

APPLICATION NO: 24/00042/LBC **CASE OFFICER:** Andrew Hunt

WARD: St Gabriels **PARISH:** N/A

LOCATION: The Park Hall, Huyton Hey Road, Huyton, Knowsley
L36 5SE

PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER CHURCH BUILDING TO 5
DWELLINGS, WITH ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL CHANGES

Site Description

The Park Hall is a historic Grade II Listed Building built in 1856, and sits within the Huyton Church Road and Victoria Road Conservation Area. The site is an irregular rectangular shape and is located at the intersection of Huyton Church Road and Huyton Hey Road. There are other dwellings to the north and east of the site, a car park to the south, a fast food restaurant to the south west and a wooded area to the north west. The site is currently in a state of dereliction with some works being done to the exterior and interior in accordance with the previous planning permission and other works being unauthorised. The current state of the site includes building materials and construction equipment left at the site.

Proposal

The proposal is for the change of use of former church building to 5 dwellings, with associated external changes. The proposal is a change from the previously approved proposal in 2018 for 5 dwellings. Some of the works have been carried out in accordance with the permission, however some works have been carried out which materially differ from the approved plans and as such do not currently have consent. The main internal changes are the following:

- Flat 1 – change to staircase layout.
- Flat 3 – Changes to stair location, and alterations to dining room wall, (restoration of archway detail and timber trussed structure to the en suite).
- Flat 4 – Entrance door has been moved and the stairs relocated.
- Flat 5 – Location of the stairs has been changed and an additional bedroom created by altering the modern partition walls.

The main external changes are the following:

- Addition of Conservation rooflights to allow for more practical use of the upper floors.
- Reinstatement of the stained glass (removed by previous owner)
- Repair of stone boundary wall
- Reinstatement of railings to St Johns Road.

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Consultations

Conservation Officer – While some of the harm is likely to be considered necessary to support the new use, certain aspects of the harm and losses are less clearly justified in view of the test applied to works resulting in ‘less than substantial harm’ at para 208 of the NPPF. These matters are discussed in detail later in the report.

Representations

This application has been publicised by letters sent to 13 neighbours and by site and press notices. No representations have been received.

Planning History

Previously planning permission was granted for a change of use of the building into 5 units (18/00178/FUL), It was concluded that despite some harm to the listed building, it was considered that the public benefits outweighed the harm. The public benefits included:

- works for the repair and restoration of the listed building and its features
- Bringing back into use a vacant Building at Risk

The works to date have been done under this planning permission and it remains extant.

A related planning application (24/00041/FUL) has also been submitted and is awaiting decision.

Relevant Policy

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. , having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

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The development plan in Knowsley comprises the Saved Policies of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan. The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS2 - Development Principles

CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

CS20 - Managing the Borough's Historic Environment

SAVED POLICIES - KNOWSLEY REPLACEMENT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ADOPTED JUNE 2006)

DQ5 - Development in Conservation Areas

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating with the applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

ISSUES AND ASSESSMENT:

IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Local Plan Core Strategy, chapter 12 of the NPPF and Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (Historic England: 2015) all seek to preserve or enhance the Borough's historic and architectural assets and any archaeological remains. Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Local Plan Core Strategy seek to ensure new development complements and enhances features of historic interest, preserves local distinctiveness and character through sensitive design as well as ensuring new development includes appropriate integration with the setting and immediate landscape.

Policy CS8 of the Local Plan Core Strategy seeks to preserve the character and function of historic environments. Policy CS1 states that priorities for the development in Knowsley include maintaining and enhancing heritage assets. Policy CS2 of the Local Plan Core Strategy states that developments should enhance local character and promote quality of place by: 'protecting and enhancing the historic environment.' Finally Local Plan Policy SUE2 requires development to protect or enhance historic and architectural assets where appropriate and references policy CS20.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving and enhancing listed buildings and their settings, in exercising their planning functions. Considerable importance and weight should be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.

NPPF Para 210 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

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- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

NPPF Para 215 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The Park Hall is a historic Grade II Listed Building built in 1856 and sits within the Huyton Church Road and Victoria Road Conservation Area.

It has historical value as it was built in 1856 as a Congregational Church. A school was added to the east dated 1861. The construction of the church and school was funded by wealthy local notables, with Andrew Barklay Walker funding the schoolhouse; his initials and coat of arms are emblazoned on the building. The building's presence helps to illustrate the diversity of religious values of the Huyton community at the time of its construction, and in a wider sense illustrates the expansion of nonconformity into formerly rural areas.

A Liverpool Mercury newspaper article of 1856 states that the architect was a Mr T. R. Brown and the building was to be constructed using Huyton quarry stone. The transepts of the church were initially to be screened off to be used as classrooms – before the school was added later. The church was designed to be 80ft long and 50ft across the transepts. It was to seat 350, but it is said this capacity could be increased to 500. The roof was to be open and with a stained finish. The schoolrooms were to be 50ft long.

The church has architectural value, enhanced by its prominent position on Huyton Hey Road. Its external appearance and original design had changed little prior to the unauthorised works and deterioration, save for partial blocking up of windows, the addition of a small but visually jarring dormer and loss of a porch. Internally, prior to the conversion, the pews, altar and many fixings had been removed, it is not known how elaborate these fittings were. Partitions separated both transepts from the nave, and there was an inserted floor in the former schoolroom which visually cut across the tall stained glass windows. The large volumes of the spaces of the church and schoolroom added considerably to its interest. Where these have been subdivided either historically or via the stalled conversion, this harms the ability to appreciate the architectural character of the building.

Walls and window reveals are plainly detailed on the whole although many windows have interesting inserted vertical cast iron columns. Decorative features, columns and arches adorn the entrance to the school room the rear of the nave. The building was designed to be open to the roof and the open stained timber roofs of the nave and school room are particularly significant features. The relative simplicity of the outward appearance of the church building is one of its distinctive and significant features, as this simpler level of decoration is not necessarily reflective of Congregational Churches of the era, but rather reflects the character of its original rural setting. A greater degree of architectural flair is apparent in the schoolrooms, with the tower a striking element of the design.

The social value of the building will have changed over time as the church function ceased in the 19th century. Afterwards it continued as a school (closed in the 1930s) and community

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hall, where dances were held. This continued until the 1980s when the building became a workshop for shoe repairs, before it became vacant. Due mainly to its community use it will feature in the collective memory of the local community, who will likely still have an attachment to the place related to its later uses.

A Heritage impact Assessment has been submitted which concludes that the external works would be relatively minor in their nature and extent and that the building would continue to read as a former church and schoolhouse and that its architectural composition would remain appreciable.

The Heritage Impact Assessment concludes that the internal works would negatively impact the significance of the listed building and that it would cause less than substantial harm but that the benefits from securing the optimum viable use of the building, the repair and refurbishment of the listed building, and the improvement to the character and appearance of the Victoria Road and Huyton Church Road Conservation Area outweigh the harm.

The main internal changes are the following

- Flat 1 – change to staircase layout.
- Flat 3 – Changes to stair location, and alterations to dining room wall, (restoration of archway detail and timber trussed structure to the en suite.
- Flat 4 – Entrance door has been moved and the stairs relocated.
- Flat 5 – Location of the stairs has been changed and an additional bedroom created by altering the modern partition walls.

The main external changes are the following:

- Addition of Conservation rooflights to allow for more practical use of the upper floors.
- Reinstatement of the stained glass (removed by previous owner)
- Repair of stone boundary wall
- Reinstatement of railings to St Johns Road.

The current proposal would result in some loss of features of historic value, principally in the interior of the building. Some of the changes are in relation to insulation of the roof and are required to ensure that any future housing can be heated in an affordable way and to improve the energy efficiency of the building and to comply with current building regulations. It is considered that whilst suboptimal from a heritage point of view, these changes can be justified on the grounds of energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions aligning with the council's climate emergency declaration and reducing the heating bills of any future occupiers down to reasonable levels. However, the precise details can be secured via condition.

The information supporting the current application is deficient on several aspects of the proposed changes, but these details can be addressed through planning conditions. However, the following elements of the building would be negatively impact from the proposal and this impact would not be removed by planning conditions.

In relation to the floors, the revised schedule of works at 49.00 indicates a proposal is being developed to install solid floors in place of most of the suspended floors. This is a departure from the previous approved application where suspended floors were used. Whilst this is a departure from the existing character of the building, this would not be sufficient to result in significant harm to the listed building and would be acceptable overall in the context of the

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scheme as a whole. A condition will be attached to require a new schedule of works that demonstrates how the floor will be compatible with adequate insulation and ventilation.

On the exterior most of the important features would be retained, however, there would be alterations to 2 stained glass windows which would not have the original coat of arms design. The west facing nave window would also have double glazing with a black sealant, this is less than the ideal single glazing with window behind. The design and placement of the rooflights is also considered suboptimal, and the rooflights are of a modern design. The decorative double door previously removed from the building would also not be replaced.

Overall, the harm to the listed building from these changes would be less than substantial. This would be outweighed by the need to bring the building back into a viable use, the building's deteriorating condition and the absence of the realistic possibility of an alternative scheme that would be better in relation to heritage. The site has been vacant for a considerable period (at least 17 years) and the proposal would improve the site at a key gateway location into the Town Centre. The proposal would also ensure the delivery of 5 houses on a brownfield site helping to contribute towards housing delivery

Overall, the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the Grade II listed building, however, the harm to heritage is outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme including bringing back a historic building back into a viable use, safeguarding the future of the building with a viable use and delivering housing on a brownfield site.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In relation to archaeology, given the urgency of works, the current state of the building and the part retrospective nature of some of the proposals, it is considered that a programme of historic building investigation would not be reasonable or necessary. The money and time that would be spent on such a survey would be better directed to restoring and improving the character and appearance of the building to retain as much as possible of its historic features.

CONCLUSION

In relation to Heritage assets, the proposal causes less than substantial harm that is outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme including the benefits of bringing back into productive use a Grade II listed building, safeguarding it from the prospect of further deterioration and improving the appearance of the site located in a key town centre gateway location. The proposed development complies with policies included within the Core Strategy (2016), Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (saved policies 2009) and National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following condition(s):-

1) Plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:-

- a. Section Details - (Received 19/11/2024).
- b. Conservation Sample Life - (Received 19/11/2024).

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- c. Proposed Elevations - (Received 15/10/2024).
- d. Proposed First Floor Plan - (Received 15/10/2024).
- e. Proposed Ground Floor Plan - (Received 15/10/2024).
- f. Proposed Site Plan - (Received 15/10/2024).
- g. Window 22 and 23 - (Received 15/10/2024).
- h. Sash and Frame Sections - (Received 15/10/2024).
- i. Window 2 Drawing - (Received 15/10/2024).
- j. Window Detail - (Received 15/10/2024).
- k. Door Elevation 2 - (Received 15/10/2024).
- l. Door Drawing - (Received 15/10/2024).
- m. Park Hall Schedule of Works - (Received 15/10/2024).
- n. Floor Construction Statement - (Received 01/10/2024).
- o. Proposed Ground Floor Plan - (Received 01/10/2024).
- p. Dwelling 5 Proposed Section - (Received 23/07/2024).
- q. Dwelling 5 Proposed Floor Plans - (Received 23/07/2024).
- r. Dwelling 4 Proposed Section - (Received 23/07/2024).
- s. Dwelling 4 Proposed Floor Plans - (Received 23/07/2024).
- t. Dwelling 3 Proposed Section - (Received 23/07/2024).
- u. Dwelling 3 Proposed Floor Plans - (Received 23/07/2024).
- v. Dwelling 2 Proposed Section - (Received 23/07/2024).
- w. Dwelling 2 Proposed Floor Plans - (Received 23/07/2024).
- x. Dwelling 1 Proposed Floor Plans - (Received 23/07/2024).
- y. Location Plan - (Received 29/01/2024).

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Pre Additional Works

2) External Works

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, a comprehensive detailed written schedule and specification of works/method statements, samples and sectional drawings/plans describing works proposed to repair or alter external faces of walls, window surrounds, parapets and roof coverings to the former church shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing prior to any additional works to any of these elements to the building. Details shall include:

- a. method statement, samples and specification describing indent/ mortar repair/replacement proposals for stonework (including window surrounds and mullions).
- b. 1 sq m sample, method statement and specification of mortars for pointing
- c. Samples shall be provided of any new slates and including tooling finishes.
- d. proposals for any structural interventions to walls, tracery or other details, supported by a suitable structural survey.

The works shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details prior to occupation of any part of the building and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

3) Window Details

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Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to any additional works , large scale drawn elevations and sections sufficient to describe in full the designs and materials of new windows, indicating the reveals, tracery, proposals for stained glass, any putties or sealants and the designs and materials of any secondary glazing or fire measures behind all windows shall be submitted to and have been approved by the local planning authority. All window works should be required to be completed in accordance with the agreed scheme prior to occupation and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

4) Circular Window Details

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to any additional works, details of Circular windows to rear transepts (north elevation) and other circular windows shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

5) Metal windows/stone surrounds

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to any additional works, details of Metal windows/stone Surrounds shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

6) Tracery windows

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to any additional works, details of Tracery windows on all elevations shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

7) External Doors

a) Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information relating to the main entrance doors to units 1 & 5, scale drawn elevations and sections showing the full construction details of the timber doors at no less than 1:10 shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing prior to installation of the doors. The elevations and sections shall show accurate restoration of the doors and decorative metalwork.

b) Details of finishes to all door and associated ironmongery shall be submitted and agreed in writing prior to finishes being applied.

c) Works shall be completed in accordance with agreed details prior to occupation of each relevant dwelling.

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Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

8) Rainwater Goods

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to any additional works, details of additional Rainwater Goods, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter. Timber fascia's shall be painted/retained as black.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

9) Additional Lighting

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to its instalment, details of any additional lighting to car park, paths and cycle store, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the setting of the building.

10) Flat Roof

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to its installation, details of the proposed materials for the flat roof, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

11) Ridge Tiles

a) Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information., a scheme for the reinstatement of the ridge tiles to match historic designs shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA, prior to any additional works. For the avoidance of doubt, ridge tiles to the main ridges shall be clay slotted rolltop ridge tiles with a fleur-de-lys insert, plainer roll top ridge tiles may be used to secondary ridges and angled clay ridge tiles shall be used on the lowest ridges to the rear.

b) Samples of each type of ridge tile and supporting roof plans identifying the location(s) they are to be used, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing prior to installation.

c) The works shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details prior to occupation of any part of the building and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

12) Chimney and Vents

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, prior to commencement of any works to the chimney or installation of any vents, details of works to the chimney and details of vents, shall have been submitted to and have

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been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

13) Timber Roof

Prior to their installation details of proposals for alterations/insulation/ventilation/repair/any repainting works to the timber roof structure should be provided for consideration (insofar as is possible to describe in advance of fuller site investigations), shall have been submitted to and been approved by, the local planning authority, details should include sections through showing roof timbers/parapets and a justification for alterations (e.g, quantifying energy conservation benefits and demonstrating the proposal is the most sensitive option).

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

14) Schedule of Works

Prior to their installation, an updated Schedule of Works shall be submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority, together with sufficient supporting information & plans to demonstrate a suitable approach to wall linings/insulation/pointing/cavity drainage, including how it interacts with the flooring proposals at ground floor. All works shall take place in accordance with the details approved.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the internal and external appearance of the building.

15) Boundary Treatments

Notwithstanding the approved plans and supporting information, a detailed schedule and specification of boundary treatments (including railings and corner gates) to Huyton Hey Road shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing prior to occupation. The works shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details prior to occupation of any part of the building and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the setting of the building.

16) Paths

Notwithstanding submitted details, prior to installation of surfacing, details of surfacing materials for footpaths, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

Pre occupation

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17) Ground Levels

Notwithstanding submitted details, prior to occupation of the building, details of proposed ground levels to reduce internal damp in the building, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter.

Reason: In order to preserve and enhance the external appearance of the building.

18) Landscaping

Notwithstanding submitted details, prior to occupation of the building, details of landscaping, shall have been submitted to and have been approved by, the local planning authority. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and retained hereafter. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved drawings, no part of the development shall be occupied until full details of both hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The details shall relate to all land surfaces not built upon and shall include:

- a) Land-levels and gradients resulting in the formation of any banks, terraces or other earthworks
- b) hard surfaced areas and materials,
- c) planting plans, specifications and schedules, planting size, species and numbers/densities, trees to be retained and a scheme for the timing / phasing of work.
- d) existing plants / trees to be retained
- e) A detailed regime for the ongoing and longer term maintenance of all soft landscaping is also required to be submitted for approval.

The approved landscaping works shall be implemented and completed prior to the occupation of the dwelling to which it relates unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development and to comply with Saved Policy H5 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006, Policy CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted January 2016, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Signed Case Officer¹:

Andrew Hunt

**Signed Authorising
Officer²:**

K Foster

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Date:

6 February 2025

1 I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

2 I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

INFORMATIVES

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