

## DESIGN AND ACCESS (PLANNING) STATEMENT



Application Site: 15 Howardsgate Welwyn Garden City AL8 6BU

Proposal: Change of use of First & Second floors from a Church, Education and Community use (Use Class F1) to Function Rooms (Use Class F2).

Our Ref: 24022

Date: September 2024

Planning & Architectural Consultants  
For and on Behalf of ARCHPL Ltd.  
400 West Green Road London N15 3PX  
Email: [application@archpl.co.uk](mailto:application@archpl.co.uk)

## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. SITE LOCATION
3. HISTORY
4. THE PROPOSAL
5. DESIGN CONCEPT
6. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS
7. ACCESS
8. CONCLUSION

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This statement is submitted by ARCHPL Planning Limited in support of a planning application for a Change of use of First & Second floors from a Church, Education and Community use (Use Class F1) to Function Rooms (Use Class F2).

## **2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site is located within the town centre of Welwyn Garden City and is sited on the southern side of Howardsgate towards the junction with Parkway. The
- 2.2 The site frontage faces west across the generous open space of Howardsgate that runs through the centre of the road.
- 2.3 The site is located within a row of terrace units, adjacent to the Two Willows public house on the northern side of the application site and the Postino Lounge Café Bar to the south. The ground floor is occupied by the Gras Restaurant-Lounge.
- 2.4 The area surrounding the application site is characterised by commercial properties of a variety of uses which includes retail units and restaurants together with financial and professional service.
- 2.5 The building is three stories in height comprising a parapet roof and dormer windows in the roof space.
- 2.6 The building is neo-Georgian in style and is of a form that is typical of the Garden City vernacular. Architectural details include the oversized doorcase and pediments and timber sash windows that adds to its architectural character.
- 2.7 The existing first floor which is the subject of this application, is occupied by the Fountain of Life Church, education and community centre.
- 2.8 The development site is located within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area



Front Elevation as viewed from opposite side of Howardsgate

### 3.0 HISTORY

3.1 The foremost recent planning history relates to:

N6/2013/1753/FP

Location: Fountain of Life Church, 15 Howardsgate, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6AL

Proposal: Erection of first floor rear extension

Decision: Granted

Decision Date: 18/10/2013

N6/2009/0861/FP

Location: 15 Howardsgate, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6BU

Proposal: Change of use of first & second floor from Class B1 (Office) to D1 (Education, Community and Religious).

Decision: Granted

Decision Date: 15/06/2009

### 4.0 THE PROPOSAL

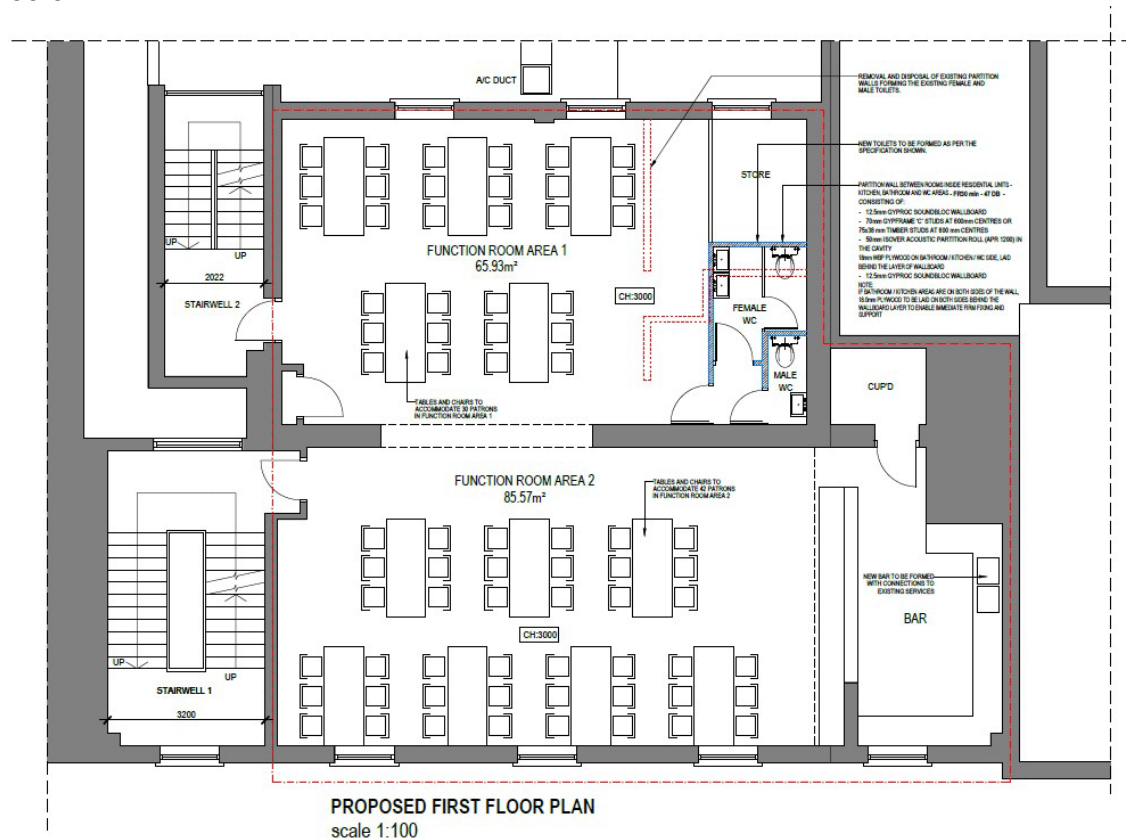
The proposal seeks Change of use of First & Second floors from a Church, Education and Community use (Use Class F1) to Function Rooms (Use Class F2).

### 5.0 DESIGN CONCEPT

5.1 The application site is currently in vacant previously in use as a Church, Education and Community centre (Use Class F1).

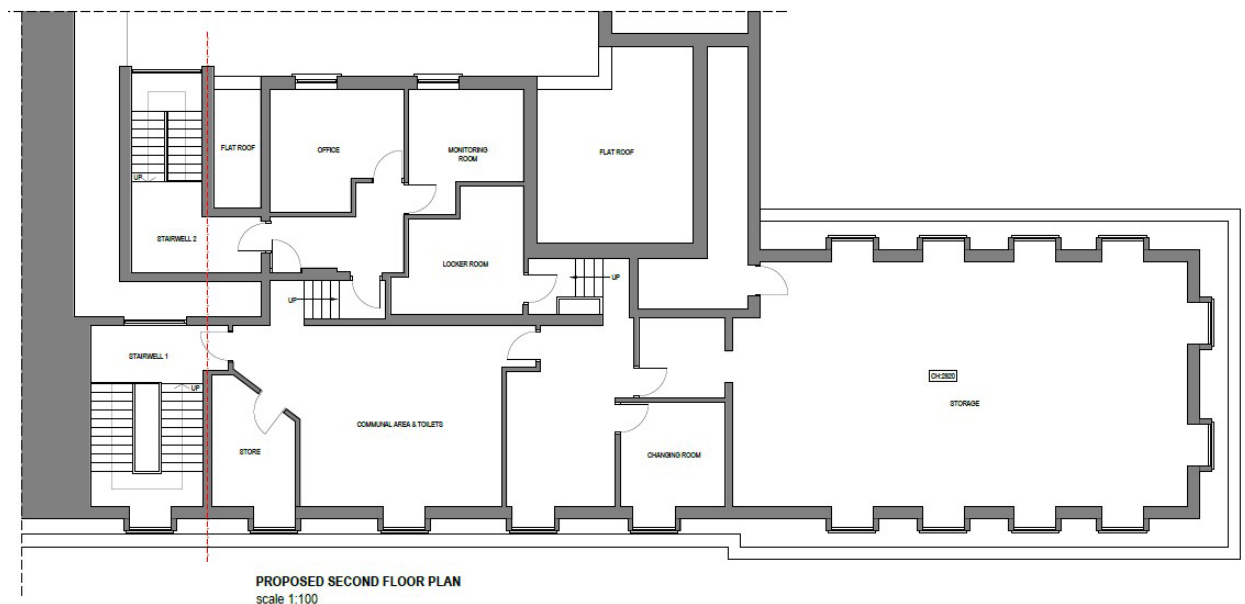
5.2 It is proposed to alter the current use class in place of a function room. The proposed development consists of mainly internal alterations with no changes to the exterior.

5.3 The first-floor layout will consist of function area rooms with floor areas measuring 65.93m<sup>2</sup> and 85.57m<sup>2</sup>.



Proposed first floor plan

- 5.4 The second floor is to be made up of an office / admin room, communal area & toilets, staff rooms and storage rooms.



Proposed second floor plan

- 5.5 The proposal as a function room will provide various uses from corporate meetings to formal dinners, parties, and hosting social and business events.
- 5.6 Servicing of the function rooms is to be provided from the second floor where facilities for patrons will also be provided.
- 5.7 It is estimated that approximately 72 people will be attending at any one time. Attendance will vary according to the type of event and seasonal variations associated with those events.
- 5.8 Proposed opening times again will vary according to seasonal variation in events but generally the proposed opening will be marked down as Sunday-Thursday 11am to 11pm and Friday and Saturday 11am to 1am.
- 5.9 It is considered that the main issue with this proposal would be the potential for noise disturbance to other neighbouring properties in the area. In this town centre location, there are no residential units adjacent to the site and the uses which are opposite consist of retail and office units.
- 5.10 In any case, planning history shows that a discharge of conditions for noise management was submitted and part approved which indicates that noise mitigation was presumably implemented when planning permission was granted for the First & Second floors to be used for Church, Education and Community purposes.
- 5.11 Adjoining two storey operation at the “Two Willow” public house/bar has an established closing of 1.30am on the weekends with 11pm closing during the weekdays. The Postino Lounge Café Bar also has late closing throughout the week at 11.30pm. It is therefore considered that the effect of the proposed operation will be seamless within the established nighttime economies of the adjoining businesses.

- 5.12 Notwithstanding, the applicant is willing to accept appropriate planning conditions to be imposed against potential noise disturbance to ensure that adequate level of protection against noise or vibration or the level of noise emitted can be controlled.
- 5.13 Although there is no parking associated with this building, it is located in the centre of Welwyn Garden City and is served by several car parks and public transport links. It is considered therefore that the proposal would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways.



Photo of the site with the red arrow indicating the point of entry.

## 6.0 POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the policies of the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The Development Plan for the area comprises:

Local Plan 2016-2036 – Policies:

SP6 - Community Services and Facilities

SADM 7 - New Community Services and Facilities and Losses of Community Services and Facilities

### 6.3 Principle of development

6.4 The main issues are:

1. Whether the principal of the change of use would be acceptable;
2. Town Centre Policy; and
3. Other Material Planning Considerations

### 6.5 The principle of a Change of use of from a Church, Education and Community use (Use Class F1) to Function Rooms (Use Class F2).

#### Policy SP 6

#### Community Services and Facilities

The Council will make sure that communities can easily access a range of community services and facilities by:

- Guarding against the loss of existing community facilities;
- Allowing for the expansion or enhancement of existing community facilities to assist continuing viability, particularly in areas where new development will increase demand;

- Promoting accessible, strategic locations, particularly town centres, for community facilities and services that serve a wider area than local neighbourhoods or villages;
- Working with developers, partners, the community and voluntary sector, on the wider use of buildings, dual use and co-location of services in accessible places and also to address gaps in existing provision;
- Supporting alternative community uses for community facilities that are no longer needed for their current purpose;
- Making sure that existing community facilities and services are improved to meet the day-to-day needs of new and existing residents; and
- Requiring new neighbourhoods to provide for needs of the new communities created by that development.

Additionally, the Council will support:

- The upgrading of facilities where there are known to be gaps in provision, or where existing facilities no longer meet modern day requirements;
- The provision of new facilities where there are known gaps in provision;
- Schemes to open up private or restricted-access facilities to the public; and
- Support the provision of new sports facilities serving a wider area than neighbourhoods or villages at existing sports hubs.

It is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the afore mentioned policy;

a) In this town centre location, there are no residential units adjacent to the site and the uses which are opposite consist of retail and office units.

b) The proposal as a function room will provide various uses from corporate meetings to formal dinners, parties, and hosting social and business events.

c) Servicing of the function rooms is to be provided from the second floor where facilities for patrons will also be provided.

d) It is estimated that approximately 72 people will be attending at any one time. Attendance will vary according to the type of event and seasonal variations associated with those events.

e) The proposed hours of opening are in line with adjoining similar businesses. However, the proposed use is less likely to create excessive disturbance in comparison to the adjoining operations which are noisier in nature.

f) No changes are proposed to the external appearance of the building and therefore the proposed development would not detract from the visual amenity of the area.

g) The policy's key thrust is to ensure that, as far as possible, existing community facilities and services are retained and, where possible, enhanced.

h) The proposal is however new and the SADM7 states that *"The Council will support the provision of new community services and facilities in accordance with appropriate standards and in appropriate locations which are convenient to the communities they serve and accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycling and public transport, and buildings that are inclusive, accessible, flexible and sited to maximise shared use of the facility"*. The proposed development meets this criterion.

i) The proposal is therefore not considered to have adverse impact on neighbouring amenity is in compliance with Development Plan and Local Policy.

j) The proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **7.0 ACCESS**

7.1 There are no major alterations to the existing access arrangements of the property. Double door entry from the ground floor fronting Howards gate will be maintained including other site arrangements to be retained.

7.2 The proposed development does necessitate parking provision. The site is located in the centre of Welwyn Garden City and is served by several car parks and public transport links

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

8.1 It is considered that the proposal will preserve the character and appearance of the listed building and the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

8.2 The proposal is in general conformity with the Development Plan overall and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to justify refusal, and planning permission should reasonably be granted.