

Church: St Mary and St Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham
Interviewee: E3 – Henry Freeland, Freeland Rees Roberts Architects
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2015

1. NW: So we're going to talk about Wymondham Abbey, your project there. Can you outline to me briefly how you got involved with the project?
2. E3: Well I was first approached I think in about 2000 when there was a mini competition, and I was one of the contenders. I don't know how many of them there were, I think there may have been three or four people being considered and we had a sort of fairly sketchy brief, but it was clear they wanted to clear out the space internally, because they had sacristies and vestries which had been a temporary measure for 100 years, you know, the usual problem. It was pretty obvious that they wanted to extend, and so how on earth do you extend a building like that? So it was just a matter of putting together some ideas really, and luckily I was successful in that process and was appointed to carry on.
3. NW: And apart from clearing out stuff what do you think in a broader sense the project has aimed to achieve, and has it succeeded?
4. E3: Well, I think it has developed hugely, because I think initially it was 'How can we get a bit more space to get lavatories, kitchens, get all this clutter out of the church, perhaps display some material.' It hadn't been developed as a brief very far I don't think, just like most briefs really, and one you know has to do that in conversation. And I think the other factor that came in much later on was the HLF angle, where clearly in order to apply for HLF money you have to go a step further in your educational aspirations and your interpretation aspirations...
5. NW: ...access to heritage...
6. E3: ...that probably wasn't in the original brief to any great extent. It might have been slightly there, but obviously to get the HLF money you have to really take it seriously and go for it big time. And I think the possible content of the building changed probably three times over the intervening years before we got to the final solution. And the project was intermittent because there were two members of the PCC who I was talking to initially and it is possible that they may have been protecting the project from other members of the PCC and perhaps not taking everybody along with them at that stage. And then of course people change in churches, and that vicar went, and then there was an interregnum and then another vicar arrived. So there was a gap in the project where it just went away for four years, and we thought that was it really. And then I think in – the trouble is I'm not very good with dates – probably about 2008 / 2009 they came back and we developed it again, and it changed from... It was a two-storey building, the south east extension was a two-storey building at one stage, and then it went to a three-storey building, and then it went back to a single storey building. One of the most interesting things that happened was that we had some quite early meetings with English Heritage – Paul Edwards was the inspecting architect at that stage – and

he said a really interesting thing which I thought I would never hear anybody from English Heritage say, which was 'I think you need to make it bigger'. And of course what he was talking about was scale, and the age old problem in trying to extend churches, and how on earth you do it without making it like a domestic extension. And he was absolutely right. I mean, we haven't quite gone sort of large enough, we'd gone fairly large, and it is a massive building so it's a really difficult scale problem.

7. NW: Do you mean the existing building?
8. E3: The existing building is just massive scale. I mean when you're away from it you don't really appreciate it, but when you're up next to it, it's incredible. The east monastic tower, that ruined tower, is huge, but then you go to the other end, and the west tower is just a stage bigger, just an order bigger in all directions. I mean it's just extraordinary. So in a way that was one of the biggest challenges, I'd say, but what he said was very useful because it was sort of encouragement, because I thought everybody would say 'You must be joking, you can't possibly touch this building.' So that was quite interesting. But I think it's been a long and, not tortuous, and a long and sort of changing process...
9. NW: A winding journey?
10. E3: And I would say that we've got to a much, much better solution now than it was in most of the other stages. There was another ingredient which was an infilling of the east monastic tower with a two-storey glass box really, and there was lots of agonies over that about what was going to happen to the pigeon droppings on top of it, so we put a lead roof on top of it and we had an access hatch and a wooden shovel ready and all that sort of thing. But the problem with that part of the building was that by the time you had got a staircase to connect the two levels actually the plan area was quite small; you weren't really getting any useful space, and so that eventually went away as a sensible thing to have because it was going to cost £3–400,000 and it didn't seem to add particularly to the ensemble of what we were trying to do. The thing that we lost with that was that there was always meant to be a connection through the building, so there was a sort of circular route; but actually we've kept that by simply saying, 'OK, well you go outside and you go back in again', and you protect that line by having a big set of railings across the east side of that tower, which actually apparently were there and were removed at some point. So that's how that went.
11. NW: So in terms of the project frame of reference do you think it will have succeeded?
12. E3: I hope it will, because I think we've met the brief; we've provided all the peripheral bits they need, the lavatories, the sacristy, which obviously are the working bits, but then we've added what we were worried was going to be a big circulation space in that south east extension. It was something about the scale of it, just that it was so high, and it looked so narrow on paper, but actually it's fine, it's actually a big space and its width is perfectly OK and I think it's going to make a great interpretation room and educational space. The north east extension has this dual role as a vestry, but also some interpretation. So obviously one needs to close

away the vestry and then have some interpretation. I think the interpretation has been the most difficult element of the whole thing. That's gone through various cycles of design and at one moment it was a whole load of mobile things that you could move around, but there was a worry about that, that the PCC would spend all their time moving stuff around, or that these things would be in the way and that they would have nowhere to put them. And so that was a concern, and I think everyone became much happier once everything became fixed and we're using cupboard doors for panels for display and things in drawers that you pull out, and glass cabinets that you look into and that sort of thing. And there's been quite a lot of debate about how far that goes and I think one of the problems is that you don't really know how to react to it until you see what's proposed, and so there have been some quite late reactions actually to what's proposed, and that has been modified a bit. And of course the DAC have been incredibly interested in what that will be like. I think their remit is not so much in what it says and what it shows, but actually how it's integrated. And they've really only very recently given approval for that. The project suffered the usual sort of difficulties as you go along; you know, discovering things that you didn't know were there. So you probably saw the arched opening with the scratched design, did you?

13. NW: No, but Fr. Christopher mentioned it.
14. E3: So, you know where that is, do you?
15. NW: It's at the east end?
16. E3: It's in the east end of the north east extension. There's a big arched opening, and it's very, very difficult to read archaeologically, because of that east tower. The east tower is in the wrong place. The original crossing tower was one bay to the east. So when they took down the monastery, as it were, for some reason they decided to move the tower into the nave, so actually that was the end bay of the nave. So you think that St Margaret's Chapel, the chapel to the north, is a transept, but it isn't; the transept was one bay to the east. So this arch was actually walking from the north aisle into the transept. And that arch was blocked, and the original scheme was to undo it, and there was some value engineering which said, alright we won't do that, because it will cost £30,000 by the time we had put a glass screen in. But actually as the scheme has gone on the finances have been under pretty good control and it was decided to add that back in. And when we opened it we found this amazing scratch design in the reveal, which is really interesting as it's possibly the best one in England. And why am I telling you this? Oh well obviously that brings a whole new level of interpretation to that space, which is very important. Of course most people probably won't really get its significance, but there will be some display material which will [explain it]...
17. NW: Who is responsible for the content of the interpretation?
18. E3: A firm called Janus, a guy called Simon Hill, who do this sort of thing. They are actually an interesting outfit because they obviously design interpretation, but they also make the panels, sorry they make the cases, so they're a sort of design and construct sort of firm. They also made the shop, and designed the shop.

19. NW: And have they come in through you?
20. E3: No they were procured by the PCC direct, but obviously we've been trying to work with them; it hasn't been very easy, but I think it's a challenging thing to work with interpretation people ... I think it's been difficult because they haven't really shown us exactly what they're going to do until a rather late stage. So we've obviously had drawings to comment on, but I'd say that maybe that integration of design could have been better. But I think it will probably work out OK in the end, but it's just a bit scary always, isn't it? I don't think we as architects feel totally in control of what all that was going to look like; well now we're slightly more confident, and we have had to try and persuade them not to do one or two things.
21. NW: Thinking about the building as a whole, the building as you took it on, as it were, how would you describe its character?
22. E3: Are you talking about the existing building?
23. NW: Yes.
24. E3: Well I mean it's just an incredible Romanesque church, incredibly unusual really, in that it was part of a monastery but it was always a parish church, which is just very, very weird to me. I think it's got wonderful ingredients from other centuries, it's got the two aisles which are obviously later, it's got the amazing Comper reredos, and it's just a terrific thing. In a way one felt quite scared about the idea of extending it because it is such a fine building. On the other hand the east end is quite ruined, and there were on the east end of the south aisle clearly there was an intention to extend it because there was a sort of temporary brick end infill which now you can't see. And so that sort of was a bit of an excuse to extend it in that direction.
25. NW: Or an invitation?
26. E3: An invitation, yes. St Margaret's Chapel was a ruin and actually just looked terrible, and just trying to enclose that in a sensible way seemed a good idea. I think the east tower, much more difficult, because obviously it's just such a fantastic space, and I don't know whether it would be a good idea to put something in that or not. OK, we're not going to, but I think it could have been done successfully, but it would have changed its character quite a bit, and I think in some ways it's rather nice that character is still there; so you go out, and you look up and you go 'Wow', you know, and lots of people will experience that. But it's quite an awe-inspiring building I think. I think another side-effect of what we've done... Did you see the west end, we've altered the... because the shop was next to the west doors and so we've moved the shop into the south aisle in order to re-open the west doors for ceremonial occasions, because it was completely blocked – it was actually panelled over. And so we've used that area to get lots of storage, and we've put an inner door to try and act as a draught lobby. And because that's all glass, that inner bit of screen, you actually get this extraordinary reflection of the east end in there. And you also get, as you come in the west door, you get this wonderful view, and I think that's been quite successful, but perhaps part of it's accidental.

27. NW: There are lots of happy accidents in these...
28. E3: Yes, I mean, it's quite nice when you find something that your work does that you weren't expecting. Of course sometimes it's a bad thing that you weren't expecting... [laughs]. But you know it's good that there's room for some unexpectedly nice thing.
29. NW: And more generally, for you what makes historic buildings important?
30. E3: Well I've just always loved them. I think I'm fascinated by actually the sophistication of them really, and the amazing ability that the medieval and earlier builders had. I mean, quite extraordinary really; and they didn't have CAD and that sort of thing, probably not making it up as they went along quite as much as we imagine, I mean they must have planned it incredibly carefully. But the things they did were amazing, and they were jolly clever, and they had lovely materials. You never stop finding new things when you work with these buildings; you're always seeing something new that you haven't noticed before. And I suppose the sense of craftsmanship, and wonder, and space, it's all great, isn't it? I think that's what I like. And in a way new buildings, the sense of wonder and space also does something, makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck, it's the same sort of thing, but you don't get that feeling quite as often perhaps as you do in some of these amazing old buildings.
31. NW: There can be a richness to an old building...
32. E3: Yes.
33. NW: ...it's having been there for...
34. E3: Yes, well that's right...
35. NW: ...x hundred years.
36. E3: Yes, and obviously the sort of pleasant decay and wear is also quite nice, isn't it? Maybe it makes one feel reassured, and that things can go on for a long time, and it's the sort of stability of this country. [Laughs] I don't know...
37. NW: How do you think the church understood the importance of their building and did you see that change?
38. E3: No, I think they are quite a sophisticated group of people and they are very, very aware of how wonderful their building is, and they have archivists and things, and they know what they've got, and are very enthusiastic about it all I think.
39. NW: Because that's not always the case is it, with churches.
40. E3: No, I think that's right, no. But I think this is not the case with Wymondham, I think that they're pretty up there.
41. NW: In terms of the process, and I know it's been a long process as you were saying, how did you find stakeholders such as – you mentioned Historic England but – the amenity societies etc.
42. E3: Well I think we tried to do the usual best practice which is to get them all together to try and get a consensus of opinion. So we got the DAC involved very early on, we got English Heritage involved very early on, we got the conservation officer involved very early on, and I think also the other amenity societies as well,

although we often rely on the DAC to make sure they're coming along. I think we had lots of very good early discussions and not only on the scheme that has been built but on the previous schemes as well. So there's quite a long history of people encouraging it, but I was just surprised by how much everybody encouraged it from the beginning really. And I suppose the people at English Heritage have changed so it's obviously now become David Eve for the last section of the bit. The DAC obviously has a sort of rolling change in it, but they've been very supportive. David Uddlestone at South Norfolk District Council, he was conversation officer and he's been very positive and very supportive all the way along; he's now retired, but just got us there in time. The other factor is that it's a scheduled monument of course, sorry the east end is a scheduled monument, so both extensions are on scheduled monuments, so we've worked very closely with English Heritage, Will Fletcher has been fantastically supportive. I think one of the absolute keys was having a really good archaeologist, so Roland Harris has been involved. He's my counterpart at Norwich Cathedral, he is the Cathedral Archaeologist and really good, and very much into the Romanesque as well, and a very good buildings archaeologist as well as... And that has actually been pretty key to reassure particularly Will Fletcher at English Heritage. And I think that's quite important that, well I think it's very important that one reassures all the approving bodies that actually everything has been considered very carefully...

43. NW: And there's also a credibility...

44. E3: Yes.

45. NW: ...a reputational...

46. E3: I think there is.

47. NW: ...transaction.

48. E3: There is, I think, and if you don't know somebody that takes a bit of time to establish. But I think that didn't seem to be a problem with this; we were generally working with people we had known before. But it has all been really, really good. There was a slight wobble at planning permission stage. We went to – I'm just trying to think what happened – we went to the Council. It was interesting. South Norfolk District Council was slightly different to other councils. You know you get your three minutes, but then very often you're not allowed to say anything else. I think we had our three minutes, and then the councillors spoke, and then we were allowed to say other things. So they were able to ask us questions which was really good because...

49. NW: And were you doing the three minutes?

50. E3: I think our liaison person [for the client], Mike Halls, and I went and I think we both did a three minute, as far as I remember. And then there were possible questions to us both, and that was very valuable because I have been to other councils, Uttlesford for instance, where you're allowed your three minutes but then the councillors debate it and they're talking absolute nonsense, and you can't intervene and say this is not right. And we had Felsted church, we had it refused, because it was about an extension where obviously the children were going to go

and the councillors were saying 'Well, you want to get the children as far away from the church as possible, you want a separate building, you don't want it attached.' And we simply weren't able to say 'No, no, I'm sorry that's not right, child protection means that you need them attached to the church.' So there were issues like that. So that was actually a very good experience with South Norfolk District Council. I have to say though there were people speaking against it, and people speaking for it, so you were thinking, as usual, 'Oh God, this is a democratic process, it could go either way.' But actually they ended up saying 'Actually, we think this is possibly a project that could win awards, so we're going to approve it', so that was OK. [Laughs]

51. NW: It did end up with some objections didn't it, from SPAB, was it?

52. E3: SPAB might have objected, yes. But I would expect them to object to it, on the basis that it's a fine old crumbly thing and it doesn't need any new interventions. And I think it's difficult for them, because I mean they are the sort of guardian of that. But I think the danger is that they will be left behind in the debate, if they can't move a bit. Because I think everybody else has moved. You know, I think that if we were trying to do that 20 years ago English Heritage would say 'Oh no, this is a museum'. And I think – I don't know how you feel about this – but I think that life has moved on and everybody realises that if our churches are going to be kept going they have got to adapt and one has got to do it extremely well but, you know, using traditional materials in a modern way is a way of doing it, and it doesn't have to be a pastiche and actually that's the wrong way of doing it. And the Victorians weren't doing a pastiche, they were doing their own thing, but you know it seems more like a pastiche because it was sort of neoclassical or something.

53. NW: What do you put that change down to?

54. E3: I think I put it down to people managing to do things well and so English Heritage seeing somebody is able to do something extremely well in that way, and therefore it actually can be done successfully. I think it must have been a slow realisation that actually this is possible. I suppose the most recent example of that is Witherford Watson and Mann's Astley Castle thing, which clearly got the Stirling Prize because it was that sort of thing, wasn't it? It was taking something that was really difficult to deal with and dealing with it in a modern way but very sensitively, and that it can be done. And there are lots of other examples, I can't think of many, but... Richard Griffiths, for instance, would have done lots of quite good things like that. And probably Michael Hopkins.

55. NW: Norwich Refectory.

56. E3: Norwich, absolutely. Well I suppose that is slightly different because that's sort of a new building but it absolutely that sort of thing. It is using traditional materials, responding well, but being quite modern, and it seems to work. And I think if there are enough of those things, and also the clarity of what has happened, you know there is no pretence that it might have been done in 1510 or something. [Laughs]

57. NW: Do you think in terms of reflecting on both this project and your more general experience, do you think the current process can be relied upon to produce good results, in this sort of situation, or do the good results come in spite of the process?
58. E3: Ah, that's a difficult one really. I think sometimes good results don't come because of the process, but I think it's all about taking people along with you, isn't it, and if you can justify what you're doing and explain it, and persuade people that it is a good and appropriate way of doing it, then the process will allow you to do it. I think one of the problems is when you're dealing with an individual officer, to try to get something approved. I suppose I'm thinking of, say, conservation officers, where very often in a Council there is quite a powerful conservation officer who has very strong opinions about something, and the planners are not capable of forming their own opinion, because they're relying too much on the conservation officer's views. And so internally you're not getting a consensus of opinion and a balanced view about it, you're getting an individual who is really deciding whether they think it's appropriate or not. I think the DAC situation is better, because you have a number of people who are coming to a consensus of opinion. Somebody in the DAC might be violently opposed to something, but somebody else might argue for it and say well actually I think you're wrong. And I think you get more of a consensus of opinion there. I mean I suppose there's a danger that it might be wrong. You know, it's the same with English Heritage probably, if you get a particular officer who is dealing with it, that can influence the situation quite strongly. I think just in Wymondham's case we seemed to get encouragement from everybody all the way along, we were very lucky. Perhaps we were just on the right track, but one's not always on the right track from the beginning, and sometimes things come to grief, as you've probably experienced yourself. Having said that, at least we have a process, and we don't have to go down to the mayor and give him a couple of hundred thousand quid to get something through [laughs] which you might in some countries I suppose. And there are appeal processes and things.
59. NW: And the chancellor obviously in a church situation is quite an important person...
60. E3: Yes.
61. NW: ...and in this case she produced a judgment, didn't she?
62. E3: She did. And I'm just desperately trying to remember. It was extremely helpful; but I'm trying to remember why was it extremely helpful, can you remember? It was very helpful, wasn't it?
63. NW: Yes it was; she did a very good job of giving everybody their chance to express... acknowledging their opinions and coming to a ...
64. E3: Yes.
65. NW: ...and observing that the church had done a very good job of consultation and...
66. E3: Yes.
67. NW: ...and process...
68. E3: Yes.

69. NW: ...and came out strongly in favour of it.
70. E3: Yes, yes. No obviously, the trouble is one sometimes forgets it is the chancellor making the decision and thinking it's the DAC making the decision. Obviously the DAC are pretty key as well but you're absolutely right, yeah. I think the other thing is PCCs are sometimes not very good at working out whether what you're offering them is the right thing. And sometimes because they're a committee pulling in all sorts of directions, if you're not strong enough in what you want to do for them, then they can dilute the solution and actually make it worse. But they've definitely not done that on this, they've been a very good client actually, which is a surprise in a way, because there are so many of them, you expect it to be more difficult than it was, but it has been a very good relationship. There's always been quite a big group of people, certainly in the last phase of the project where we've been dealing with this particular solution, there have been a large group of people who we've got to know very well. I think Fr. Christopher has been very key as well, because he's a strong person who has not been prepared to compromise and he's quite wise, and very focused, and good.
71. NW: So can you identify the sort of skills that a client of this nature needs?
72. E3: Well I suppose I ought to say 'Totally trust your architect' [laughs] but that's a bit dangerous, isn't it? I think, obviously knowing what they want is pretty important, and having a good brief, I think the brief came across pretty clearly. Probably being quite adaptable, because once you start trying to raise funds if you suddenly have to go to HLF you might have to start thinking laterally a bit, which they're pretty good at. I think realising that you can't get good solutions for very little money so...
73. NW: So being realistic about money?
74. E3: ...so yeah, being realistic about money and having to buy into the fact that it is going to cost a lot of money, and not to get too worried about that. Because there is money available, and also you need people who are prepared to do a lot of hard work. It's not for the faint-hearted is it? You've got to go out there and make all these applications, and you've got to be very determined I think. I have often said in the past that I think PCCs are dictatorships, with one guy leading the team. In the past it has worked very well, because I think very often if there's somebody running things they feel responsible to get the money, so they're prepared to make the applications and get on with it. Sometimes when you get a committee, everybody is rather leaving it to everybody else to do it and it's all a bit wishy washy and it doesn't get done. That didn't happen at Wymondham because everybody was really pulling their weight in their own departments as it were. It's been very good.
75. NW: So that's about drive and energy, is it?
76. E3: I don't know. I think sometimes there's one person who is clearly going to get this done, You know, they see it as their project and they're going to take the PCC along with them. I mean the danger is that they go off on some tangent and the rest of the PCC don't like what they're doing and it ends up in a sort of mess in

the village, but I have seen it work really well. And I have seen really small populations do amazing things because there's somebody who is really focused and is going to get it done, and I've seen other bigger villages who just haven't managed to do it because it's all too wishy washy and they haven't thought it was worthwhile to go out and get the money.

77. NW: Do you think that's to do with, for example, somebody having business skills, they might have been a project manager or...

78. E3: I don't know, it may be, it's possible. But I've seen vicars do it, I've seen individual members who are leading a project. I'm not only talking about extensions, I'm also talking about repair projects as well, where you just see some people are much more effective at getting it done and not being put off by needing fifty thousand quid or whatever it is, they just go and blooming well find it. And other people who say, 'Oh no!' and just never get it done. That's just really interesting. And I do think very often it's people on fabric committees who just don't quite get it done. But Wymondham was very exceptional really, because they had a lot of people involved in the project and they've been very effective.

79. NW: Could you identify ingredients for successful change? What does a project need?

80. E3: Well, I think it needs a strong need, and therefore a strong brief, and I suppose a successful solution needs to have a strong concept really.

81. NW: And in terms of people?

82. E3: OK. Well determination, and not being put off, because there are problems along the way. It's a complicated process and you've got to be persuasive, you've got to be determined, you've got to be prepared to put in a lot of hard work as the client, as well. And I suppose you've got to find the right team to support the process as well. You've got to choose your architect carefully and all the rest of the team, and you've got to have a very good contractor; you mustn't forget that. I always think that actually if you haven't got a good contractor you've had it really. Because the guys who are going to actually put the stuff together are absolutely key; you can have a great design and it can be just totally messed up by being done badly, can't it? So I think as architects we're totally reliant on good craftsmen and people who care. And actually I think there is one other ingredient about a successful project like this and I think that is it being a happy project, and not a confrontational one. I think it's really important that everybody's pulling together and enjoying what they're doing and have a sense of pride in what they're doing.

83. NW: So consensual...

84. E3: Yes.

85. NW: ..and community based in some sense?

86. E3: Yes, I think that goes right the way through. The guys who are doing the plastering, they need to be happy and think this is great, you know, what we're doing is going to make this building terrific with our plaster. And I think the contractor has a really difficult job, trying to get all these materials together for these bloody architects who have chosen ... you know they come from Poland or

something, and then they've got to get these guys together and not have them standing about. I mean we've had a few problems on Wymondham, you know with windows and things not arriving when they thought they were going to arrive. They still haven't arrived, some of the them [laughs], and it's just pretty difficult. And of course now we have an extension of time claim and we've got to adjudicate on that. It's always difficult isn't it, because you're trying not to clobber anybody, and you're trying to be fair and yet you don't want to upset anybody, you want to encourage. But in a way you're not really allowed to get encouragement into the thing. But I do think a happy site and not having bust ups along the way is incredibly important. Because I think if it's going badly from a contractor's point of view he's not going to be very interested, and he'll just want to get off the site, throw it together and get off.

87. NW: Stepping back to the big picture, the magic bullet question: if there was one thing that you could change about the way we change historic buildings, what would it be?
88. E3: I'm not sure I quite understand your question...
89. NW: Is there anything you'd like to fix?
90. E3: Oh, well, I suppose the energy side of it, which is a real problem which is very difficult to fix. Having said that, these buildings have been here for a thousand years and actually they're doing quite well on the energy front, but it's just going forward, and how you heat buildings sensibly and not just lose all the heat immediately and cause lots of side effects; I mean it's a huge difficulty, isn't it? I think in a way we've got to quite a good stage in this country where we can adapt our historic buildings, and there is a process and it's not a 'Sorry you can't touch this, it's too precious'. Actually funnily enough I think this is better with the more important buildings than with the more common buildings, and I think we've got more problems with, say, a grade 2 listed cottage where you've got a conservation officer saying 'Oh no'; I don't know if you've experienced this recently, but that can be a problem. And actually you've got a grade 1 nationally important building where you need to do something with a lot of care and negotiation you can actually do it, but with an ordinary cottage you find you can't organically grow it because somebody's saying 'No'. And that I think seems quite strange.
91. NW: Because at the smaller scale it might come down to a single person's opinion...
92. E3: Exactly...
93. NW: ...as opposed to...
94. E3: ...exactly, I think that comes back to my consensus thing really. So the rules don't seem to be quite the same across the board. And if you're a cathedral or something and it needs a new space somehow a way can usually be found to do it. If you've got a cottage and you need a new kitchen there may be no way to do it, and that just seems a very, very bizarre thing to me. But I do think the whole thing has moved hugely as I said before, and I think it will continue to move, actually. And I think it's good that there are controls, because whatever we do

needs to be appropriate and very carefully done, because they are great buildings, aren't they, and you could really mess them up if everybody had just free rein it could be quite serious.

95. NW: And when you say you see it continuing to change, what can you see coming down the line?

96. E3: I just think some very good things are being done to historic buildings, so in a way you could argue that the bar is rising as far as quality is concerned, and everybody is showing that it is possible to do things really sensitively, but beautifully and using great materials, but actually not in a pastiche way, in a modern way. And I think just the more that is done, the more acceptable it becomes and therefore... it won't become easier, but it's just more acceptable, and so one won't have quite so much 'You can't do this' from the beginning. Whether somebody like SPAB and the Victorian Society will move from their positions I don't know, but they're quite still 'No, no, no'. I think the problem with their position is that the danger is that they don't get taken seriously because they're so negative. I mean I'm a member of the SPAB, have been for donkey's years, but I see them as an arm of the argument, and a very useful one, but I just think sometimes that they're a bit unrealistic.

97. NW: Henry, thank you, that's been very helpful.

98. E3: That's good, thank you, very thought-provoking.