Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Application Code: R/56/498
Committee Date: 12/02/2019
Location: Hawes Methodist Church, Main Street, Hawes

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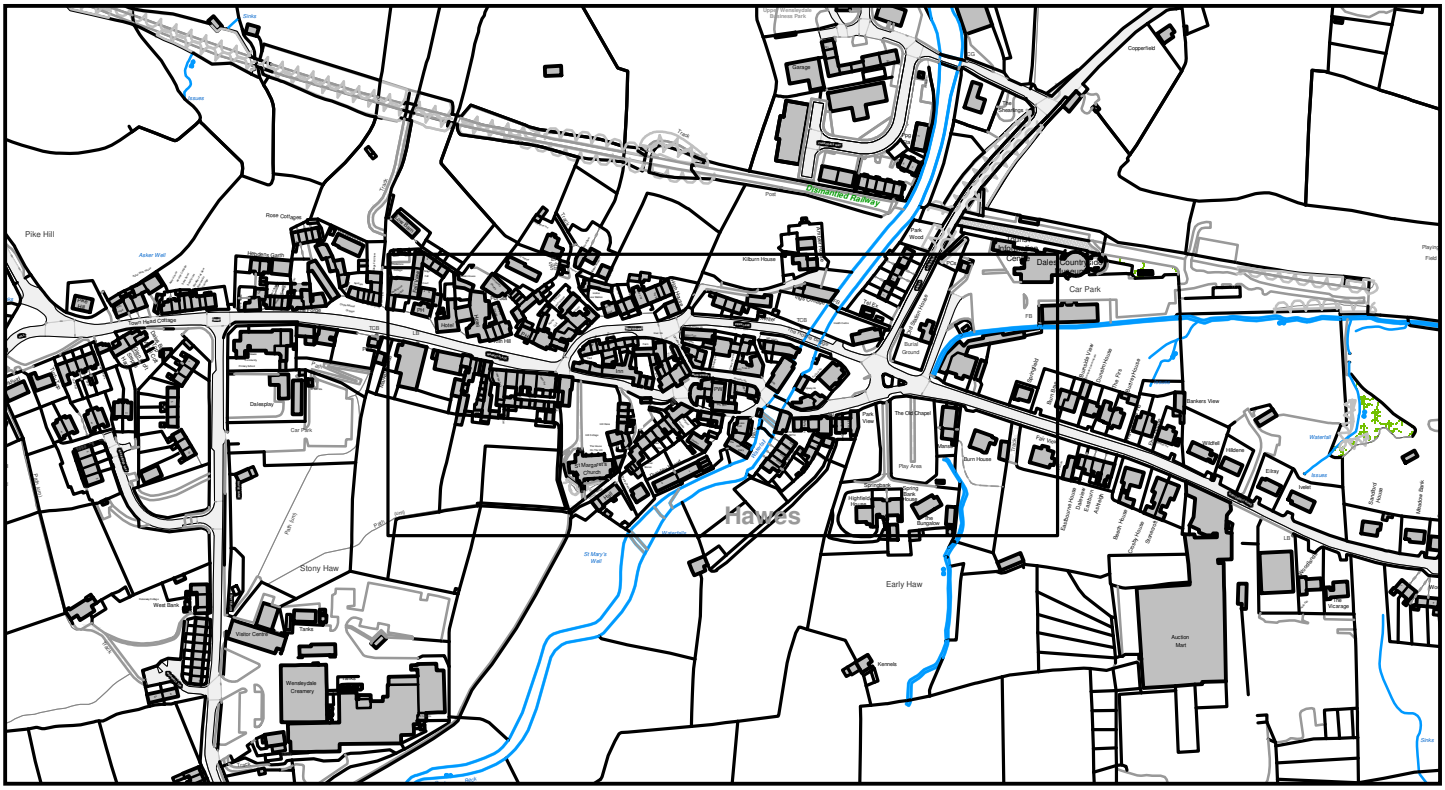

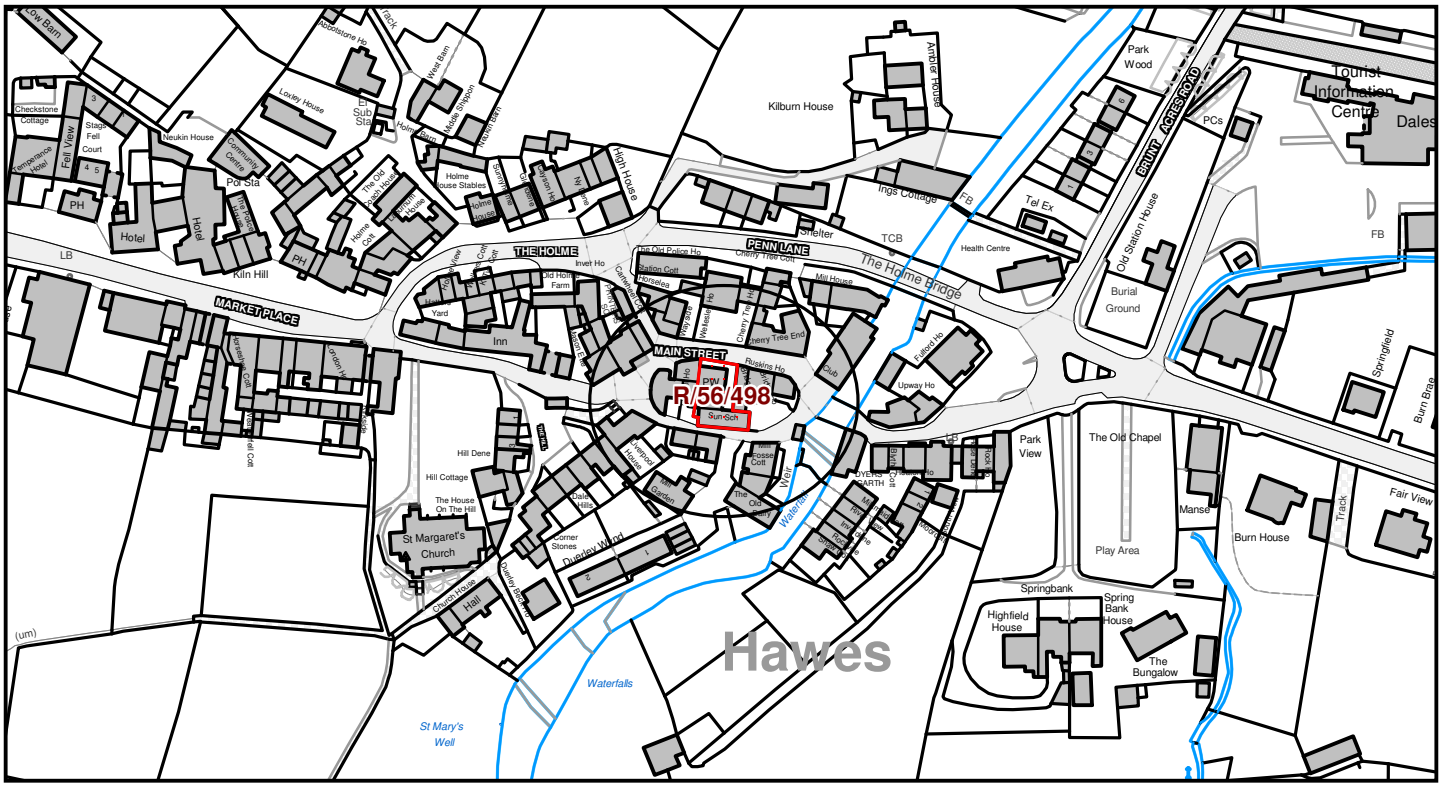

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Schedule No:12

Application No:	R/56/498
District:	Richmondshire
Parish:	Hawes
Applicant's Name:	Matthew and Sally Faulkes; Ian Morton and Heritage Apartments Ltd
Grid Ref:	SD87358980
Received by YDNP:	22/10/2018 **Officer:** Andrew Bishop

PROPOSAL: **full planning permission for change of use and conversion of church and Sunday School (use Class D1) to three apartments and two cottages for holiday let accommodation (Use Class C3)**

LOCATION: **Hawes Methodist Church, Main Street, Hawes**

CONSULTEES

Hawes & High Abbotside PC

Hawes & High Abbotside Parish Council held a special meeting on Monday November 5th to determine its response to the consultation from YDNPA for this planning application. The applicants had already given by invitation a 15 minute presentation to the October meeting of the Parish Council but this was prior to the validation of the application later in the month.

The applicants were given a further 3 minutes to speak at the special meeting and took part in a subsequent Question and Answer discussion. 7 other public speakers made contributions at the special meeting, 4 local residents and a local businessman who were objecting, with 2 business proprietors in support, although it was noted that both their businesses are currently up for sale.

Unusually the copious documentation supporting the Planning Application had been sent well in advance in hard copy to all the individual Parish Councillors, so it is fair to say that the Parish Council was fully up to speed with the proposals and the plans put forward by the applicants.

After an animated yet well-informed debate it resolved, by 4 votes to 2 votes, to OBJECT to the planning application. The Parish Council's reasons are as follows:

It recognises the need to find a new use for the

redundant building, but questions whether this is the best and only new use available. The proposals represent an unacceptably significant over-development of a site with no outside curtilage of its own. The cycle store is but a shared alleyway between two buildings, one a domestic dwelling whose occupants rely upon it being left clear for their access. Wheelie bins for the 5 proposed holiday apartments and cottages will be between the railings and the front of the building facing the A 684. It was considered by the Parish Council that this would spoil the front view of the former chapel and the street scene in this historic part of Hawes.

There is no parking available at the former Chapel and the consequence is that the public car parking available in the vicinity of the building, relied upon by local residents as many houses in the Town Foot area do not have parking of their own, will be displaced by those who have come to stay in the proposed holiday apartments and cottages. The Parish Council was unconvinced that the plans to purchase annual passes for 5 cars in the Dales Countryside Museum (DCM) some 250 metres away would deal with the issue of the displacement of parking nearer to the building, and several Councillors who are involved in operating holiday cottages noted the importance guests placed on how close their vehicles could be parked to where they are staying.

The developers suggest that their Management Plan will ensure that guests will be instructed to park in the DCM car park and that on arrival day there will be a member of staff present to put this instruction in place. However Councillors pointed out that guests will be coming and going throughout their stay and there will be many occasions when guests arriving on a wet and windy Upper Dales day will succumb to the temptation of taking up public parking spaces nearer to the Chapel rather than struggling against the wild weather in walking up from the DCM car park.

The rear entrance to the building faces Chapel Street, previously known as Gruel Street and never described locally as the Church Street in the developers plans. This is a narrow 2 way street serving 14 dwellings, and a bypass to the A 684 where it is very narrow and occasionally is blocked by articulated lorries struggling to negotiate the bend by the Conservative Club. Whilst the developers claim it is used for loading and unloading this is an overstatement, as its main purpose is to provide access to the dwellings its serves and it

needs to be left clear. The Parish Council considered the conversion of the former Chapel to 5 holiday apartments and cottages would lead to this important access road being blocked very often by their guests parking to unload and load their vehicles.

Other concerns raised amongst Councillors was whether the advertising procedure was adhered to by the Methodist Circuit in initially disposing of the former Chapel, as it appears its advertising for the re-use by the community of the building fell well short of the mark, and the Chairman reminded the Parish Council of its and his objection to a similar situation some years ago where the Church of England had not followed the rules and promoted the conversion of the National School into a 5 bedroom holiday cottage. The objections raised resulted in it being re-advertised and this attracted an enterprising young couple with a young family to purchase the property and convert it into their own house and a very attractive new public venue being used for a variety of community events and called the NASH.

Parish Councillors also raised the issue of whether the former Chapel could have been converted into affordable housing for local occupancy, but this was roundly rejected by the developers at the meeting as being financially unviable. However it was pointed out that the Bainbridge Methodist Chapel is likely to be converted into 2 affordable dwellings and the Government through its Homes England Agency is actively promoting community-led developments of affordable housing with very substantial grants. This promotion has radically improved the financing of these type of developments in the 2 years since Broadacres Housing Association assessed the prospects converting the Hawes Methodist Chapel into local occupancy housing, and rejected it as being unviable.

Hawes & High Abbotside Parish Council would accept the planning downsides as outlined above if all or some of the proposed apartments and cottages were made available and restricted for local occupancy, as it would be a price worth paying to address the urgent need for affordable housing in the Parish.

Alternatively it would be comfortable with a mixed use like the NASH, where part of the former Chapel / Sunday School could be converted into residential accommodation for local occupancy, and the remainder put to a retail / recreational / community use.

	The Parish Council Chairman, Councillor John Blackie explained to the meeting that as a member of the YDNPA Planning Committee he was entitled to express a preliminary view of the planning application at the meeting, which was in line with what the Parish Council resolved, but he would reserve his final judgement until the Planning Committee meets, and then having considered all the information available at that time would make up his mind then. The Parish Council asks that this consultation response is reproduced in full within the bound and electronic version of the Planning Committee papers at which the application will be presented and decided.
Hawes and High Abbotside Ward	No comments received.
NYCC - Area 1 Richmond Highway Depot	No objections.
North Yorkshire Building Control	No comments received.
Senior Listed Building Officer	No objections.
Fire & Rescue Service	No objections.
Wildlife Conservation Officer	This application is supported by a bat survey report which indicates that the building is not currently used by bats. There are no objections subject to the provision of bat and swift boxes to provide some biodiversity enhancement in accordance with policy W2. An informative notes re: bats and nesting birds is recommended in the event that these protected species are encountered during the development.
Area Ranger (Lower Wensleydale)	Indirectly affects PROW.
Environment Agency	No objections.
CEHO Richmondshire DC	No objections.

PUBLIC RESPONSES

Objections have been received from 8 sources. In addition a letter and 52 name petition of support has been received and one other letter enquiring if the units are for sale. The objections are summarised as follows:
-neighbours not consulted
-lack of on-site parking
-guest cars blocking Chapel Street
-add to congestion in town
-lack of bin storage
-unsafe location of new doorway
-lack of fuel storage

-lack of cycle parking
-rail travel not considered
-reduce scale of the development
-make contribution to public or electric car infrastructure
-noise, dust and disturbance during conversion
-too many holiday lets in area
-loss of privacy
-stove flue not high enough
-additional load on main sewer
-incorrect property address

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

C9(15) - Existing community facilities

L1(15) - Heritage assets

L2(15) - Conversion of traditional building - acceptable uses

L3(15) - Conversion of traditional buildings - building treatment

W1(15) - Wildlife sites, species and networks

W2(15) - Biodiversity enhancement

CC2(15) - Flood risk

SP2(15) - National Park Purposes

SP4(15) - Development Quality

OFFICER OBSERVATIONS

REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION
This application is reported to Committee because the Parish Council recommendation is contrary to the decision which the Head of Development Management proposes to take.

APPLICATION SITE
The application site consists of a vacant former Methodist Church and its associated school rooms located within the historic core of Hawes. The church was constructed in 1913 and the Sunday school rooms date from 1902. The buildings are sited in the densely developed historic core of Hawes which has a mixture of surrounding commercial and residential properties.

The church is of stone construction and presents a gable to its Main Street (A684) frontage with a central entrance doorway with steps rising from street level. The front elevation has metal railings set above low stone walls with gateways and stone piers separating it from the carriageway. There being virtually no pavement on the church's side of the road. There are a series of large arched leaded windows on the front elevation at two levels and centrally on its eastern side. The other side windows are flat headed mullions with 2 or 3 divisions. There are narrow external passages to either side between the church and the adjoining buildings. A neighbour has a right of access along the passage to the east which leads to a doorway into their dwelling, Chapel House.

To the rear of the church is a range of two storey former Sunday school rooms. These face onto Chapel Street with a frontage of 2 over 2 pane vertical sliding sash windows and an entrance door onto the street. There is a small walled curtilage on one gable end of the former school rooms. Internally the pulpit, pews, organ, memorials and many other

features relating to its former ecclesiastical use have been removed by the former church users.

PROPOSAL
The proposal is for the conversion of the church into three holiday accommodation units and the former Sunday School into a further two units for the same purpose.

No extensions or demolitions are proposed and the existing railings and gates at the front are proposed to be retained. No off-street parking would be provided.

Existing door and window openings would be retained with two exceptions: a new doorway formed onto Chapel Street and a fire exit onto the small rear curtilage at the end of the school rooms. Some obscure glazing would be replaced with clear panes to the front and rear elevations. The side elevation windows would be retained with leaded obscure glazing. Four conservation rooflights would be introduced to each side of the main roof.

Internally the conversion of the church itself would involve a vertical division into three one bedroom units internally accessed from the existing front door. Due to the arrangement with larger windows at upper gallery floor level the bedrooms would be on the ground floor.

An infill at gallery level would form a complete first floor for lounges and kitchens served by three individual staircases. The existing vaulted ceiling in the Church would be retained as part of these works. The former school rooms would be divided into two 2 bedroomed units each with a door onto Chapel Lane.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY
No relevant planning history.

KEY ISSUES:
-principle of the development
-impact on character and appearance of existing building
-impact on neighbours
-impact on highway safety
-impact on a public right of way
-flood risk

PRINCIPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT
The Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2015 - 2030) aims to deliver sustainable development in the National Park context. It aims to achieve the conservation and enhancement of traditional buildings (heritage assets) by allowing them to be adapted or converted to new uses, providing the building and its landscape has the capacity to absorb them.

Policy L1 considers development affecting heritage assets. Traditional buildings may be designated as Listed Buildings or are considered to be ‘heritage assets’ despite not being designated. Proposals affecting non designated heritage assets that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to designated heritage assets will be treated as though they were designated for the purposes of the policy.

Policy L2 is a strategic spatial planning policy (i.e. it governs where development ‘should go’). It allows traditional buildings to be changed to residential and employment uses in certain locations (in existing settlements, building groups, or suitable roadside locations). Intensive uses will not be appropriate in buildings that are isolated in the landscape and a

change of use only allowed in isolated buildings where there would be no material alteration to the exterior of the building or its surroundings.

Policy L3 considers the details of the conversion works. Proposals will not be allowed where they undermine the architectural and historic character of the traditional building and its landscape setting. The building must have the physical capacity to accommodate the new use without significant extension or alteration or requiring new ancillary buildings.

A proposal to convert a traditional building to a new use must satisfy the requirements of all three policies.

The Local Plan also seeks to protect vital community facilities and Policy C9 does not permit the loss of community facilities unless it can be demonstrated that the current use is no longer needed or that the building could not fulfil an alternative community use. Applications should be supported by financial, business, options appraisals, marketing and community engagement evidence.

The application site is a former church and therefore a community building for the purposes of policy C9. It is supported by evidence relating to all of the policy requirements. The North Yorkshire Dales Methodist Circuit has carried out significant community engagement and marketing before selling to the current owners.

Conversations over the future of the Church were held with other Christian groups from May 2013. The only community group using the school rooms has been the WI. The last service was held in the Church in April 2014. The Methodist Circuit wrote on the 24th May 2014 to Hawes Parish Council informing them of the closure of the Church and asking them if they could see a community use for the building. The Methodist Circuit report that they did not receive a reply. Enquiries were made to a housing provider and the YDNPA as to whether the buildings would be suitable for affordable or elderly housing. The lack of parking was seen as making the buildings unsuitable for permanent residential occupation.

The Methodist Circuit advertised the building for sale, in accordance with the Authority's advertising procedure, in the Upper Dales Newsletter between September 2015 and March 2016. Each local community group in Wensleydale was also contacted directly by letter in February 2017. The church buildings were finally advertised on the open market via a local estate agent at a lower than valuation price. No enquiries were received. The building has therefore been advertised for at least 3 years for a community use and there has been no interest expressed by a community group or user.

The Methodist community now worships at Gayle and West Burton or attend Hawes Parish Church and the continued use of the building as a place of worship would also appear unlikely. The building may lend itself well to another community use however Hawes has community buildings at St Margaret's Parish Church and The Market Traders Hall, and community use is made of the Dales Countryside Museum, the National School House and Gayle Institute.

The Parish Council has not suggested any community group that may make use of the building and no community groups have come forward expressing an interest in taking on the building. The maintenance costs of such a large building are likely to be beyond the means of many local community organisations.

It is considered that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the proposal would

comply with policy C9 of the Draft Local Plan (2015-2030) and would not be harmful to the community well-being of Hawes.

The applicants have also looked into the viability of a conversion to permanent residential and retail uses. Their assessment is that the costs of renovating the existing structure and of redevelopment mean that the most viable use is a division into holiday let accommodation.

Policy L2 allows the conversion of traditional buildings within settlements to short term holiday accommodation. The church and school rooms are not listed buildings but their location, age and construction mean that they have historical and cultural significance and are considered to be undesignated heritage assets.

IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF EXISTING BUILDING
The proposed conversion would not involve any extensions or demolition and would retain the character and appearance of the church buildings. Distinctive features like the arched openings on the front with patterned lead framed coloured glazing, the mullioned side openings, and the railings to the front would be retained.

Internally the floor space and ceiling levels within the two-storey school rooms lend themselves to a vertical subdivision into two units. The body of the church requires more new internal walling to create three units but would be on two floor levels. Essential to this is the substantial infilling of the void at balcony level. The upper floor would be open to the full height of the vaulted ceiling. Where new staircases would be inserted there would also be a sense of the full internal height of the former church from ground floor level to vaulted ceiling.

The proposal includes the insertion of 4 rooflights on the eastern and 3 on the western side of the roof. They would be of the conservation design and located low down close to the eaves. They would not have a significant harmful impact on the character of the church.

AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURS
Although the site is in the centre of town it is surrounded by residential properties. The previous use of the buildings will in the past have introduced significant numbers of people accessing the buildings for services, weddings etc. The proposed use is unlikely to result in a significant increase in noise or disturbing activity.

Wellesley House, on the opposite side of Main Street, has windows approximately 19.5m from the main frontage of the church however the obscure glazing in the ground floor windows of the church would be retained. The upper windows are at such a height they primarily give a view of the sky.

Houses crowd the church to either side with facing windows however it is not proposed to change the glazing in the side windows. A neighbour has a right to use a side passage and the applicants have removed the proposal that this passage be used for bicycle parking which will be stored within the building instead. Wheelie bins will be stored in the small area of walled curtilage at the rear of the property.

A house faces the School room building at close distance across Chapel Street. The windows to Unit 4 which would occupy the proposed western half will therefore need to be retained as obscure glazed. The eastern Unit 5 would look onto the roadway of Duerley Wynd with very oblique views of residential properties and would not require obscured

glazing.

IMPACT ON HIGHWAY SAFETY
The National Planning Policy Framework (2018) provides the following guidance (para.109):

"Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."

The buildings do not have any off-road parking of their own and visitors arriving by car would have to rely on public carparks or on-street parking. There is no on-street parking on the narrow section of the A684 to the front of the building which is subject to a 'no waiting at anytime' restriction and there are 'no-parking' restrictions on the equally narrow Chapel Street to the rear. Chapel Street could therefore be used for loading and unloading but parked cars would block or restrict movements by other traffic.

The application is supported by a Transport Statement which notes that Hawes provides a range of services and facilities and is served by public transport. It is proposed that guests staying at the Chapel use the long stay car parking at the Dales and Countryside Museum which is 300m away. This car park has 220 spaces and is open 24 hours a day, every day. The developer would purchase five annual parking permits and guests would be provided with information about access and parking to avoid conflicts with other road users. It is noted that there are hotels/guest houses and holiday cottages in the area that also have very limited access and parking in this part of Hawes.

As a church, the building had capacity for hundreds of people to attend services or community events at the same time. Although regular attendance at the church declined over the years it still had the potential to attract a large number of car borne visitors. The report concludes that the proposed holiday let use would generate fewer traffic movements than if the building continued in community use.

The Highway Authority has no objections but requires a Construction Management Plan to be provided to include parking for operatives, the loading, unloading and storage of plant and materials. They also suggest that a copy of the information to be provided to guests be agreed with the Authority.

Some objectors have suggested the demolition of the school building to provide car parking for guests in a conversion of the church. The school building is also a non designated heritage asset and part of the cultural heritage of the town. There would need to be compelling reasons to justify its demolition and is not proposed by the applicant.

IMPACT ON A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
Chapel Street at the rear of the Sunday school frontage is also a public footpath. The proposals would not make any physical change to this route but it needs to remain free of any obstruction by materials, scaffold, plant, vehicles or barriers associated with the development.

FLOOD RISK
The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment due to being partly within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the proximity of Gayle Beck. The Environment Agency has no objections to the proposed development but requests a condition to ensure that the identified flood proof and resilience measures are implemented.

ECOLOGY
The application has been supported by a Bat Survey Report following site inspection and emergence surveys. No bats were seen emerging from the building and none were found from the inspection of its structure. It concludes that bats are unlikely to roost in the buildings and that the proposals are unlikely to have an adverse impact on them. Nevertheless mitigation is proposed to minimise any impact on those that may use the building on a casual basis. It is recommended that the mitigation measures to be implemented during the building works be conditioned. It is also recommended that bat and swift boxes be provided on the building to support biodiversity in accordance with Local Plan Policy W2.

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS
Hawes and High Abbotside Parish Council has objected to the application for a number of reasons, principally that the proposal is 'overdevelopment' as the site has no curtilage or parking and would generate problems for residents and other road users. However the Parish Council would accept these problems if the proposal was for local occupancy dwellings rather than holiday lets.

The applicants consider that permanently occupied dwellings would not be viable and the proposal before members is for holiday letting. Policy L2 allows for either holiday letting or local occupancy providing the building can be put to the use proposed without significant alteration etc.

ANALYSIS AND MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS
The willingness of the Parish Council to set aside the problematic elements of this proposal illustrates the dilemma at the heart of this application. The buildings are part of the town's heritage and as such are worthy of retention and a viable economic use that would ensure their future. However it is difficult to envisage a new use that will not have the same parking and access problems raised by this proposal.

The applicants have demonstrated that the buildings are no longer needed for use by the community and that they can be sensitively converted to 5 dwellings for short term holiday letting. The proposal would not be detrimental to the character or appearance of the surrounding area or harmful to residential amenity. As the site does not benefit from off street parking, any cars loading or unloading are likely to cause some disruption to traffic or residents. The test applied by National Planning Policy Framework is that permission should only be refused on highway grounds if the impact on highway safety or the road network is likely to be 'severe', which does not appear to be the case with this proposal. Parking for guests can be provided by permits for the public car park at the Dales and Countryside Museum.

It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2015-2030) policies SP2, SP4, C9, L1, L2, L3, CC2, W1 and W2 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

That permission be granted subject to the completion of a S106 agreement restricting occupancy to short term holiday letting and conditions based on the following:
-time limit
-approved plans and drawings
-Construction Mangement Plan

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-submission and approval of Guest Access and Parking Plan
-implementation of flood proofing measures
-window schedule
-obscure glazing to be retained
-front railings to be retained