

Church Saved as Office Space



Long-running efforts to find a use for the redundant Roman Catholic church in Durrington have reached a successful conclusion, after councillors approved its conversion into offices and apartments.

Salisbury district council's northern area committee gave the go-ahead last Thursday for the ground floor of the former Church of Our Lady of Heaven to be turned into offices and the first and second floors to become flats and apartments. It also approved the building of two further homes in the church grounds.

The church, which was built in 1961, following a massive local fundraising campaign, was closed down by the Clifton RC diocese in the summer of 2003, because of falling attendances and rising maintenance costs. Villagers and members of the church collected a petition of more than 500 signatures to save the building from demolition, and there were various unsuccessful efforts to try and acquire the building from the Clifton diocese, so it could be used for community purposes.

Now, a plan by Turley Associates to convert the church has been approved, after planning officers said the scheme would contribute towards the vitality and viability of the local community and would not unduly disturb neighbouring amenities or be detrimental to the area.

Durrington parish council objected to the development because of concerns over security. Its members said that, while it would do a lot to raise the standard of the area, the building and its grounds had always been a magnet for local youngsters who sometimes caused problems there.

They therefore wanted extra security measures included in the development, such as electronically-locked doors to stop unauthorised entry to the apartments and a wall or fence at least two metres high around the boundary, to deter vandals.

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