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Chipping Congregational Church, Garstang Road, Chipping, Preston PR3 2QH.

Heritage appraisal and heritage impact assessment for proposed internal alteration.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been prepared to determine the potential for harm to heritage interest derived from proposals to install a first-floor structure within a portion of the main hall and to install secondary glazing within the internal window openings of the Chipping Congregational Church building. The building is Grade II listed and is located within the Chipping Conservation Area.

1.2 Regarding the potential for harm to heritage interest, this report will consider the following matters;

- A. The potential for harm to the heritage significance of the building via the introduction of modern additions and alterations to its fabric.
- B. The potential for harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area by virtue of changes to the visual appearance of the building.

1.3 Inspections were undertaken in February 2026 to gain an understanding of the surrounding area and the likely impacts of the proposals upon them. In accordance with the NPPF, this document and the research that informs it is proportionate to the asset's importance. This document aims to provide the Local Planning Authority with the information necessary to make an informed decision regarding the proposals. Sustainable development is a principal tenet of the National Planning Policy Framework, promoting the conservation of historic assets whilst enabling change in a considered manner.

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2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The church was designated GVII IN 1983. LEN: 114217. The Historic England listing description² is as follows; *Chapel, 1838. Squared watershot sandstone with sandstone plinth, quoins and square gutter. Each wall is of 2 bays, having windows with glazing bars, plain stone surrounds with semi-circular heads, keystones and radiating glazing bars. The south-west wall has a door with plain stone surround beneath each window. Between the windows is a plaque: 'PROVIDENCE CHAPEL ERECTED BY SUBSCRIPTION MDCCCXXXVIII'. The north-west (gable) wall has a one-storey porch at its left-hand side, now extended. Its right-hand return wall has a door with plain stone surround and a small window with plain stone surround, semi-circular head and keystone to its left.*

2.2 Pevsner, in his Buildings of England series, Lancashire North, describes the building as follows: *Congregational Chapel...erected by subscription in 1838, when it was called Providence Chapel. Two round-headed windows above two flat-headed doors in the long side*³.

2.3 Chipping is a nucleated rural market village with a history dating to at least the Norman period⁴. The medieval plan form of the village remains, as do a number of buildings from the late 17th century. During this period, Chipping was a small settlement, as evident in Saxton's map of 1577 and Speed's map of 1610. In the following years, Chipping benefited from pre-industrial era growth with a number of mills established along its brook. The village continued to grow into the C19th, during which the Congregational Church was founded.

2.4 The conservation area appraisal⁵ makes no substantive mention of the Congregational Chapel, aside from confirming it as a listed building within the boundaries of the designated area. It is not included in the 'Summary of Special Interest' on pages 3-4, or within the "Spatial Analysis: Key Views and Vistas" on pages 8-9.

2.5 Regressive mapping indicates numerous changes to the building since it first appeared on the 1844 OS map (Lancashire sheet no 64) as an 'L' shaped building, which is much different from what exists currently, with a much larger narrow extension projecting north. On the OS map surveyed in 1891 (Lancashire sheet XLVI.9), a building is shown with a small lean-to extension (assumed), projecting north as at present. By the early C20th, the lean-to had been extended north again, as it exists currently. The periodic enlargement of the building since its founding in the early C19th is indicative of the ongoing growth of the congregation, which continues to this day with the building serving a growing number of local people.

² Historic England [online] see here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1147217?section=official-list-entry>

³ Hartwell & Pevsner (2009) Buildings of England. Lancashire North. pp.211.

⁴ Smith, T. (1894). *History of the Parish of Chipping in the County of Lancaster with some Account of the Forests of Bleasdale and Bowland*.

⁵ Chipping Conservation Area Appraisal. See here: <https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/file/46/chipping-conservation-area-appraisal>

3.0 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 This section of the report responds to the requirements as set out in paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Under the heading “Proposals Affecting Heritage Assets” is stated the following:

3.2 *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation”.*

3.3 Annexe 2: Glossary of the NPPF, defines significance as follows; *The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.*

3.4 Annexe 2: Glossary of the NPPF defines setting as follows; *The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. In addition, aside from the NPPF definition of setting, Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance further define setting as: “Definition of the setting of a significant place will normally be guided by the extent to which material change within it could affect (enhance or diminish) the place’s significance⁶”.*

3.5 Chipping Congregational Chapel is a Grade II listed building of moderate architectural, historic and communal significance, deriving primarily from its well-preserved early C19th fabric and its role in serving the village of Chipping. Architecturally, it is a simple but characteristic example of a small parish chapel, constructed in local sandstone with subtle detailing, including round-headed windows and a dated inscription. Historically, it evidences community-led religious provision through its construction and its incremental enlargement throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, illustrating the growth and continuity of its congregation within the developing village of Chipping. Its evidential value lies in this phased evolution. Given its location, its contribution to the wider Conservation Area is modest, meaning its significance relates primarily to its fabric, historic use and development, and continued communal use.

⁶ English Heritage [2008] Conservation Principles Policy and Guidance.

4.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 For the purposes of this assessment, the concept of preservation is understood to mean an absence of harm to heritage significance. Harm is defined within Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset⁷. The assessment below considers whether the proposals would introduce change that would materially erode the significance of either the church building or the conservation area.

4.2 The proposals comprise the insertion of a first-floor mezzanine to approximately half of the main hall building, along with the insertion of an internal window in the dividing wall at first-floor height to provide a viewpoint into the main hall below, and the insertion of secondary glazing panels to the window openings of the main hall area.

4.3 The church is experiencing an increase in members which has meant that in recent years due to the increase in people using the main hall during community gatherings, the children have been housed in the small utility/ kitchen area in the small northern extension. Whilst the increase in members is good for the congregation and community utilisation of the building, this does not comprise a long-term or acceptable solution. It is therefore intended that the proposed first floor will remedy this issue. Whilst a number of small holes will be required to secure the floor to the walls, it is my view that these will not comprise harm to heritage significance as defined by paragraph 84 of conservation principles.

4.4 The proposed mezzanine window is to be inserted into what appears to be an entirely modern section of wall, and as such no harm will arise with respect to historic fabric. The proposed window opening will allow the users of the proposed first-floor structure to observe the services held below in the main hall, thus maximising the user experience of the main hall.

4.5 The secondary glazing panels are required to control condensation build-up upon the timber-framed single-glazed windows and to improve heat retention. Prolonged condensation can cause deterioration and decay to the timber and the plastered reveals, and thus, the proposed glazing comprises a low-impact and cost-effective solution that will not harm the existing timber window frames. The proposed secondary glazing units comprise aluminium frames with glazed panels. The frames would be secured in the reveals with minimal mechanical fixings. Again, whilst a small number of small holes will be required for these fixings, it is my view that these will not cause harm to heritage significance as defined by paragraph 84 of conservation principles.

4.6 The secondary panels will not be visible externally, and therefore harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area will not occur. However, the proposed first floor will cross some of the windows at a low level within the window openings. The affected windows are the eastern window to the northern gable and the northern window opening of the eastern elevation. Whilst this will be visible externally, the visual change is

⁷ Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance. English Heritage 2008. Para 84.

minimal and harm by virtue of adverse impact upon the ability to appreciate significance is largely negligible, either to the heritage significance of the listed building or to the heritage interest of the conservation area.

4.7 The presence of the proposed first floor and the secondary panels will alter the visual experience of the main hall building internally. However, given that the interest of the building is held by its modest external appearance, material form and history, it is my view that harm will not occur in this regard and the special interest of both the listed building and the conservation area will be preserved.

4.8 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states the following: *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

4.9 The proposals would deliver clear public benefits as defined by paragraph 020 of the Planning Practice Guidance⁸, principally through the sustained and enhanced use of the building as an active place of worship and community facility. The proposals are minimally invasive and avoid further extension of the building to create further floor space, and will remedy the issues faced by the growing congregation. The introduction of the mezzanine will enable improved internal functionality and inclusivity, particularly for younger members, thereby supporting the building's continued communal role. The installation of secondary glazing will secure the long-term conservation of the windows by mitigating condensation-related decay in a low-impact and reversible manner, whilst improving heat retention and comfort for the users of the building.

4.10 Overall, it is my view that the proposed works, by virtue of their limited physical impact, reversibility, and retention of the building's key architectural and historic attributes, would not erode significance as defined in paragraph 4.1. Accordingly, the proposals meet the statutory duty under Section 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give special regard/ attention to the preservation of both the listed building and the conservation area and should be treated favourably.

⁸ Which states: Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework. Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.



Figure 1: Northern elevation.



Figure 2: Eastern elevation.



Figure 3: Location of the proposed first-floor.



Figure 4: Location of the proposed first floor as seen from the southernmost room of main hall building.