



r b a architects

HERITAGE + PLANNING + DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Westminster Works
13/15 Nile Street
Emsworth
Hampshire
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for

HCG Property Services Limited

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This Design and Access Statement has been drafted in support of the application to demolish the existing building at 15 Nile Street, Emsworth and replace with 2no. contemporary, 3 bedroom dwelling houses.

The Heritage and Planning Statements have been prepared by John Pike MRTPI IHBC

The Design and Access Statement has been prepared by RBA Architects

1. Site and surroundings

Nile Street is an attractive narrow street leading from South Street to the east down to the Mill Pond. The character is varied with some older terraced cottages at the South Street end but a number of post-war developments interspersed of limited design quality.

The site comprises a two-storey building built in 1808 as the Congregational Church, on instructions from Olivia Holloway. It is brick built with rendered walls on two sides, the frontage being coated in a textured finish. The roof comprises a double pitch with gables to the front and rear. It is clad in natural slates. The building covers the entire site and abuts the footway in Nile Street. There is rear and side pedestrian access by way of existing rights of way.

There appears to be little documentary evidence about the history of the church other than a pamphlet found in the Havant Museum titled *The Congregational Church, Nile Street, Emsworth, Hampshire 1808 - 1829*. (An extract illustrating a rudimentary drawing of the church is shown at Figure 1 below.

The floor plans show that the lower part of the building was used as a school on two floors and the main body of the church included a gallery at the Nile Street end. There is a brief description of the church accompanying the illustrations in the pamphlet.

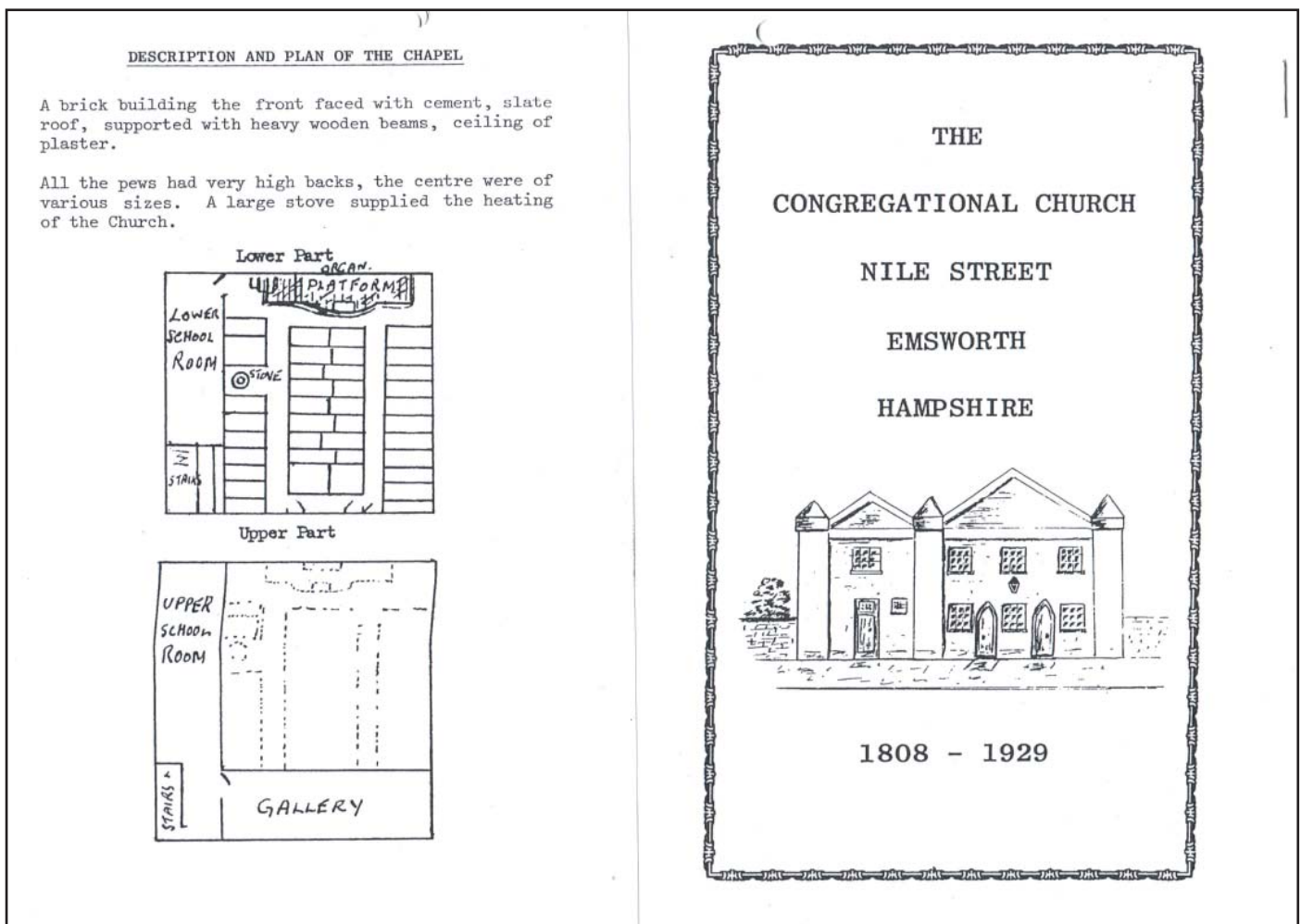


Figure 1: An extract from *The Congregational Church, Nile Street, Emsworth, Hampshire 1808 - 1829*

The ecclesiastical and educational use of the building appears to have ceased in 1929 when it was converted to commercial use. The conversion has resulted in the removal of the gallery and all semblance of the ecclesiastical use. In respect of the school, there is also little evidence of its original use.

Externally, the building has been altered in a significant way. There is little sign of its previous uses. Nearly all the window and door openings are 20th century. The only tangible sign of the previous uses of the building is its basic form.



Figure 2: Frontage to Nile Street showing altered fenestration

2. Heritage assets

The site is located within the Emsworth Conservation Area (designated heritage asset), first made in 1970. The building is not a statutory listed building nor is it a locally listed building of architectural or historic interest, it may therefore be described as a non-designated heritage asset. Havant Borough Council (HBC) has prepared a conservation area appraisal and a management plan. A number of buildings have been highlighted as being of local interest and making a positive contribution to the conservation area. 13 (15) Nile Street is such a building. Nile Street itself was created in the latter part of the nineteenth century, according to the appraisal, and is therefore a relatively “modern” street in the context of the conservation area.

3. Assessment of significance

The building in its present state is considered to have a low level of significance both architecturally and historically. Although it is a relatively old building in Nile Street, dating from 1808, it has undergone much in the way of alterations, both internally and externally, and consequently very little of its original character and appearance survives. The external alterations that have been carried out in the past to facilitate the commercial use are crude and insensitive, thereby not adding anything to its architectural value. Nile Street itself is a pleasant street with the more interesting historic buildings situated at the eastern end on the south side. It is fair to say there is an eclectic mixture of architectural styles in the street but much of the late 20th century development is of poor architectural quality. The significance of this part of the conservation area is more about the variety of architecture and the way the buildings address the narrow street, rather than the quality of the buildings. There is quite a strong vertical emphasis exhibited by most of the buildings and gable features on some of the buildings, including the application property, add articulation to the roofscape.



Figure 3: Inside showing concrete floors and beams and metal windows

4. Impact of proposed development

The loss of this building would not have any significant impact on the character or appearance of the designated asset that is the Emsworth Conservation Area. The important characteristics of this part of the conservation area are the 19th century buildings, mainly at the eastern end of Nile Street. The narrowness of the street and the view down to the Mill Pond are also positive features. Most of the individual buildings in the street are not of high value either architecturally or historically and this is illustrated by the fact that few are either statutory or locally listed buildings of architectural or historic interest. The designation by HBC of the application property as making a positive contribution to the conservation area does not seem to be backed up by any evidence. Perhaps there was only a cursory inspection of the frontage, but even that would suggest that the property's architectural value had been significantly diminished.

5. Conclusion

The loss of this building, that has no statutory or local designations, would not detract from the character or appearance of the designated heritage asset that is the Emsworth Conservation Area. Consequently the proposed development would not be at variance with Policy CS11 in the Core Strategy.

Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework refers to non-designated heritage assets. It suggests that a balanced judgement should be made having *regard to the harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset*.

The property is in a very poor condition. The Inspection Report attached to the Market Report prepared by Vail Williams suggests a cost of £415-519,000 to refurbish the property. Clearly this would make retention and re-use for B1 or residential use unviable. (See Appendix A)

The removal of this building should therefore be allowed, subject to planning permission being granted for a satisfactory replacement development. A condition could be attached to the conservation area consent to secure redevelopment, immediately following demolition, to avoid an unsightly gap in the townscape frontage.



Figure 4: Aerial view of Nile Street showing development site

1. Pre-application enquiry

An enquiry was submitted on 9th June 2012 and a response received on 18th July 2012 from HBC. The proposals the subject of this planning application have been formulated having regard to the comments made in HBC's letter. The specific issues are covered in detail in both this planning and heritage statements, however, it is considered that the application proposals comprise the exemplar scheme required by HBC to overcome the loss of the existing building and commercial use.

2. Planning history

There have been three applications affecting this property as follows:

1. 04/70111/000 - planning application submitted for redevelopment in the form of 2, three-storey houses. Application withdrawn.
2. 05/70111/001 - planning permission refused for redevelopment in the form of 2, three-storey houses.
3. 05/70111/002 – conservation area consent refused to demolish existing building.

The main reasons for refusal were based on demolition of a building that contributes positively to the conservation area, loss of employment use and detrimental impact on amenities of nearby residents.



Figure 5: Front elevation of existing building

3. Planning policy

The Borough's Core Strategy contains relevant policies and these are outlined below with comments specific to the application proposals:

CS2 and DM3 relate to the protection of employment sites. The existing building was not built for business use and is not considered "*fit for its present use*". This is borne out by the fact that the previous user has relocated to purpose built business premises.

The condition of the premises is very poor, with significant structural problems. Major investment would be needed to bring the premises up to a standard required for modern business use. Servicing and parking facilities are non-existent and the narrow road exacerbates this problem. The close proximity of residential properties and the almost wholly residential character of Nile Street persuades against business use. Furthermore, Vail Williams has produced a report that forms part of this planning application. The conclusion of the report is that significant expenditure would be required to bring the premises to a standard for continued employment use. Such expenditure would render such proposition unviable and therefore there would be no merit in a marketing campaign that would merely result in the property remaining vacant for the foreseeable future.

CS9 relates to housing. 826 homes are projected to be required in Emsworth by 2026. The development of this site would offer two purpose built and well-designed dwellings on a site that has previously been developed and within the District Centre where development is encouraged.

CS11 refers to protecting the borough's heritage. The existing building is not statutory or locally listed. It has very limited architectural interest following substantial alterations both internally and externally in the twentieth century. A suitable redevelopment, as proposed, would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

CS14 is about sustainable design and construction. The proposed dwellings would be built to at least Level 3 Code for Sustainable Homes and would incorporate water efficiency methods.

CS15 is about flood risk. The site is within Flood Zone 1 and is less than 1 hectare. It is therefore not at risk of flooding according to Environment Agency criteria.

CS16 requires high quality design. The proposed development would adhere to the aspirations of this policy. Certainly the design would be compatible with the essential characteristics of existing noteworthy development in Nile Street.

CS17 seeks to concentrate development within urban areas. This part of Emsworth is such an area.

DM13 refers to parking and cycle provision. A large integral garage would be proposed for each dwelling, similar to the provision for other dwellings in this street. There would be space for a large car and cycles. The garage would be set back from the highway to ensure adequate manoeuvring distance.

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is considered relevant and a material change in circumstances since the previous refusal. Paragraph 14 gives a clear indication that sustainable development should be encouraged. The proposed development would have social, economic and environmental benefits. There would be no adverse impacts that would outweigh these positive benefits. Paragraph 51 states that a change from commercial (Class B) use to residential use should be approved where there is a need for additional housing in an area provided there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate. Paragraph 138 makes it clear that not all elements of a conservation area necessarily contribute to its significance. Although the published conservation area appraisal suggests this building does make a positive contribution there is no justification to support this claim.

4. Proposal

The proposal is to demolish the existing building and erect 2no. two and a half storey dwellings. The previous refusal to erect two dwellings is acknowledged, however, this proposal is considered quite different in a number of ways that are outlined below:-

1. The proposed dwellings would be less bulky and slightly further away from the northern boundary compared to the refused scheme, as much as 5.7 metres maximum and 4.4 metres minimum.
2. Windows would be primarily on the southern and eastern elevations. Any windows in the north elevation would be treated to minimise overlooking, by means of angled oriels, fixed lights and obscure glazing.
3. The design would be more innovative and sympathetic to the conservation area than the refused scheme.

5. Comments on previous reasons for refusal reference 05/70111/001

1. The existing building is only a vestige and contains very little of its original character or appearance. It is not considered that it makes a significant contribution to the conservation area and is neither a statutory nor locally listed building. For more detailed assessment refer to the heritage statement.
2. The poor quality and condition of the existing accommodation, residential character of Nile Street and availability of purpose built commercial units elsewhere in the borough suggest that continuing commercial use would be both unlikely and unwarranted. For more detailed assessment refer to the Market Report prepared by Vail Williams.
3. Windows in the north elevation would be located to orientate views away from existing dwellings and where appropriate be partly glazed with obscure glass and in part non-opening.
4. It is not considered that any loss of light to nearby properties would occur compared to the existing situation. The proposed dwellings would not be significantly higher than the existing building but would be much further away from existing dwellings in School Lane and less bulky.
5. Less building bulk and a significantly smaller footprint would be proposed for the two dwellings compared to the existing building (109 square metres compared to 190 square metres gross floor areas). The volume of the proposed dwellings would be approximately 39% less than the existing building.
6. Most dwellings in Nile Street are three storeys. The proposed dwellings would incorporate the top floor within the roofscape and therefore would be lower than many of the existing dwellings in Nile Street.
7. This is a district centre location close to public transport facilities and all amenities. It is an accessible location where lower levels of parking are considered acceptable. Most recently built dwellings in Nile Street have only one garage space. There is a public car park opposite where visitors may park legally and safely.

6. Conclusion

The proposed development would provide two dwellings for which there is an identified need.

The siting, height, bulk and design would be compatible with the development in the area and as such would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Only about 57% of the site would be built upon, compared to 100% site coverage of the existing building, and a reasonable distance would be maintained between the existing dwellings in School Lane and the proposed dwellings to protect residential amenity.

The existing building has very limited architectural interest. It is not a designated heritage asset. As such its demolition should be judged alongside proposals for suitable redevelopment in accordance with advice in the NPPF.

Commercial use would be incompatible with what is an almost wholly residential street. Adequate servicing and parking are non-existent. The existing building is in such a poor state of repair that new occupiers would need to make considerable investment to bring it up to a reasonable standard. This is unlikely given the availability of modern purpose built commercial floorspace elsewhere in the borough.

It is respectfully suggested that conservation area consent should be granted to remove a building that has very little heritage value and no viable future due to its very poor condition. The proposals the subject of the planning application would result in the provision of good quality housing, for which there is an identified need, in a sustainable location and to high design standards that would benefit the Emsworth Conservation Area.

1. Design introduction

The design proposals seek to replace an existing redundant building in Nile Street, Emsworth with two new dwellings. The approach adopted in developing the design has been to seek a solution that has regard to the role the existing building plays both within the immediate vicinity of Nile Street as well as the wider context of town setting of Emsworth.

The scale and mass of the existing building together with the visual interest created by existing roof scape and asymmetric gable walls fronting onto Nile Street, are all characteristics that have informed the development of the design proposals.

2. Amount

The site is currently fully covered by a tall two storey structure with the external walls of the building forming the site boundary on all four elevations.

The proposals involve the demolition of the existing building and the construction of two attached houses to replace the demolished building. This amount of development reduces site coverage allowing amenity space to be created to the rear of the dwellings as

well as creating a greater distance between properties to the north and west. This results in the formation of an improved sense of space between the proposed development and the houses in vicinity of site.

3. Layout

The new houses are designed with a frontage onto Nile Street with the accommodation arranged over two and half storeys.

Front doors and access to parking spaces have been designed to create interest at street level with the doors and windows having priority in the street frontage over the garages which are recessed to be less prominent when viewed approaching along Nile Street.

The main living spaces are located on the first floor of the dwellings with bedrooms located within the roof spaces at second floor level. This arrangement of rooms enables windows to be directed toward the distant views of Emsworth and the sea but away from the more sensitive north elevation where windows are positioned either with oblique views or with obscured glazing in order to limit any perception of overlooking or loss of privacy to properties located on the north of the site.



Figure 6: Birds eye view of proposed development



Figure 7: Proposed development viewed from the north

4. Scale

The scale and mass of the proposed scheme draws upon the fundamental form of the existing structure in respect of height and the articulation of the roof scape, which is typified by pitched roofs with dominant and subservient profiles.

The proposed design reflects the manner in which the existing gables create visual interest when viewed obliquely from within the vicinity of the site. It is, however, considered important to establish a unique

identity with satisfactory proportions to the form of the proposed dwellings internally and externally. This has informed a proposal that emphasises the vertical elements of the building and reflects the nature of the local vernacular.

There is an increase in the height of the ridges, which is typified by slender projecting elements floating over clerestory glazing on the principal elevations. This increase in height is balanced by the reduction in the overall building volume by reducing the building depth at the front and rear.



Figure 8: Proposed development viewed form Nile Street

5. Landscaping

Although the site context provides limited opportunity for the introduction of landscape features a number of meaningful design features are proposed. These include:

- Rear courtyard gardens that define a private, practical external space for the properties
- A small specimen tree is positioned in the rear garden areas of each house to provide visual improvements to the north of the proposed properties as well as help mitigate any perceived loss of privacy.
- The private transition space in front of the entrance doors of the properties is enclosed by a dwarf wall and metal railing
- Hard surfaces around the dwellings are finished with permeable paving blocks which are similar to those found elsewhere in Emsworth

6. Appearance

The external form of the building has been designed to reflect the vertical 'grain' characteristic of properties in Nile Street. The first floor 'bay' feature is used to define each house and to be distinctive within the street, setting it apart and respecting the existing dwellings forming the street scape.

The roof has been designed to reduce the mass of the building as well as reinforce the vertical proportion in conjunction with the recessed element of the facade.

The materials chosen for the external finishes are drawn from those found in Emsworth and are selected for their known properties of durability for this exposed coastal location.



Figure 9: Proposed development viewed from public car park

7. Context

The development of the design proposals has been informed by the Heritage Statement prepared by John Pike where the context of the site, existing building as well as the wider context of Emsworth has been analysed in detail and is included with this Design and Access Statement.

Nile Street, when viewed looking east from the application site, is largely three storey in character with some properties positioned to the back edge of the footpath and others set back. When looking west along Nile Street however the properties reduce in height to two storey again with some properties close to the boundary and others set back.

The application site lies at a transition between these two scales of development which informs our decision to proceed with a development of two and a half storeys to emphasise this transition.

8. Access

Emsworth is well served by public transport. There are frequent bus services linking Emsworth to Havant and the main towns and cities on the south coast. There is also a railway station in Emsworth which link to the mainline rail network at Havant or Chichester where trains connect to London.

Emsworth also has large public car parks which are located close to the application site providing ample visitor parking for cars.

The houses are positioned with vehicle access off Nile Street with secure on site parking for one vehicle as well as secure storage for at least two bicycles.

Access from the rear amenity space is proposed onto Frobisher Gardens which will give an alternative refuse collection point to collection from Nile Street.



Figure 10: Nile Street looking east



Figure 11: Nile Street looking west

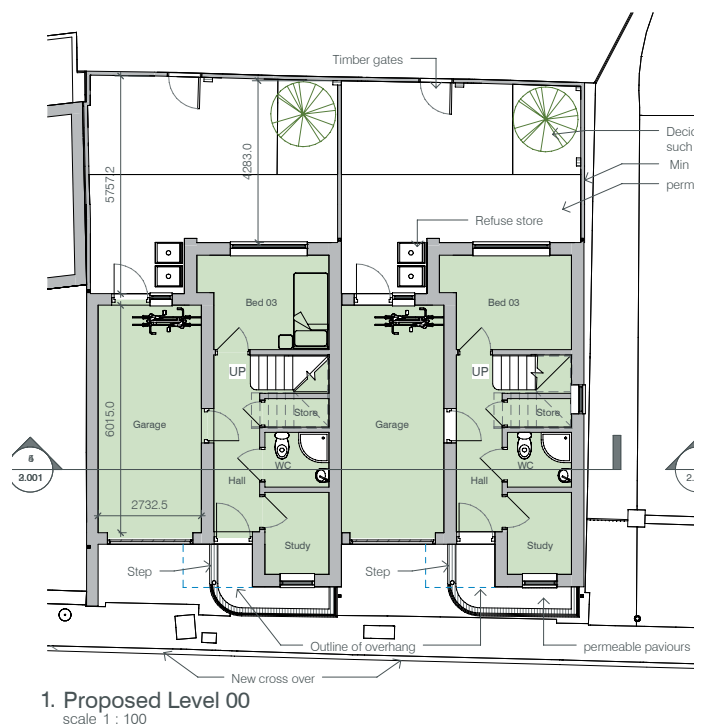


Figure 12: Ground floor plan