

**Application No: 15/00752/FULL Full Application**

**Site:** Woodgreen Methodist Church, High Street, Woodgreen,  
Fordingbridge, SP6 2AU

**Proposal:** Change of use to unit of holiday accommodation; replace existing  
single-storey additions; new sewage treatment plant.

**Applicant:** Mrs J Hart

**Case Officer:** Ann Braid

**Parish:** WOODGREEN

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**1. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

Contrary to Parish Council view

**2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION**

Conservation Area

**3. PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

DP1 General Development Principles  
DP6 Design Principles  
CP16 Tourism Development  
DP19 Re-use of Buildings outside the Defined Villages  
CP12 New Residential Development  
CP10 Local Community Facilities  
CP8 Local Distinctiveness  
CP7 The Built Environment

**4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Design Guide SPD

**5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Sec 3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy  
Sec 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

**6. MEMBER COMMENTS**

None received

**7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Woodgreen Parish Council: Support the application. The Parish Council is

aware that this decision is contrary to Policy DP19 but, in this instance, considers that the application should be supported for the long term maintenance of the building

## **8. CONSULTTEES**

- 8.1 Ecologist: Any consent should be subject to conditions to ensure that measures are taken to mitigate against impacts on protected species and habitats. As the proposal involves a residential use within 400m of the New Forest Special Protection Area, a legal agreement to secure habitat mitigation would be required. Permitted development rights, and the provision of external lighting should be controlled by condition.
- 8.2 Building Design & Conservation Area Officer: Although the use would secure the future of the building, other uses could be equally sympathetic, as a residential use would be likely to require internal and external alterations. As it stands the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area due to the limited external alterations that are being proposed. There is therefore no objection subject to a condition relating to the use of appropriate timber joinery.
- 8.3 Highway Authority (HCC): No objection subject to condition relating to parking and turning of vehicles
- 8.4 Natural England: No objection subject to payment in mitigation of impacts on the New Forest Special Protection Area

## **9. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 9.1 16 letters of support have been received relating to the following;
- The maintenance of the building in good repair.
  - Local businesses would benefit from the use by holiday makers.
  - The allocation of parking would be an improvement over the existing situation.
  - There is little requirement for another building in community use.
  - The use should be restricted to holiday use only.
- 9.2 One letter has been received setting out the ideal level of provision for access for the disabled.

## **10. RELEVANT HISTORY**

- 10.1 None

## 11. ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 This application relates to a small, but prominently sited church building which lies on the east side of the High Street in Woodgreen. The building faces onto the street and lies within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area. The church has almost no curtilage. The land slopes up to the rear. The open forest and the designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar Site, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lie less than 200 metres to the east.
- 11.2 Consent is sought to change the use of the church into a self-contained unit of accommodation (Use Class C3) to be let for holidays. The applicant also owns the property directly to the east, "Dongoa" and some of the land of that property would be incorporated into the application site, to provide an area of domestic curtilage and parking. The existing vehicular access to Dongoa would be shared, and a parking and turning area created for the chapel. In term of alterations to the building itself, an existing rear extension would be re-built and a side extension would be converted. Facing materials would remain unchanged and all window and door joinery would be timber.
- 11.3 The main issues under consideration would be:
- Whether the proposed change of use would be supported by the relevant policies of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy (in terms of the introduction of a new residential or tourist related use).
  - The impact the development would have upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
  - Whether the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its impact upon the ecology of the New Forest.
  - Potential loss of amenity to neighbouring residents.
- 11.4 There is no difference in planning terms between the use of a building for holiday letting and residential use, as they both fall within Class C3. The applicant's statement indicates that it has been the practise of the National Park Authority to allow holiday letting subject to restrictive conditions. However Policy DP19, which relates to the re-use of buildings outside defined village boundaries, states that the conversion of a building to residential use would not be acceptable. This restrictive approach has been supported in recent Appeal decisions for similar developments to the one now under consideration at South Sway Farm (reference APP/B9506/W/15/3006490) and Fishpond Piece (reference APP/B9506/W/15/3005862).
- 11.5 The Authority has granted some holiday accommodation as part of a farm diversification scheme at some large farm holdings, in order to help support the land-based economy, in accordance with Policy CP17; however that policy is not applicable here as this

application does not relate to farm diversification or to a land-based enterprise.

- 11.6 Furthermore, policy CP10 states that the proposed change of use should not result in the loss of a community facility. The applicant's case is that Woodgreen is already well served by community facilities, and it is doubtful that another community use could be sustained. The applicant also asserts that lack of space for basic facilities makes the permitted use as a church and/or other uses that could be carried out without planning permission impractical.
- 11.7 It is worth noting that Officers responded to a number of calls in the run up to the sale of the property and consistently advised that a residential use would be contrary to Policy DP19. The church has not been used for some time, but no evidence has been presented as to any attempt to market the building for a use that would comply with Policy DP19 or Policy CP10. To quote the supporting statement, "the applicant's purchase has the singular advantage of enabling the enlargement of the plot to enable the provision of parking and turning space and also the provision of a domestic foul drainage system". Whilst additional external space would undoubtedly be an advantage when marketing of the building, no evidence has been submitted to show that the building would not function in other uses without an allocation of the applicant's land.
- 11.8 In addition to Policy DP19, Policy CP16 seeks to ensure new tourism development would provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest, would be part of a farm diversification scheme and would relieve visitor pressures on internationally or nationally designated sites. There is no information accompanying the application which would demonstrate that the proposal would provide and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest. In addition, the proposal would not bring about any benefits to the New Forest National Park. In fact the proposal would appear to contribute towards (rather than relieve pressure upon) the nationally designated sites of conservation interest due to the proximity of the building to the open forest. It is also important to have regard to the fact that Policy CP12 seeks to ensure any new residential development (holiday lets are also classed as a C3 dwelling use) would be restricted to the four defined villages (Sway, Ashurst, Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst). The proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policies DP16 and CP12 of the adopted New Forest National Park Core Strategy.
- 11.9 As noted above, previous officer advice confirmed that an application for the residential use of the building would be contrary to policy. Most discussions took place by telephone, but one written enquiry related to the prospective use of the building as a commercial photography studio, and it was concluded that an

application for this business use would be likely to be supported. In all cases it was advised that in order for a residential use to be supported it should be clearly shown that the building would not be suitable for other uses that would comply with Policy. It was advised that it would be necessary to substantiate the case with details of how the existing building had been marketed for use for alternative community purposes or business purposes, and whether such uses are likely required or any offers were forthcoming. The applicant's statement considers other uses, but in relation to each option, argues that the same issues arise; the building would be too small, there would be no associated space for parking or drainage.

- 11.10 The existing use of the building falls within Use Class D1 which includes clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law courts, as well as non-residential education and training centres. The use of the building may change to any of these without planning permission. It has not been conclusively shown that these alternative uses would be unsuccessful in the building.
- 11.11 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure proposals for new housing within 400 metres of the Special Protection Area (SPA) demonstrate that adequate measures will be put in place to avoid or mitigate against potential harmful impacts upon the ecological integrity of the SPA. The applicant does not acknowledge the proximity of the site to the SPA and therefore does not propose any specific measures for mitigation. Natural England also raise this concern and without such supporting information it has not been demonstrated that any additional impact associated with increased pressures arising from new residential development would be mitigated against. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policy CP1 of the adopted New Forest National Park Core Strategy.
- 11.12 The proposed physical alterations to the building would be relatively unobtrusive and would (subject to further information relating to window opening and joinery details) be appropriate to the building. There is therefore no objection to the use from the Conservation perspective.
- 11.13 The Parish Council supports the application as a means of preserving a valued historic building in good repair. There have also been many letters of support, mainly referring to the local desire to retain the building in good repair. Neighbours also believe holidaymakers would support local businesses, and the allocation of parking for the site would be an improvement over the existing situation. With regard to neighbouring amenity, it is considered that this would be largely unaffected by the proposed use.

- 11.14 There is undoubtedly strong local support for the proposal and it is accepted that a viable use for the building needs to be found to secure its long term future as a valued local historic building. Nonetheless, before any holiday use can be considered, the applicant needs to demonstrate much more clearly that there are no other viable re-uses of the building available that would comply with policies CP10 and DP19.

## 12. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

### Reason(s)

- 1 Insufficient information has been submitted with the application to adequately demonstrate that the building is incapable of another beneficial community or business use. The proposed use of the building as a holiday let would therefore result in the introduction of a new residential use for which no satisfactory justification has been provided. The development would be located outside any of the defined New Forest villages in New Forest National Park, adjacent to the open forest. Due to the restricted size of the application site, it is further considered that the level of activity generated by the development would have an unacceptable impact upon the character of the countryside to the detriment of its special qualities and local distinctiveness. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policies DP1, CP10, CP12, CP16 and DP19 of the New Forest National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (DPD) (December 2010) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposal would lie within 400 metres of a Special Protection Area (SPA) and no information has been submitted to demonstrate that adequate measures would be put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the ecological integrity of the SPA. Therefore there would be insufficient information to assess the potential impact upon the SPA and the proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policy CP1 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (DPD) (December 2010), the Development Standards SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.



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