

Report to Planning Committee

26 July 2023

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| Application Reference | DC/23/68304 |
| Application Received | 22 May 2023 |
| Application Description | Proposed change of use from Methodist church to 9 No. self-contained studio apartments, fenestration alterations, bike shelter and bin store, parking and landscaping. |
| Application Address | Lawrence Lane Methodist Church, Lawrence Lane, Cradley Heath B64 6EU |
| Applicant | Dr Balbir Bhandal |
| Ward | Cradley Heath & Old Hill |
| Contact Officer | Carl Mercer carl_mercer@sandwell.gov.uk |

1 Recommendations

1.1 That planning permission is granted subject to conditions relating to:


- i) Cycle parking, provision and retention;
- ii) Waste storage, provision and retention;
- iii) EVC bays, provision and retention;
- iv) Low NOx boilers, provision and retention;
- v) Construction method statement; and
- vi) Provision and retention of car parking.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The development would provide much needed housing to national internal standards, with parking, landscaping and cycle and waste storage accommodated within the layout.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

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|  | Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods |
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4 Context

- 4.1 The application is being reported to your committee as five objections have been received.
- 4.2 To assist members with site context, a link to Google Maps is provided below:

[Lawrence Lane Methodist Church, Lawrence Lane, Cradley Heath B64 6EU](#)

5 Key Considerations

- 5.1 The site is not allocated within the Development Plan.
- 5.2 The material planning considerations which are relevant to this application are:-

Government policy (NPPF)

Planning history

Design concerns - layout and density of building and overdevelopment

Highways considerations - Traffic generation, access, parking and servicing

Environmental concerns – Noise and pollution



6. The Application Site

6.1 The application site is situated on a parcel of land bounded by Lawrence Lane, Clyde Street and Pearson Street, Cradley Heath. The building is a former single storey church building.

7. Planning History

7.1 The applicant previously submitted a change of use application to a house in multiple occupation (HMO), which generated a notable number of objections from neighbours. In response, the applicant withdrew the application in favour of putting forward this proposal consisting of self-contained flats.

7.2 Relevant planning applications are as follows:

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| DC/23/68164 | Proposed change of use from Methodist church to 12 No. bedroom HMO (house in multiple occupation) with fenestration alterations, bike shelter and bin store. | Withdrawn - 18.05.2023 |
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8. Application Details

8.1 The applicant proposes to convert the building into nine, one bed self-contained flats. Ten off-street parking spaces would be provided (one for each flat and one visitor space), together with waste storage, cycle storage areas and landscaping



9. Publicity

9.1 The application has been publicised by neighbour notification letter with five letters of objection being received.

9.2 Objections

Objections have been received on the following grounds:

- i) Character – windows and door arrangement would be altered; the area is made up of elderly and vulnerable people;
- ii) Increase in traffic – it is already difficult to manoeuvre in the area and there are existing parking issues;
- iii) Increase in noise and pollution;
- iv) Increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity;
- v) Density of occupancy is overdevelopment;
- vi) Lack of amenity space for residents;
- vii) Impact of short term tenancies on local area; and
- viii) Impact on local services.

Non-material objections have been raised regarding loss of property value and fire safety.

These objections will be addressed in section 13 (Material considerations).

10. Consultee responses

10.1 Highways

No objection – the number of parking spaces proposed is acceptable.

10.2 Pollution Control (Air Quality)

No objection, subject to electric vehicle charging bays and low NOx boilers required by condition.



10.3 Pollution Control (Noise)

No objection subject to a construction method statement required by condition. Whilst there would not be a great deal of external work, it seems sensible to attach such a condition due to the proximity of surrounding residents.

10.4 West Midlands Police

No objection.

11. National Planning Policy

11.1 National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development but states that local circumstances should be taken into account to reflect the character, needs and opportunities for each area. The Framework refers to development adding to the overall quality of the area by achieving high quality design, achieving good architecture and layouts. It also states that developments should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

11.2 I am of the opinion that the proposal raises no concerns regarding design, in accordance with paragraph 126 of the NPPF.

11.3 In respect of paragraphs 111 of the NPPF, I consider it unlikely that the development would have a severe impact on highway safety for the reasons set out in Material Considerations below.



12. Local Planning Policy

12.1 The following policies of the council's Development Plan are relevant:

CSP4 - Place Making

DEL1 – Infrastructure Provision

HOU1 - Delivering Sustainable Housing Growth

HOU2 – Housing Density, Type and Accessibility

TRAN4 - Creating Coherent Networks for Cycling and for Walking

ENV3 – Design Quality

ENV8 – Air Quality

SAD H2 – Housing Windfalls

SAD EOS 9 – Urban Design Principles

12.2 In respect of CSP4 the design of the development would be acceptable and would enhance the attributes the area offers in terms of its local character.

12.3 Infrastructure provision, in this case EVC bays, would be ensured by condition and the site would contribute towards the Community Infrastructure Levy (DEL1).

12.4 Whilst land is identified and allocated in the development plan to meet the borough's sustainable housing growth, under policy HOU1 additional housing capacity will also be sought elsewhere through planning permissions on suitable sites. As such, this proposal would assist with providing much needed housing within the borough.

12.5 The proposal meets the requirements of policy HOU2 in that it proposes a range of types and sizes of accommodation which would be accessible by sustainable transport to residential services. The proposal would also achieve high quality design with minimal amenity impact.

12.6 Highways raise no objection to the traffic generation attributed to this development (TRAN2).



- 12.7 Sufficient amenity space is provided to allow for cycle parking provision (TRAN4).
- 12.8 ENV3 and SAD EOS 9 refers to well-designed schemes that provide quality living environments. The proposed layout and design is acceptable.
- 12.9 In respect of air quality (ENV8), electric vehicle charging points can be ensured by condition
- 12.10 The proposed dwellings would be a windfall, subject to SAD H2. The proposal meets the requirement of the policy as it is previously developed land, suitable for residential development, and capable of meeting other plan policies.

13. Material Considerations

13.1 National and local planning policy considerations have been referred to above in Sections 11 and 12. With regards to the other material considerations, these are highlighted below:

13.2 Planning history

This application was submitted in response to residents' concerns regarding a proposed HMO. The current application is the applicant's attempt to alleviate these concerns by proposing self-contained flats.

13.4 Design concerns - layout and density of building and overdevelopment

All the units would exceed the minimum national requirement for one bed units (37m²) as stated in the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS). In addition to this, all servicing and parking can be accommodated within the site area and I am therefore not of the opinion that the proposal is overdevelopment. In respect of the character issues raised by objectors, the minor external alterations would enhance and



create a more active building frontage. Furthermore, there is no relevant planning policy which would discourage a mix of accommodation types in a particular area.

13.4 **Highways considerations - Traffic generation, access, parking and servicing**

Highways raise no significant concerns regarding the proposal. There is sufficient car parking space to serve the development and it should not result in appreciable parking overspill on to the highway.

13.5 **Environmental concerns – Noise and pollution**

The surrounding area is densely built up and I am of the opinion that the introduction of nine units would not introduce excessive noise issues. There is also no evidence of increased pollution and the air quality officer has not raised concerns.

13.6 **Other matters**

Increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity

There is no evidence to suggest that these issues would be introduced by the approval of this proposal. Furthermore, the police raise no objection.

Lack of amenity space for residents

It is correct that there is no private external space provided for residents. However, the site is situated in a sustainable area within walking distance of services in Cradley Heath and Old Hill, parks and greenspaces.



Impact of short-term tenancies on local area

Concerns regarding the transient nature of occupants is noted, but there is no evidence to suggest that residents of the proposed flats would not be longer term, in contrast to typical HMO accommodation.

Impact on local services

The introduction of such a modest number of units proposed would not have a significant impact on local services.

14. Conclusion

On balance the proposal accords with the provisions of relevant development plan policies and there are no significant material considerations which warrant refusal that could not be controlled by conditions.

15 Alternative Options

15.1 Refusal of the application is an option if there are material planning reasons for doing so. In my opinion the proposal is compliant with relevant polices and there are no material considerations that would justify refusal.

16 Implications

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| Resources: | When a planning application is refused the applicant has a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, and they can make a claim for costs against the Council. |
| Legal and Governance: | This application is submitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. |
| Risk: | None. |



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| Equality: | There are no equality issues arising from this proposal and therefore an equality impact assessment has not been carried out. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | None. |
| Social Value | None. |
| Climate Change | Sandwell Council supports the transition to a low carbon future, in a way that takes full account of the need to adapt to and mitigate climate change. Proposals that help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, will be welcomed. |

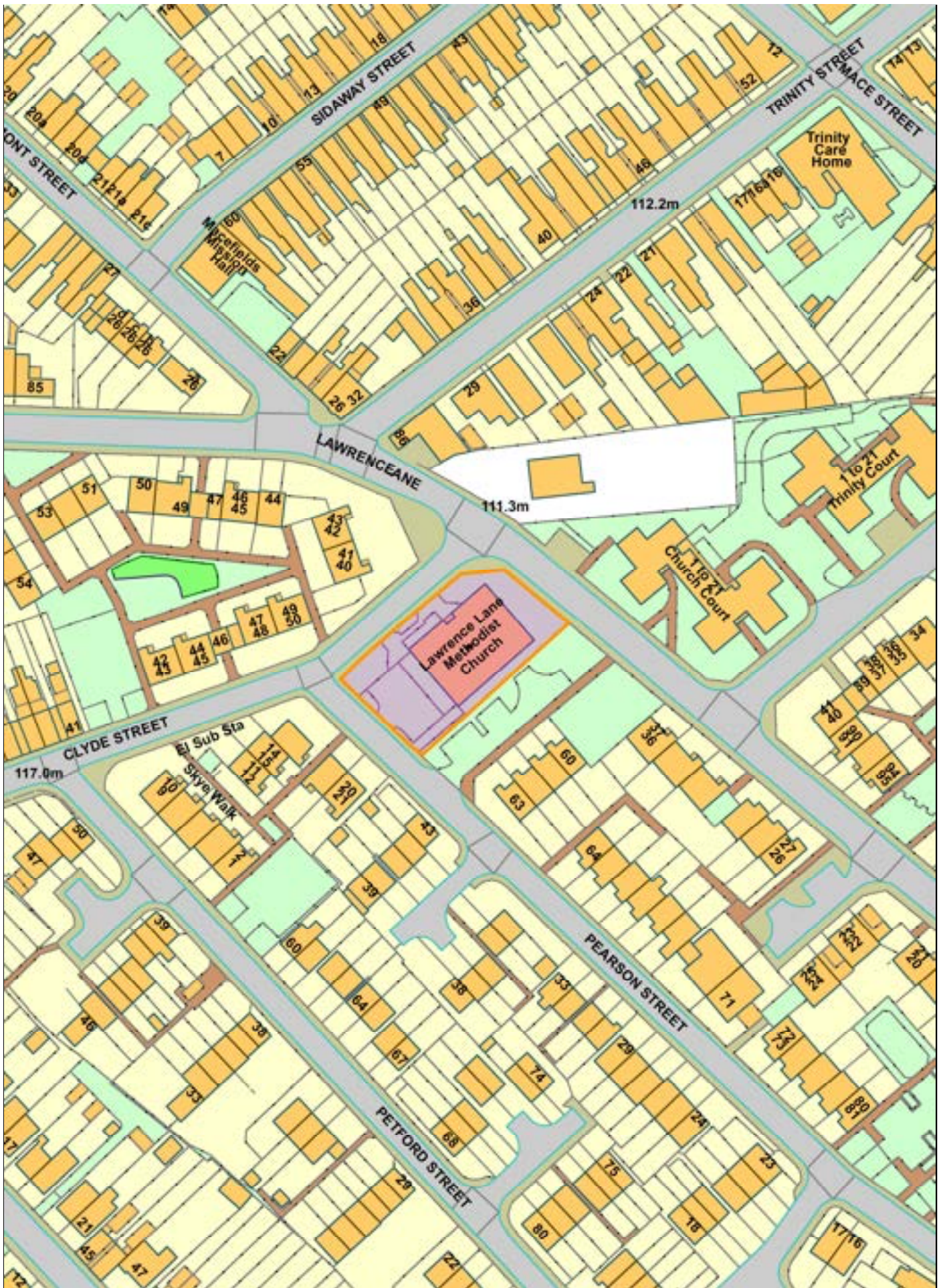
17. Appendices

Context plan

LLMC/5

LLMC/6



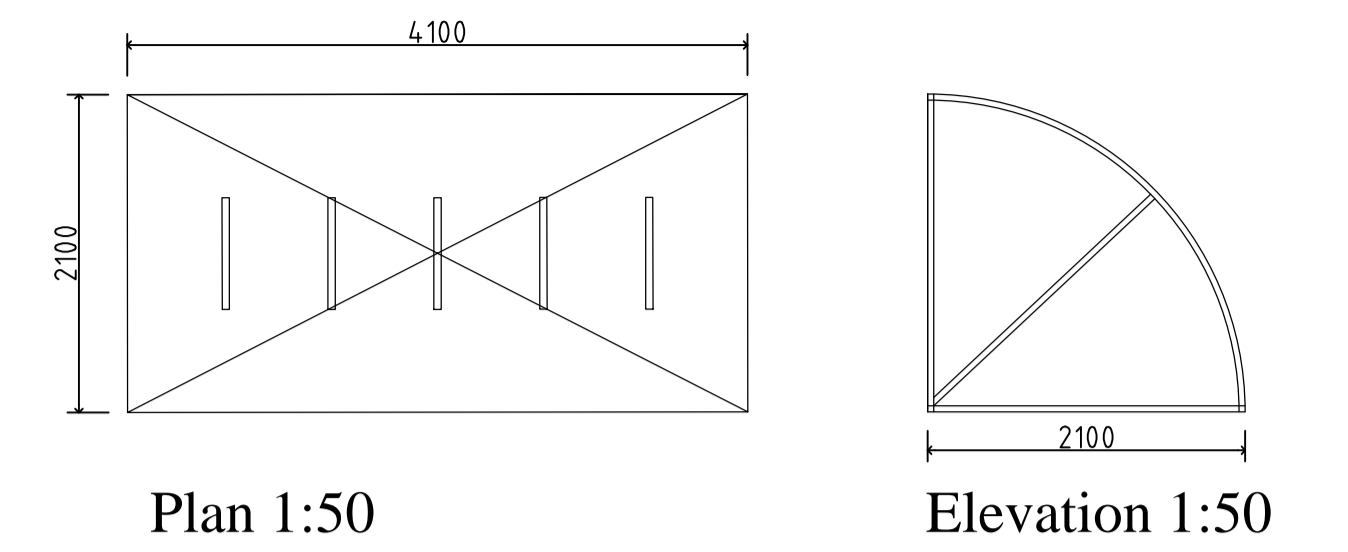


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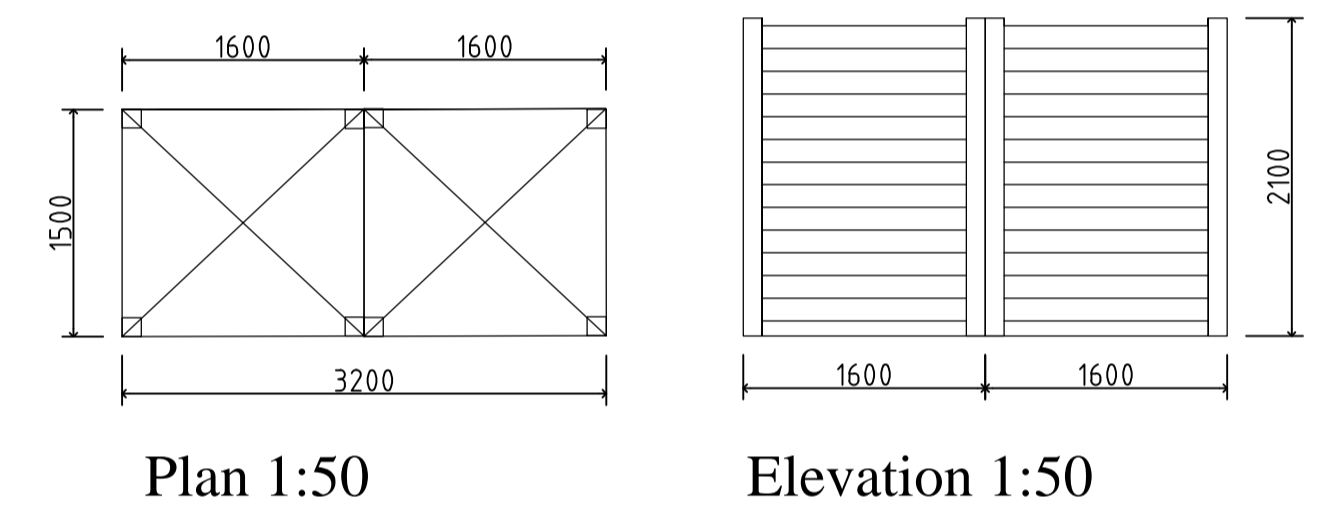
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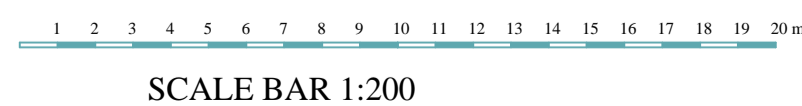
10 Person Bicycle Shelter



Bin Storage

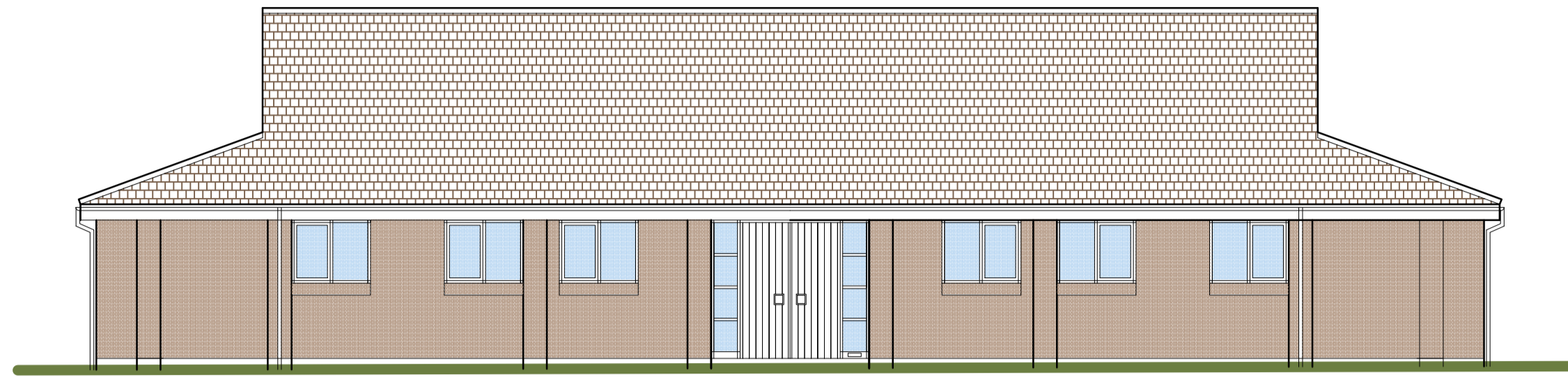


SITE PLAN 1:200

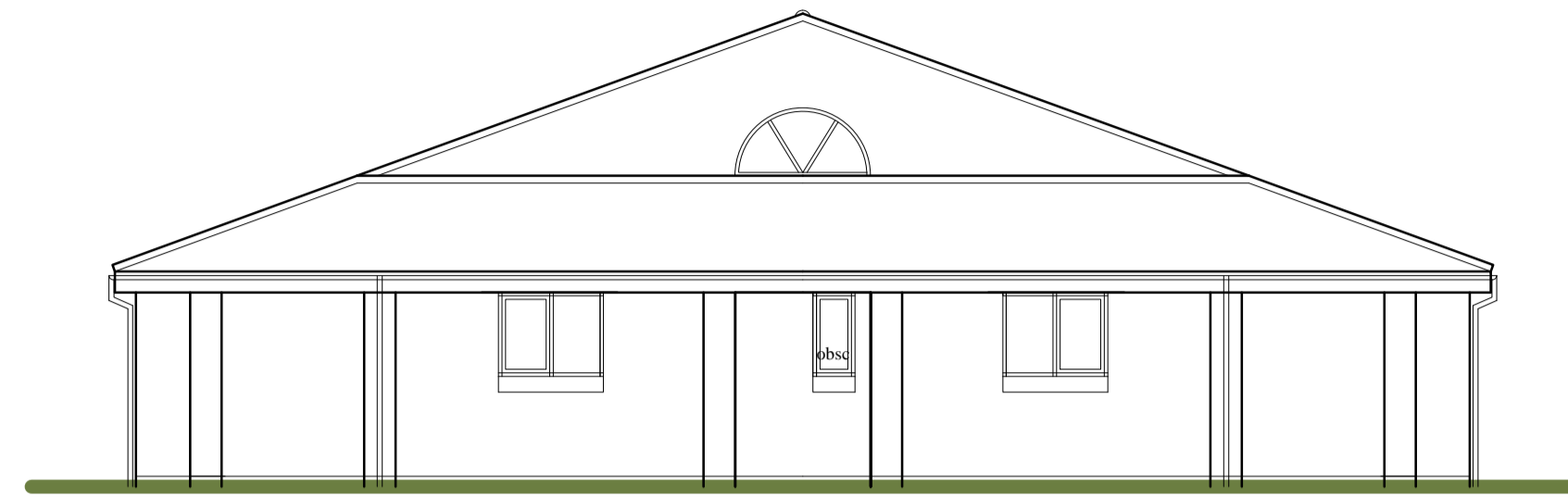


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| TITLE: | |
| Site Plans Lawrence Lane Methodist Church Lawrence Lane Cradley Heath B64 6EU | |
| DRAWING NO. | REV: |
| LLMC/6 | - |
| DATE: | |
| May 2023 | |
| SCALE: | |
| 1:200 & 1:1250 | |

Proposed Plans & Elevations - 9 Studio Apartments
 Lawrence Lane Methodist Church, Cradley Heath B64 6EU



FRONT ELEVATION 1:100



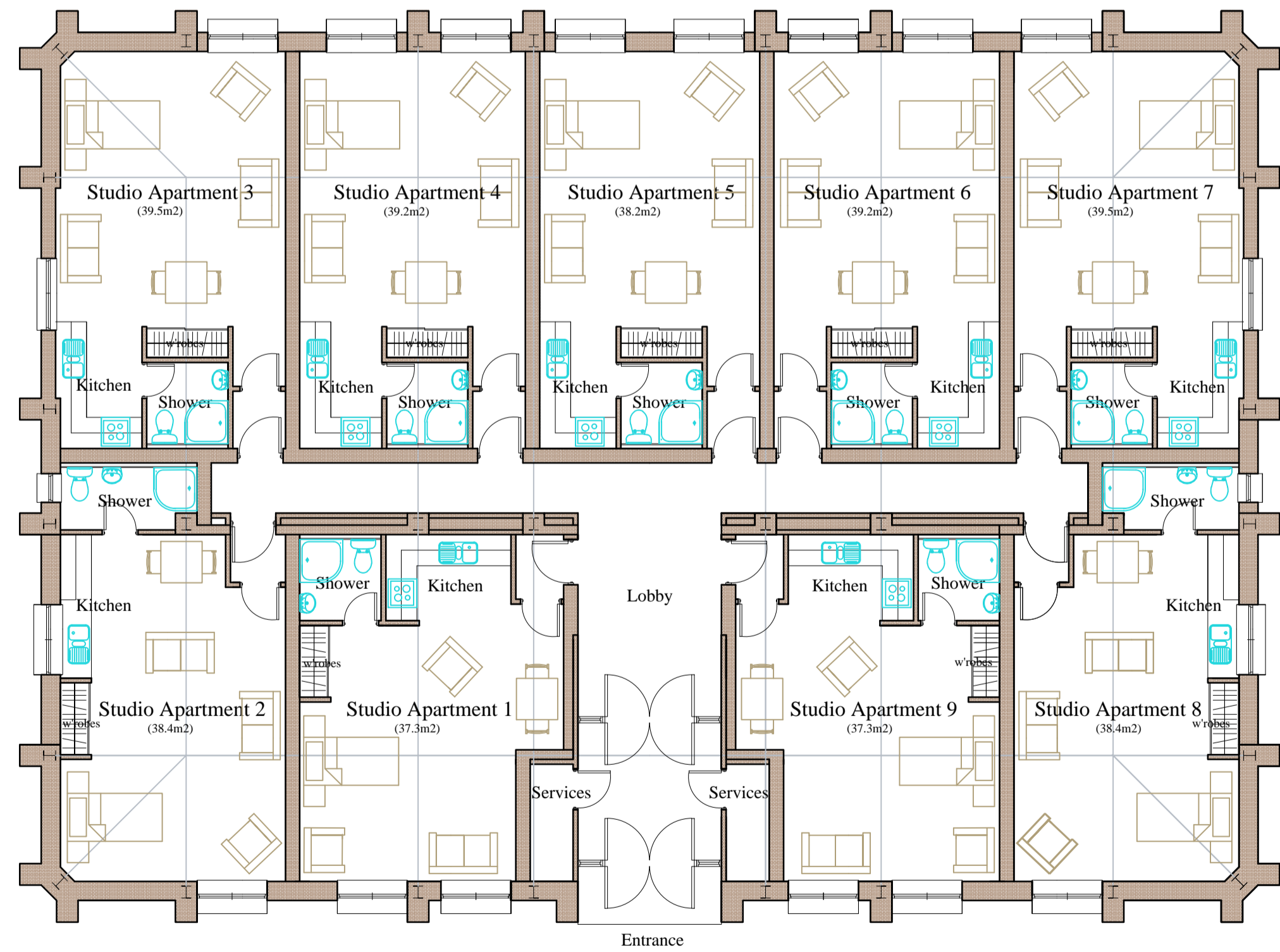
SIDE ELEVATION 1:100



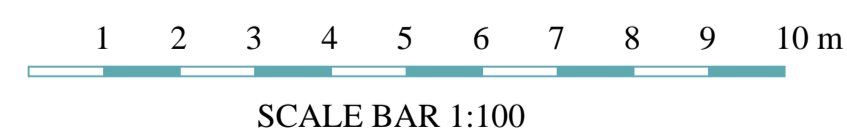
REAR ELEVATION 1:100



SIDE ELEVATION 1:100



GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100
 (428m²)



TITLE:
 Proposed Plans & Elevations
 Lawrence Lane Methodist Church
 Lawrence Lane
 Cradley Heath
 B64 6EU

DRAWING NO. LLMC/5 REV: -

DATE: May 2023

SCALE: 1:100

NCR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN &
 TOWN PLANNING

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