

From: Cooke, Jacob (Senior Planning Officer) <jacob.cooke@newport.gov.uk>
Sent: 11 September 2026 09:31:22 UTC+01:00
To: "Cooke, Jacob (Senior Planning Officer)" <Jacob.Cooke@newport.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: St Mary's Sunday School - Community asset

From: Architect Designs <myprojects@architectdesigns.co.uk>
Sent: 09 September 2026 17:43
To: Cooke, Jacob (Senior Planning Officer) <jacob.cooke@newport.gov.uk>;
Subject: St Mary's Sunday School - Community asset

Hi Jacob, I have spoken to the auction house who sold the property on behalf of St Mary's Church and he has provided me with some additional information regarding how the Sunday school came to be split from the title deed of the church and sold off separately.

We fully appreciate the importance of protecting genuine and viable community facilities. However, in this particular case, we consider that the circumstances of the property are materially different from the loss of an established and functioning community facility.

The building was no longer required by the church as it did not perform an active or essential community function any longer and hadn't for a number of years. Prior to the separation of the Sunday School from the adjoining church ownership, the matter was considered by the relevant community panel. The community was consulted regarding the future of the building and it was agreed that the Sunday School should be separated from the church by way of separate title and subsequently sold.

This decision is significant, as it demonstrates that the building was not simply disposed of without consideration of its community value. Its future was considered by those directly responsible for the church and its community function, and the conclusion reached was that the building was surplus to requirements and that there was no identified use for it either by the church or within the local community.

The building is also in a poor state of repair and requires substantial investment to make it suitable for continued occupation and to bring it up to an appropriate modern standard. The level of expenditure required, together with the limitations of the existing building, further undermines the viability of retaining it as a community facility.

It is therefore important to distinguish between the historic use of the building and its current planning and community function. The fact that the building was historically used as a Sunday School does not, in itself, demonstrate that there remains a current or viable community need for the building to continue in that use.

In this instance, there is no identified community organisation seeking to retain or occupy the building, no identified community use that would be displaced by the proposal, and no evidence that the building currently provides an essential or irreplaceable community function.

The circumstances surrounding the sale demonstrate that the community use had already become redundant prior to the current proposal. The decision to separate the property from the church and dispose of it was taken following consideration of its future and consultation with the community panel. The subsequent sale to a developer and submission of this planning application therefore represents the next stage in finding a viable and sustainable future for a building which was already considered surplus to community requirements.

The proposed residential use would secure the long-term future of the existing building. It would enable significant repair, refurbishment and improvement works to be undertaken and would return the building to active use rather than allowing it to remain vacant, under-used or continue to deteriorate.

We feel the proposal should therefore be viewed as the sustainable reuse of a redundant former community building, rather than the loss of a functioning community facility.

We feel the Council should not seek to retain a building as a community asset simply because of its historic use where the evidence demonstrates that:

- the former community use is no longer required;
- the church has no further use for the building;
- the community panel was consulted regarding its future;
- following that consultation, it was agreed that the building should be separated from the church and sold;
- there is no identified current community use or organisation requiring the building;
- the building is not considered to be a viable community asset in its existing condition; and
- the proposed residential use provides a realistic and sustainable future for the building.

We would also suggest that retaining the property in its current form, without an identified viable community use or operator, would not necessarily secure any meaningful community benefit. The proposed residential conversion provides an opportunity to invest in and secure the future of an existing building while also contributing to the provision of residential accommodation.

The auction house is approaching the previous owner (or church co-ordinator) to request a letter outlining the approach they took when making the decision to sell the premise and the input the local community had in coming to this decision. Could I therefore request an extension of time to allow us to receive this letter and submit it as part of the supporting documents for this application please?

Many thanks

Kind regards

Julie Ball
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