

49/17/0021

REV D WIDDOWS

Formation of ramped access to north porch, alterations to entrance driveway and insertion of glazing to upper panels of the west and north porch doors at St Andrews Church, Church Street, Wiveliscombe

Location: ST ANDREWS CHURCH, CHURCH STREET, WIVELISCOMBE,
TAUNTON

Grid Reference: 308271.127676

Full Planning Permission

Recommendation

Recommended decision: Conditional Approval

Recommended Conditions (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A1) DrNo 603.WD.03 North Porch Plan, Section & Elevations
(A1) DrNo 603.WD.02 Rev E Driveway access ramp plan and section
(A1) DrNo 603.P.021 Proposed North & West Elevations

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Proposal

This application seeks approval for three separate items within a wider re-ordering scheme granted faculty on 03.11.2015.

It is proposed to remove the central row of timber panels within the west doors and insert 12mm Slimlite double glazed units fixed with matching timber beads internally. The west lobby in the tower base entered via the west doors forms part of the main processional route. The glazed panels will afford views both into and out of the church which will greatly assist with the coordination of arrivals and departures.

The door frame and tracery date with the other external joinery but both of the west doors have been replaced with modern replica joinery as recently as within the last 30 years. The timber panels are plywood and in a poor state of repair as the lower edges are delaminating/rotting. A workshop overhaul of the doors is proposed as part of the proposal to include the replacement of the lower panels with timber. The finished doors will be painted to match the existing joinery. The octagonal west lobby is also used as a meeting room and is locally heated with electric convector heaters. The proposed slim double glazed units will help reduce the heat loss from this area giving greater comfort to those assembled.

It is proposed to remove the upper timber panels within the north porch doors and insert toughened safety glass beaded internally with matching timber beads. The construction of the north porch doors dates with the other existing external joinery. The finished doors will be painted to match the existing joinery.

The church is opened daily and the north porch doors are hooked back to show that the church is open for visitors. The glazed panels are intended to offer an inquisitive view of the church interior for those visiting outside of the normal opening hours. There are original glass lights in the upper panels of the exterior doors in the northeast and south porch doors.

It is also proposed to lift and relay the existing entrance driveway and form a DDA compliant ramped access up to the north porch doors. The existing cobbled driveway is in need of urgent repair. The existing surface is very uneven and immediately within the north churchyard gates the cobbles have sunk very badly.

Site Description

The church of St Andrew is a grade II* listed building and was entirely rebuilt in 1827-29, and is an early and therefore unusual example of nineteenth century church reconstruction. Built in perpendicular gothic style, it is the design of Richard Carver and much of his external structure survives, including the semi-hexagonal chancel and four gabled porches. The church is surrounded on all sides by a churchyard, which itself is enclosed by houses, garden walls and allotments on three sides, with the north open to Church Street.

Relevant Planning History

Consultation Responses

WIVELISCOMBE TOWN COUNCIL – Supports the Application.

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP – No Observation

SOUTH WEST HERITAGE TRUST – No Comments

HISTORIC ENGLAND – No Objection (to amended scheme)

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2018 regarding further information on the above application for planning permission. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Historic England last formally commented on this scheme in November 2017 at which time we objected to the scheme submitted and expressed our disappointment that the alternative compromise options which had been previously discussed on site were not being taken forward.

Since this time, two alternative options have been discussed -

- Option C which seeks to relay the centre of the path in paving slabs, leaving both types of cobble to either side and with bands of cobbles crossing the path and the semi-circular apron of cobbles at the threshold relaid.
- Option E which seeks to relay the centre of the path in paving slabs, leaving both types of cobble to either side, but doesn't include the other decorative features. This option has been submitted for consent.

Whilst we would prefer to see option C implemented as it retains more of the characterful features which make this path such an attractive and interesting approach to the church, we accept that option E will maintain more of the fabric and character of the historic path than option B (which was previously submitted for consent) whilst providing level, smooth access. Those features at the threshold will be covered and left in situ. In order to delineate the threshold, consideration should be given to the insertion of a line of cobbles set in a semi-circle within the paving thereby breaking up the more monotonous nature of the new material. That being said, option E as submitted would present a compromise solution to which we would not object.

Once the path is completed, the PCC should retain and store the rest of the cobbles for use in repairs.

Recommendation

Historic England has no objection to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application meets the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 131 and 132.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess, section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the

application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Representations Received

Representations on previously submitted scheme:

Ward Councillor Steve Ross Comments:

To register my support for the improvements to accessibility at St Andrew's Church in terms of access and lighting. While this is an historic 19th century building it's future lies in accessible community use.

It should be noted that the current access causes issues for a large group of users, especially those members of our community with difficulties arising from age, disability or parents with prams. Improvement is long overdue.

The improvements should complement the building's sustainable future within the community and works may even allow some different insights into the building's history.

Ward Councillor Eddie Gaines Comments:

I am the Ward Councillor for Wiveliscombe and West Deane. I have lived in the Wiveliscombe area for over 25 years and have also been a regular visitor to St Andrews and was also married at this church. I fully support the application and at the same time understand that to achieve better access there will be some alterations to the main public entrance. I believe these changes are expected and very necessary - but, those that are making these changes have total respect for the aspect and heritage of this building. We are all custodians of where we live and work at the same time we must realise that where necessary alterations are needed - in this case to make it easier for people to enter and utilise the full church events and of course pastoral care. I am aware that there was a fatality of an elderly person leaving the church by this door - tripping on steps, co-incidentally leaving a funeral service. Providing better access and egress provision is vital and also being able to support less able and disabled people is vital in a caring community and if you can't provide it at a church - then something is amiss. I respectfully ask that this planning permission is granted in its current form.

21 Letters of Support – All supporting for the following reasons:

- The current driveway is dangerous
- Limited access for those with disabilities over cobbles
- Access for pushchairs
- Access for wheelchairs
- Access for people with walking frames
- Access for delivery of bulky loads
- Removal of steps

- Replacement of temporary ramps
- Improve slippery surface in the wet
- Make the doors easier to open for services
- Increase use of the building
- Alternative designs are less visually appealing
- Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act
- Duties as a service provider under the Equalities Act (2010)

No new representations following consultation on the revised scheme.

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

EN12 - TDBCLP - Landscape Character Areas,
 EN14 - TDBCLP - Conservation Areas,
 EN22 - TDBCLP Dev Affecting Sites of County Archaeological Importance,
 EN23 - TDBCLP - Areas of High Archaeological Potential,
 CP8 - Environment,

This takes into account the recent adoption of the SADMP.

Determining issues and considerations

This application was put before members on 10th January 2018. The scheme was recommended for refusal because the design for the ramp leading to the main door was considered to cause harm to the Listed Church. This view was also endorsed by Historic England. The Planning Committee deferred the item to allow further discussion and submission of alternative drawings for the path that acknowledges the cobbles, with an element of the cobbles retained.

Officers have had the opportunity to negotiate with the project architects and a compromise scheme that meets the needs of the church and reduces the harm to the heritage asset is now before the planning Committee. Whilst not an ideal solution, it delivers the accessibility required to the church and the harm is reduced to a level where officers feel that on balance, they can now support the proposal. Whilst Historic England do not endorse the proposal, they have withdrawn their objection.

Applications for planning permission affecting a listed building or its setting must be determined in accordance with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires that “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority...shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

The main issue for consideration is the impact that the scheme will have on the listed church and the improved access that the new ramp and doors will provide.

The National Planning Policy Framework Chapter 12 requires the planning authority to balance harm to the heritage with public benefit. In this case the alterations to the porch and door will cause less than substantial harm as prescribed in chapter 12 paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This is offset by public benefit of allowing continued use of the church as a place of worship.

The alterations to the cobbles leading to entrance are still a concern. However this is a compromise scheme that maintains more of the fabric and character of the historic path than option B (which was previously submitted for consent) whilst providing level, smooth access. Those features at the threshold will be covered and left in situ. In order to delineate the threshold, consideration should be given to the insertion of a line of cobbles set in a semi-circle within the paving thereby breaking up the more monotonous nature of the new material. It is considered that the new proposals still cause 'Less than Substantial Harm' as prescribed in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This harm has been reduced in the revised scheme to the level where the public benefit of the disabled access now offsets the harm. Accordingly the application is now recommended for Approval.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Contact Officer: Mr T Garratt