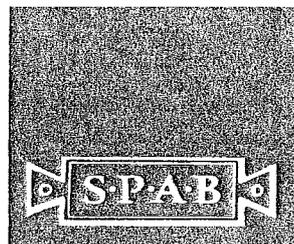


THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS
37 Spital Square London E1 6DY Telephone 020 7377 1644 info@spab.org.uk



Mr Henry Freeland RIBA
Freeland Rees Roberts Architects
25 City Road
Cambridge
CB1 1DP

Our ref: GDNS/SPAB/09

14th April 2009

Dear Henry

Wymondham Abbey

I write following the meeting of the Guardians of the Society earlier this week and would like to thank you also for the extra copy of your presentation which they saw in full. Some members of the committee have visited the Abbey previously.

As encouraged by Neil Birdsall the Guardians concentrated on the principles of the proposals. They noted that the extensions and alterations were very largely focussed at the ruined end of the Abbey.

In terms of the case made for the need of the new facilities the Guardians were not wholly convinced of the scale of the needs put forward. They suggested that some of the spaces deemed to be required in the Statement of Need, notably the proposed education facilities and activities, did not have to be attached to the existing building and might be accommodated elsewhere.

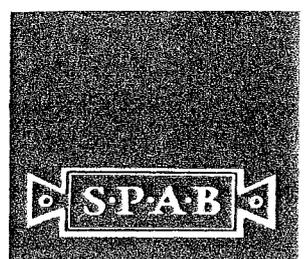
In the Society's view the ruined Monks' Tower says much about the history of the site and its fate after the Dissolution. The Guardians strongly agreed that the emptiness and verticality of this end of the building were integral to its striking character, and they felt that placing anything within the vacant tower would be a mistake. Re-using this part of the church was not in their opinion justified in view of the effect on the building's character and significance. They were concerned also that the extension on the south side of the tower should not compromise its verticality.

They contrasted the treatment of St Margaret's Chapel on the north side which they judged to be simple, elemental and appropriate, with the more elaborate proposals for the south side which they felt did not relate to the grain of the building and its existing architectural language. The line of an extension at the east end of the aisle should, in the Society's view, follow the line of the west wall of the east monastic tower and should not cross the base of the tower. If an extension were to be accepted on the south side we consider that the approach should be similar to that given to the north side so that the treatment of the two sides would be commensurate.

We hope that these initial comments are helpful to you and the parish as you take the latest set of proposals forward.

With good wishes

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Yours sincerely

Catherine Cullis
Churches and Cathedrals Officer

Cc by email Mr Neil Birdsall, RIBA
Mr David Eve, English Heritage
Mrs Jean Gosling, DAC Secretary
Mr Nick Warns, Joint Committee DAC Nominee