

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
RODNEY STREET, LIVERPOOL L1 9ED

PLANNING JUSTIFICATION AND DESIGN / ACCESS STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The application site consists of the site of the Grade II* Listed former St. Andrew's Church of Scotland on the eastern side of Rodney Street on the northern side of its junction with Maryland Street within Liverpool city centre. The site has a long planning history having been the subject of various schemes, none of which has come to fruition. The lack of a reasonably beneficial use, together with an apparent desire to allow the building to deteriorate and a fire several years ago, led to its condition becoming significantly worse and the City Council using its compulsory purchase powers to acquire ownership. Nevertheless, the building still remains a vacant shell and its lack of development detracts from the Rodney Street conservation Area in which it is situated; its listed status also results in its appearance on the List of buildings at Risk. The current proposal involves the retention of the remaining external walls of the principal church building and the construction of an internal steel frame in which will be constructed five floors of student accommodation around an open central courtyard.



Site Description

St. Andrew's Church of Scotland was built in 1823-4 to the design of John Foster Junior. The body of the church is a simple two storey design with arched windows and stuccoed walls. The front stone façade is an imposing composition of large Ionic entrance columns to a recessed portico surmounted by a balustrade attic flanked by corner towers, each crowned with smaller Corinthian columns and domes. The ground floor has blind windows in battered architraves with the returns having round headed windows on two levels. The lack of proper maintenance and the neglect over several decades, together with the consequences of fire damage in 1984, has resulted in the loss of one of the front towers and some of the other associated architectural details plus the loss of the interior. The building now consists of the original external walls which enclose an open central space. It is listed as Grade II* although the description indicates it is a distinguished building in a

desperate condition. However, the location of the premises on a prominent corner site and the siting of the building within its own generous open space, which was used mainly as a grave yard, on a building line behind that of the terraces of neighbouring properties along Rodney Street allows the building to retain its striking aspect in the street scene enriching the visual appearance of the conservation area.



The original church had an ancillary building constructed in 1872 on the northern side of the churchyard. This was designed and used as a Sunday School, with its round-arched windows and classical details echoing the style of the church. This is listed as Grade II in its own right. The surrounding yard is flat and was formerly used as a grave yard with some interesting features still remaining, in particular the granite pyramid on the southern side of the church which is also Grade II Listed.



Rodney Street was first projected shortly after Lord Rodney's 1782 naval victory over the Comte de Grasse and was one of the earliest and largest of the new residential areas springing up on the outskirts of the city at that time. After a slow start, building was rapid in the last years of the 18th century as the wealthy merchants moved away from the increasing urban pressures on their houses in Hanover Street and Duke Street. By 1807 it appears that most of the street had been developed and its line was extended northwards along Clarence Street, Russell Street and Seymour Street towards St. Anne's Street. During the 20th century, Rodney Street was the centre of the professional elite in the city and still retains a high proportion of medical, legal and building consultancies; the number of more general office uses has increased in recent years although a good proportion of the buildings

are still in high quality private residential use.

The front boundary of the site is enclosed 1.2 metre high iron railings above a stone plinth providing an open aspect to the church building: the wall and gate piers are also listed Grade II. The other side and rear boundaries consist of 2 metre high brick walls. The rear boundary backs on to the John Moores University campus accessed primarily from Maryland Street which forms the southern boundary to the church.



The site is within an area allocated for Mixed Uses and Various Types of Development in the City Council's approved Unitary Development Plan where policy E6 applies. It is identified as M21 in the accompanying Schedule 6.3 which indicates that B1 (Business), D1 (Non-Residential Institutions) and Medical uses would be appropriate. As well as being listed, it is also within the Rodney Street Conservation Area.



The Proposal



The current proposal involves the construction of an internal separate steel frame which is contained by the remaining existing external walls of the former church. This frame will act as a lateral restraint to those walls, allowing the existing shell to remain intact. The proposed floors will consist of permanent shuttered concrete which will provide an excellent lateral restraint to the shell as well as allowing good fire and sound separation between each floor. There will be no new openings created with the scheme using the existing to provide the necessary access and lighting to the proposed accommodation. Behind each of the window openings in the side elevation, there will be new angled glazing to the student rooms with each opening providing light and ventilation to two rooms. The void that is created between the existing openings and the new window faces will be a full height void to the top of the existing walls. These will be left exposed with a suitable lead flashing at the top, details of which will be agreed with the Council and English Heritage. The top floor will be of a light penthouse design with glazing to the full height and width of each room that will be seen above the top walls. However, it will be set back from the existing façade by 1.5 metres which will also allow private terrace space for the occupiers of that floor.

The new block will be built around an internal enclosed courtyard, which will be to the full height of the building. Although each room will have its main windows facing outwards through the existing openings, they will be accessed from a communal internal balcony around the courtyard space. The courtyard will be hard surfaced and landscaped to provide private amenity space and will contain a communal lounge/dining area and gymnasium with each floor above having two communal lounges. The internal courtyard

will be a vibrant area with all access to rooms via either staircases or a lift which will serve the individual decks.

The proposal will provide a total of 100 student rooms on five floors with ten rooms along each side wall using the existing openings to provide light to two rooms. Each room will have its own en-suite shower and toilet facilities as well as space for a bed, desk and chair and storage space. Each floor will include communal lounges with kitchen/dining facilities; there will be two on each of the upper floors with the ground floor containing one and a gymnasium with office accommodation for management purposes. The open courtyard will measure 10 metres by 8 metres and will be open and hence naturally ventilated; its central and enclosed location will provide a high degree of privacy for the students and a ready meeting area.



As part of the adaptation of the church building, restoration work will be carried out with a view to a full reinstatement of the external shell. This will include the provision of a new tower and the restoration of the other matching one on the front elevation and the making good of the balustrade. The side arched window openings will remain as they are since they provide the source of light to the proposed new rooms; similarly, the roof will not be reinstated as a new roof structure is proposed that will take account of the height and configuration of the new residential element. More details of the full restoration works are given in the accompanying Conservation Architects' report.

The Sunday School building will have its external walls repaired and stucco rendered. Replacement period doors and windows will be installed with a newly constructed low pitched roman villa roof to ensure that the building is water tight. Its interior will remain as existing with a portal type steel frame being installed to provide suitable support for the new structure and lateral bracing for the exterior walls which are leaning and quite badly distorted. It will remain as an empty shell until a new use can be found.



It is considered that the proposed use of accommodation for students is suitable in this location being close to a number of higher education facilities within and on the fringe of the city centre which are within easy walking or cycling distance. It also makes the most efficient and beneficial use of a vacant listed building on a prominent road frontage within a conservation area. The building has been seen as a problem for many years with a long planning history which led to the Council seeking compulsory purchase powers to gain ownership in order to ensure that it was not only retained but put to a viable use.

The applicant has carried out a number of schemes for student accommodation in the city in the last two years (Princes Road, Duke Street, Bold Street and a recent approval for the former Fire Station at Hatton Garden) and has the necessary financial backing to implement this proposal. He has a proven record of delivering this type of accommodation with standards that are acceptable to the local authority and popular with the students. It is felt that if this particular scheme is approved there is a very good probability that it will be completed quickly thus providing high quality accommodation for students and representing a significant improvement to the visual appearance of the area. It will also result in a building that is on the list of those at risk being removed and allowing resources to be taken forward to other buildings at risk. The innovative proposal will represent a significant step forward for the city as a whole, indicating its ability to deliver such schemes and make a positive contribute to its standing in maintaining its stock of listed building and putting them to modern and economically viable alternative uses.

PLANNING POLICIES

Compliance with Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West

Although the exact legal standing of recent Planning Policy Statements is unclear following the change in central government and the announcement that they are all to be withdrawn, the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 states that local authorities should monitor and manage the availability of land identified in plans and strategies through development control decisions on proposals to achieve defined housing provision as set out in the plan (Policy L4). In the supporting text, particular support is given to the city centre and inner areas as priority areas for economic growth and regeneration which is reflected in the subsequent policies.

Planning Policy Statement 1 on Delivering Sustainable Development, with particular reference to paragraph 27 (viii), and Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing (paragraphs 16, 36, 38, 41 and 46) all refer to optimising the use of brownfield sites and vacant buildings in sustainable locations with substantial regeneration and environmental benefits for the local community.

Liverpool Unitary Development Plan

Under the UDP, the site is within an area identified as being suitable for mixed use and various types of development. The accompanying Schedule 6.3 lists the site as M21, indicating that appropriate uses would be B1 (Business), D1 (Non Residential Institutions) or for Medical purposes; in effect, these alternatives reflected the uses that had been granted planning permission in the 1980's and 1990's. It is not considered that the list is exhaustive and further alternatives are suitable bearing in mind the statement in paragraph 6.61 that "the designation of Mixed Use Areas and Sites for Various Types of Development is intended to promote development which can make a significant contribution to the regeneration of the local economy, providing enhanced employment prospects and opportunities for environmental improvements".

In allocating sites and buildings for mixed uses and various types of development, the council is complying with guidance from central government. Within the City Centre, such sites have been designated as diverse as possible in order to ensure that its role as a regional centre continues to expand and prosper whilst ensuring that wider considerations of the amenity, safety and general environment of neighbourhoods are properly taken into account.

This site has been the subject of earlier planning permissions although these have all expired; it is understood that they related to conversion/adaptation of the church for office and medical uses. Similarly, later proposals for uses ancillary to the adjoining John Moores University campus were not pursued. In pursuing this proposal, it is considered that the use for residential accommodation for students needs to take due account of other UDP policies including H3 (City Centre Living), GEN1 (Economic Regeneration) and E9 (Liverpool City Centre).

Policy H3 refers to City Centre Living which includes reference to student accommodation. It acknowledges that the city centre is attractive for the student population but it is aware that a balanced range of accommodation is required across the city to prevent the creation of student “ghettos” which are poorly related to established patterns of city life and activities. It is considered that this site, on the edge of the city centre and close to the higher educational establishments within an existing structure for which it has proved difficult to find suitable alternative uses represents an excellent opportunity as student accommodation. The presence of the former church building in a shell form allows an innovative design within the remaining structure thus retaining and restoring its external façade to the benefit of the local environment. There are other student residences in the surrounding area but it is considered that these are sufficiently separate to prevent the development of a student ghetto. The site is fairly self-contained with distinct boundaries on a corner site; this feeling of separateness will ensure that there is no direct detrimental effect on the amenity of any neighbouring residents as a result of the activities associated with the proposed use. This proposal offers the significant bonus of being a beneficial and viable use of a prominent listed building within a conservation area that has a long and unfortunate history of neglect and missed opportunities site, all of which give it greater significance. It is argued, therefore, that the proposed development complies with the Council’s own policies, E6, GEN1, GEN9 and HD1 on the re-use of Listed Buildings for similar reasons.

Housing Development Supplementary Planning Document

The New Housing Development Draft Supplementary Planning Document was approved by the City Council on 22 October 2004 with the intention of prioritising new housing development within the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area in general with particular emphasis on the defined Zones of Opportunity. Although the provision of student accommodation is not directly affected by this initiative, the proposal does complement its associated policies especially as it makes economic use of an existing vacant building within a conservation area in a prominent location on one of the city’s main thoroughfares. In addition, the proposed accommodation will reduce the need to provide student accommodation via conversions within family housing in other locations, thereby making a positive impact on the HMRI programme.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The basic concept behind the scheme has been the recognition to respect the integrity of the existing building and to retain and restore a Grade II* listed building within a conservation area while maximising the space within the existing structure. It is accepted that the remnants of the building are currently in a very sad state but that they are now, at least secure, and that proposals can be brought forward to bring it back into beneficial use with some degree of reasonable optimism that the scheme will be completed. It is recognised that any new works have to be contained within the existing shell whilst the external walls can be restored to their former condition. The scheme, therefore, has to achieve its maximum potential within a clearly delineated boundary; as there is no interior left of the original building, an innovative design has been prepared to provide purposely designed student accommodation on five floors. Each floor is rectangular in shape with a hollow centre which provides a central open courtyard which contains an enclosed amenity space for the future occupiers together with communal facilities.

The scale and massing, therefore, will be very similar to the original. It will differ in that the original roof which was lost following a fire in 1984 will not be restored but it will be replaced by a new roof, mono pitched towards the centre of the building. This will result in a glazed wall above existing walls but its simple straight lines and light materials will complement the existing horizontal elements of the upper floors. The front part of the upper wall will be visible between the towers (one of which is to be rebuilt to return the front elevation to its former design) and will be subservient to them thus not increasing the overall height of the building or its massing. The exact materials to be used will be agreed with the local planning authority but it is proposed to use modern materials that will blend with the original in both colour and texture.

The proposed scheme does not involve the demolition of any part of the building but rather its restoration with a view to returning its external appearance to its original style. The only significant visible change is to the roof but the proposed design is considered suitable for the reasons given above and will be in character with the building itself and the adjoining buildings, particularly those to the rear, thus preserving and enhancing the conservation area. The external appearance of the building can only be improved by the proposal particularly as it brings a derelict and neglected building back to life.

However, its intended use will result in a full maintenance schedule being introduced that will safeguard the future of the existing structure thereby ensuring the future of this listed building in an economically beneficial purpose. The scheme has been the subject of pre-application discussions with the Council's planning staff and conservation officer. The internal alterations and the type of accommodation have been discussed with the Council's Environmental Health Officers to ensure that the proposed standards comply with the Council's regulations for houses in multi-occupation. The sizes of the rooms are standard throughout the scheme but they all have en-suite toilet facilities. At least two rooms on each of the floors are wider than the rest (other than on the penthouse floor) with larger toilet facilities that are suitable for people with restricted movement. Communal facilities are provided on each floor with kitchen/dining and lounge areas provided for every cluster

of rooms. A gymnasium is provided on the ground floor behind the manager's office with a laundry room contained within one of the front tower structures.

The church building is set within a large open space that has been used in part as a graveyard with various monuments and tombs still remaining. This space will not be developed at all but will remain undisturbed following a general tidying up operation. It will be fenced off as agreed with all the relevant authorities during the construction phase, after which it will be discreetly delineated to discourage access by any residents or visitors. There are various small trees to the front of the Sunday School and these will be retained as they represent the only greenery along Rodney Street. The church yard itself also provides an area of openness within the continuously built up frontage of Rodney Street providing some visual relief as it breaks up hard elevations of the Rodney Street properties which are all built on the back of paving. It is not proposed to introduce any new landscaping to the site as this may detract from the setting of the buildings and structures currently there although the internal courtyard will be hard landscaped for the use of the resident students.

As the residential accommodation will be newly built, it will incorporate features that allow it to comply with modern regulations under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Council's own requirements so that it is accessible by all sectors of the community, irrespective of any disability. This will apply to the rooms themselves, the communal areas and to all circulation space. All doors, handles, switches and other facilities will be designed to ensure that they can be used by all members of the general community. As well as two staircases, there will be a lift to serve all floors. The ground floor of the building is accessed by a series of steps from the front elevation; this is the only access point to the building and is a serious defect to be overcome to allow full access, especially by the disabled. It is proposed to replace one of the three flights of steps by a ramp with the precise design being discussed and agreed with the local authority and the relevant conservation bodies.

The location of the premises close to the universities and other higher education establishments on the fringe of the city centre which adds to the attraction of the premises for student accommodation. These are all easily accessible by either public transport, walking or cycling. As there is no dependency on the use of the private car and given the central location with easy access to a choice of public transport modes, it is not proposed to provide any on-site car parking facilities. Provision will be made for the storage of bicycles both within one of the front towers and to the rear of the building, next to the Sunday School. The site is considered to be wholly sustainable in respect of the proposed use with a wide range of social, recreational and shopping facilities within easy reach by a variety of means of transport.

CONCLUSION

It is the applicant's view that the proposal would comply fully with the Council's other regeneration projects in the City Centre and would not prejudice the release of land for new housing but rather would be seen to complement developments across the city. The scheme has been designed to comply with the Council's other standards in the approved UDP for student accommodation and under its HMO advice. The associated works of restoration and re-instatement to the external facades of the building will be in keeping with the original design elements of the building itself resulting in a significant improvement to its appearance thus both preserving and enhancing the character of the building itself and the Rodney Street conservation area. It will also represent a significant improvement to the amenity of local residents and other commercial occupiers as it will increase security in the area as well as removing a continuing eye sore which detracts from other improvement works in the area. The proposal represents a viable opportunity to develop the site for a suitable use by a developer who has experience across the city of providing such accommodation in a variety of buildings. It is concluded, therefore, that the proposal complies with both national and local policies on the re-use of vacant listed buildings and would not have adverse effect on the amenity of any adjoining residents or on any other redevelopment proposals within the city.

KDP Architects
20th September 2011.

SECTION 106 AGREEMENT – COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

At its meeting of 7th November 2008, the Executive Board of the City Council agreed that Section 106 requirements for open space/public realm provision required under Policy OE14 of the adopted Liverpool Unitary Development Plan be expanded to require all major developments to contribute towards the provision of street trees and to fund the Council's Public Art Strategy, through policies HD23 and HD24 of the UDP, where on-site provision cannot be achieved appropriately. The aim of such provision is to create a safer, more attractive and pedestrian – friendly environment so as to encourage greater activity and interaction on adjacent street scenes and in the wider area.

The current proposal is for 10 clusters of 100 bedrooms for student occupation. Taking into account the latest data available, it is believed that this proposal could attract a commuted sum in the order of £40,000 plus legal fees through a Section 106 Agreement towards the provision/enhancement of open space/public realm, street trees and public art.

However, consideration of such commuted sums must be viewed in a balanced way against the benefit of bringing a long term vacant and neglected listed building that is included in the List of Buildings at Risk into a reasonably beneficial use. The site has a long planning history and the city Council has fought a long battle to preserve the building, acting in a positive manner by using its compulsory purchase powers to obtain control over the ownership of the building and to bring back into use. Planning permission has been granted in the past for various purposes, such as offices and medical uses, but none have been implemented with the result that the building gradually deteriorated until more intervention was needed to prevent its complete loss. Such action has been taken because it has long been accepted that the building has great historical and architectural interest, particularly in relation to the growth and development of Liverpool during the 19th century and it is accordingly listed with Grade II* status.

The current student accommodation proposal represents a realistic opportunity of not only bringing the building and site back into use but of restoring the majority of the remaining structure to its former condition. The applicant has the financial backing to implement the scheme and he has a record of delivering similar proposals across the city. This building is special because it requires a high commitment to re-instating particular architectural features to their original design in order to return its appearance to its earlier state. Such works will add to the general cost of the building programme and it is argued that an additional expenditure of some £40,000 will make the scheme unviable; even if it went ahead, it could result in cutting down in the standard and quality of work/materials which could well adversely affect the condition of the building.

It is argued that the current proposal is a high quality and sensitive treatment of the building which safeguards its integrity and restores most of its original interest. The introduction of a new use will ensure that there is activity and movement on the site providing natural surveillance and increasing that of the surrounding properties to the benefit of their occupiers. The overall site and building currently represent an eye sore in the Rodney Street conservation area which detracts from its character and appearance. The proposal would occupy a vacant site thereby complementing the remainder of the adjoining frontages and also providing a link to the University

campus developments that are taking place to its rear. The total benefits of the scheme are huge and greatly outweigh those that would be achieved by making a contribution to open space, street trees and public art. In this respect, it is pointed out that the site does represent a significant element of open visual space in the tightly developed adjoining frontages and its restoration and proper maintenance can act as a further improvement to the general amenity of the area, its residents and users. Similarly, the various monuments within the site will be safeguarded and will continue to act as public art features which contribute to the interest and visual appearance of the street scene along Rodney Street.

It is concluded that the scheme taken as a whole will make a significant contribution to preserving and enhancing the building itself and the surrounding area. A commuted sum is not necessary in this instance as the scheme itself will result in significant benefits to the local environment in compliance with the aims and policies of the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan.