

Case reference	NA-WDS-010
Application details	Conversion and extension to former church to form 10 dwellings with associated alterations and parking
Site address	Former United Reformed Church, Leven Street, Dumbarton
Applicant	Mr Paul Wilson
Local Authority Area	West Dunbartonshire Council
Reason(s) for notification	Category 2 (objection by Government Agency) (SEPA)
Representations	3
Date notified to Ministers	5 October 2018 but not fully documented until 3 December 2018
Date of recommendation	17 December 2018
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- The proposal is a combined planning application (DC16/175) and listed building consent (DC17/092) to convert and extend a former church into 10 residential flats on Leven Street, Dumbarton. The building has been empty since it was last used as a church approximately 5 years ago.
- The church building dates from 1882 and is a category C-listed sandstone building, designed in a Greek Revival Style. To the south of the church is an extension that was added later and contains offices and a hall.
- The works proposed involve the demolition of the existing extension and the erection of a new extension, with parking to be provided at ground level.

EIA Development:

- The proposed development falls below the threshold for EIA development so did not need to be screened.

Consultations and Representations:

- Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) object to the proposed development on the grounds that it may place buildings and persons at flood risk which is contrary to Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).
- The Council's Road Service (Flooding) has no objection to the site being used for residential purposes.
- Two objections from local residents were submitted to the planning application and one objection had been received in relation to the listed building consent. The objections did not relate to flooding concerns.

Scottish Government Risk Management Team

- Following notification to Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Government Flood Risk Management Team were consulted and consider that the proposed development does not raise any issues of national importance that would warrant Scottish Ministers calling it in.

Assessment:

1. As SEPA object on flood risk grounds, this application has been notified to Scottish Ministers to ascertain whether there are any issues of national importance which warrant them calling in the application for their own determination.
2. SEPA object as they do not believe that safe access/egress is achievable for this site in the event of a 1 in 200 year flood event and that land raising would essentially create an island of development. As a result, SEPA state that this proposal could put more people and property at potential flood risk, relative to the last use as a church – and this clearly constitutes as an increase in land use vulnerability. It is important to note however that SEPA are satisfied that the building itself is not at risk of flooding.
3. The Council highlight in their committee report that the Road's Service as their Flooding Authority have not raised an objection. This is because they consider that the area where the development is located, is unlikely to be significantly affected by a 1 in 200 year flood event. The Council consider that the estimated depth of the flood waters around the building is likely to be in the region of 0.3m. This satisfies the Council that the building can be used for residential purposes and will not increase flood risk in the surrounding area and can be safely accessed during a flood event.
4. With regards to SEPA's objection to the land raising, the Councils committee report highlights that this is no longer part of the proposal and was only proposed in order to provide an escape route in terms of a flood event. Something they are satisfied is no longer required.

5. Overall, the Council are of the view that the proposal is a high quality residential development, that complies with local planning policy and represents an opportunity to bring a vacant listed building that occupies a prominent location within the centre of Dumbarton back into use.
6. The Scottish Government Flood Risk Management Team (FRMT) do highlight they have some slight concerns about the change of use. But, overall they highlight the high level of consideration that has been given to flood risk by the Council in reaching their conclusions that the proposed development would have safe access/egress during a flood event. As a result, the FRMT are of the view that this development does not raise issues of national importance that would warrant intervention by Scottish Ministers.
7. In light of the above information, it is considered that this proposal does not raise any issues of national importance to warrant intervention by Scottish Ministers.

Decision/Recommendation:

- It is recommended that this application be cleared back to West Dunbartonshire Council.