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KINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Mr. Philip Mullineux
Northern Planning Services
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Hereford District Council
Hereford
HR1 3BH

Thursday 19th July 2012

Application No: N121452 /F
Old Wesleyan Chapel, Harp Yard, Kington HR5 3BJ

9 one-bedroom apartments and a new outside staircase

1. We understand that the application is for a renewal/extension of permission granted on 22.05.2009 consequent on a Planning Inspector allowing an Appeal.
 2. We note that the conditions specified by the Inspector in Schedules A and B applied to the decision by Herefordshire Council (22.05.2009) that allowed the proposed development.
 3. We note that among the conditions listed on Schedule A were several that were required to be met before work on the building commenced. No: 7 required that "a scheme for the repair of the boundary walls" to be submitted and approved on Schedule B, No: 13 required a landscape design including a plan to show existing trees and hedgesand an indication of which would be retained and which removed.
- If schemes have been submitted we have not been supplied with any notice of them. However we have observed that several mature apple trees that were on the land when the Planning Decision was made have been felled. If this action was taken without approval there has been a breach

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of Planning conditions. It is clearly now impossible for the conditions detailed above to be met by the present or any subsequent owner. It is obvious that since 2009 no work whatsoever has been carried out on the Chapel building itself. There is thus another 3 years of deterioration to the fabric of the building.

4. We dispute the statement made on the application that discussions were held with neighbours and the community. It has been a longstanding complaint from neighbours that they were not able to talk with the applicant.
Kington Town Council has a record of a request that was sent five times requesting a meeting; the requests were met with either silence or refusal.
5. Kington Town Council objected to the previous application (NW08/1741) and **objects** to the present application for the following reasons:
- 6 We consider 9 one-bedroom flats to be inappropriate for this Grade II listed building.
- 7 There is was in 2008/09 an over-provision of one-bedroom flats in Kington, many remaining empty for considerable periods, or with frequent changes of occupants. The situation in 2012 is even worse; no increase in this type of accommodation is required for either sale or leasing.
- 8 Even if additional one-bedroom flats were needed in Kington, these particular ones would be highly undesirable. As designed they are extremely small, with no storage space and no garages or designated parking areas.
- 9 The three flats on the basement level have their windows occluded and therefore lack adequate daylight. This type of accommodation might be deemed acceptable in large, over-crowded urban areas, but is wholly undesirable in a small rural town.
- 10 It is difficult to understand how the plans are compliant with the requirements for disabled access. We query whether the plans will result in a DDA (*Disability Discrimination Act*) compliant building.
- 11 The outside staircase detailed is not sympathetic to the Grade II early nineteenth century listed building.
- 12 The proposed new staircase is the only access and egress for flats on the upper floor. Even if the staircase is fireproofed the physical proximity to the staircase of two kitchens in the adjacent flats does not comply with good practice in the design of accommodation. We understand that Building Regulations specify a certain distance between a residence and a point of external exit ('dashing distance'). We query that this condition is satisfied for all the apartments as designed.

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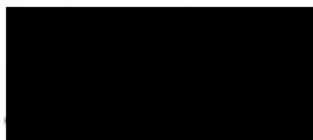
- 13 If the building is to be converted for residential use Kington Town Council considers that a re-configuration of the interior of the building should be required. For example a maximum of 3 or 4 flats in total would provide more attractive accommodation with a potential for more durable occupancy. **H17**
- 14 There are no indications that any provision is made in the design for a low carbon footprint for the building.
- 15 No information is supplied to show whether renewable sources of energy will be used, nor how water use will be minimised.
- 16 We are concerned that no parking space is provided on the land. Adjacent public car parks are already oversubscribed and unlikely to be able to provide 9 or more additional car spaces for residents.
- 17 We understand that bats are now often seen around the Chapel building. This is a protected species. Extensive building work and an increase in the number of people residing in the locality will threaten the bats.
- 18 We are concerned about the planned access provided for residents in the converted building. The single gateway in the wall on the western boundary of the site is narrow and suitable only for pedestrians. No indication is given as to how deliveries of large goods, e.g. furniture will be possible, nor how access for emergency vehicles will be assured.

Summary

Kington Town Council **objects strongly** to the application for renewal of permission for accommodation of a type that is undesirable and potentially unmarketable.

The Chapel is an iconic and historically important building in Kington. We consider that a design for its future use should be commensurate with its significance in its location in the conservation area of the town. **P7, S7, H13, H14**

Yours faithfully



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