

Norwich Diocesan Advisory Committee

Report of a Visit

Church: Holt St Andrew

Grade II*

NNDC

07/114

Date of Visit: 9th October 2007

DAC Representatives: Chris Brown (Chairman), Hugh Richmond (Vice-Chairman), The Archdeacon of Lynn, Charles Carus, Stephen Heywood, The Revd Andrew Parsons, The Revd Canon John Simpson, Jean Gosling (DAC Secretary), Caroline Rawlings (Assistant to DAC Secretary).

Parish Representatives: The Revd Howard Stoker, Edward Hewitt (Churchwarden), Richard Copas (Churchwarden), Chris Thompson (Treasurer), Pat Whitmore (Fabric Officer), Pat Chaplow (Assistant Churchwarden), Roger Percival (Chairman, Development Committee), Judith Follows (Committee Member), and Philip Murrell (Committee Member).

Also present were representatives from: Franziska Callaghan (North Norfolk District Council), David Eve (English Heritage), and Jonathan Goodchild (Council for the Care of Churches)

Purpose of Visit:

An informal enquiry looking at the possibility of building a small extension on the north side of the church to contain toilet, kitchenette and meeting room; and the conversion of existing sheds to form church offices, toilet and small meeting room.

Father Howard Stoker outlined the history of the church. Holt is recorded as having both a church and market in the Domesday Book. The church is smaller than many of the neighbouring churches, as Holt did not share the wealth of its neighbours during the middle Ages. The chancel was rebuilt in the fourteenth century and the clerestory in the fifteenth century. In 1708 the church and a large section of the town were destroyed in a fire. The church was rebuilt in 1727 and was further restored by William Butterfield in 1863. The church is in a good state of repair with remedial work recommended in the quinquennial inspection report currently being undertaken.

The church is maintained as a house for prayer and worship by the current community. The church is committed to growth and is fully supportive of the Diocesan initiative "Committed to Growth". It is a eucharistic community with daily masses, and three services on Sundays, plus occasional services. They are currently experimenting with different forms of worship such as Taizé and Iona when there is fifth Sunday in the month. The church is in the heart of the community and wishes to reach out further to the wider community. The parish is currently undertaking a project for people unable to leave their own homes. A mid-week tea service is held in the Church Hall. The church community is growing numerically with 200 on the Electoral Roll and an average attendance of 130 each Sunday, which rises to 170 for special services such as Harvest Thanksgiving. Eighty people are actively involved in supporting the church. The result of the increase in growth is the need for extra facilities within the building.

Roger Percival outlined that in March 2007 the PCC identified a need for additional facilities and the St Andrew's Development Committee was formed. The following facilities were identified as needed as a matter of urgency:

Crèche (Sunday Service facility) - 15 children regularly attend the Sunday service. After the Collect they go into the vestry.

Area where choir can change – two Sundays a month the choir are present and currently have to change at the back of the church.

Kitchen - the church regularly hosts concerts and events at which the parish would like to serve refreshments.

Disabled toilet and baby changing facilities – the present toilet at the end of the vestry is difficult to access and is not suitable for the disabled.

Storage space – Storage space is at a premium with items currently stored in the tower, vestry and off site at the rectory.

Additional fire exit – The church has been told that it requires an additional fire exit. At present there is only one at the west end under the tower. With wooden floors this has raised concerns with the Fire Officer.

Possible area for choir practice – At present when the choir practice the whole church has to be heated.

Facilities for church welcome - Easter to October – The church has a rota for opening and welcoming visitors. At present there are no refreshment facilities and a key is required to access the vestry and the toilet.

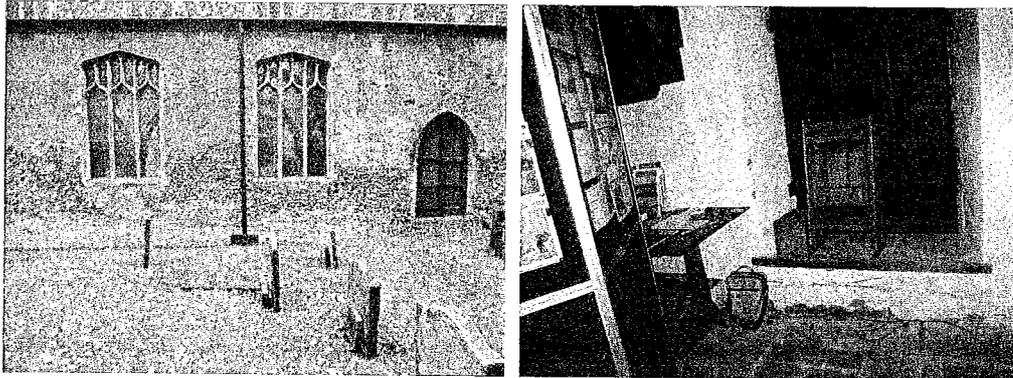
To relieve demand on clergy vestry – This is currently the only room available for alternative uses.

Multi-purpose meeting room – A need has been identified for a multi-purpose meeting room.

Parish office – The current parish office is located at the rectory which is not ideal. The parish would like to locate it if possible within the new building to bring all the facilities within one complex.

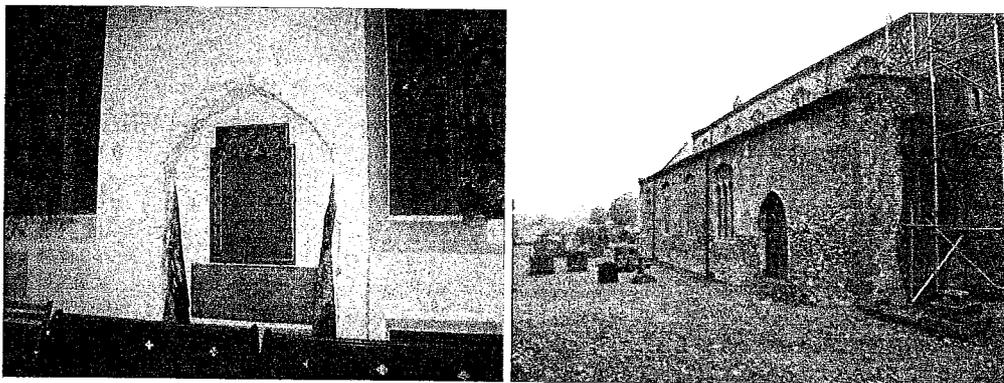
The working party has identified a site utilising the north door and is currently seeking guidance from the DAC on the proposals. Initial plans have been drawn up by a member of the congregation who is a retired architect. The Archdeacon of Lynn asked if the parish had approached their church architect, Ruth Blackman. Roger Percival said that she had been approached but had indicated that she was too busy at the moment to advise the parish. Ralph Barnett had suggested that they use a free architect from a group called 'Pro-help' where apparently there were two architects who had experience of working on churches, one of which was currently working on the project at Reepham. The Chairman reported that the committee had high regard for Ruth Blackman's work, and the Archdeacon advised the parish that they must use someone with experience in church buildings. Members were slightly concerned about the concept of using an architect for free and questioned how much control the parish would have over the project. (Subsequently, the Secretary ascertained that it is doubtful whether this project would be eligible for Pro-help as it is not a community project. The parish is therefore advised to seek the help of an experienced conservation architect without delay.) The Archdeacon felt that the parish should commission initial sketches from an approved architect, and he believed that the cost should not be too great. Funding for the project would come from selling a bungalow in the ownership of the PCC which has just been approved. Further fund raising would also be required as the total budget for the new building is in the region of £300,000.

The extension would be on the north side utilising the north door and running from the tower buttress to just short of the second window of the north aisle, it would be the same width as the clergy vestry. The building would have an east/west orientation which follows earlier advice from the DAC in 2001. Downstairs there would be a toilet, kitchen and a multi-purpose meeting room. Upstairs would house the parish office. Fr Howard felt that all the activities would not take place at the same time and could therefore be accommodated in a single multi-purpose room. Hugh Richmond felt that they would need specific furniture and storage for each activity.



The south porch was the original entrance into the church and can still be used as a fire exit. Charles Carus wondered whether with all the activity envisaged the building would be large enough or whether a slightly larger building would be better. Fr Howard indicated that there was an issue with graves which may have to be moved. Tentative informal enquiries have been made to the family concerned and from the initial response the relocation of the grave may be possible. David Eve and Jonathan Goodchild both felt that the parish needed to prioritise its needs. Roger Percival said that at present only the parish office was optional, the remaining elements were all urgently needed.

Charles Carus asked if the extension would be sunk to the floor level of the nave to produce a level access. Stephen Heywood believed that the masonry in the north aisle wall dated from the twelfth century, although there was a possibility that it may have been re-used. Members also noted that there had been a second door in the north aisle.



Members felt that the new building needed to be set back from the west end to ensure that the church looked balance from the west with the symmetry maintained. Members felt that this was particularly important as the main approach to the church is from the west. Franziska Callaghan felt that the building should commence further east of the buttress, and that its footprint should be longer and slimmer. Stephen Heywood felt that this could be achieved if the building was directly attached to the church which mitigates the scale, and looks as if it has just grown naturally. The two clear windows could be incorporated into the building, thus utilising borrowed light. David Eve and other DAC members generally supported this option as they felt that linked buildings resulted in unattractive, damp corridors, and unused space.

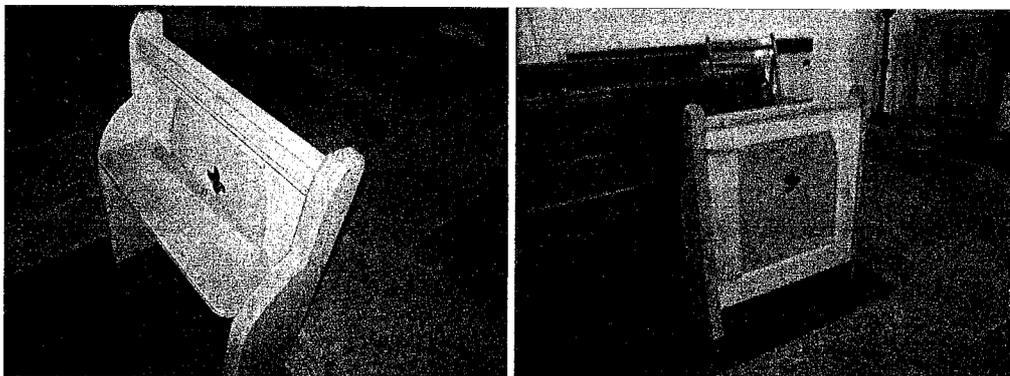
The Chairman asked if members were concerned about a two-storey building. Members felt that it depended on the levels and the detailing of the proposal. Fr Howard Stoker asked if soil had to be retained on site. Caroline Rawlings indicated that a ruling on this issue was awaited from the Chancellor. It was acknowledged that there would also be archaeological considerations.

Fr Howard asked if members had a preference for traditional or contemporary styling. David Eve felt that they needed to look at the building for guidance. He felt that the traditional form was possibly best although the detailing could be contemporary. Hugh Richmond felt that it was an issue of quality. David Eve said that the current proposals were better than an earlier version he had seen. Jonathan Goodchild also indicated that he was more positive about this version although he felt that the parish needed to look more closely at its Statement of Need. He was unsure about internalising the glazing and would like the parish to explore the possibility of a cloister style link utilising both north doors. Fr Howard expressed concern over the impact this would have on graves and trees.

Members queried why the Fire Officer had requested a second entrance as fire officers are not normally concerned with parish churches. However, if an additional exit was required members felt that it would be more satisfactory to lengthen the building in order to use the other doorway. Fr Howard stated that they had chosen a separate building as this would allow them to reclaim VAT which they believe is not the case when the building is attached. The Archdeacon of Lynn felt that the parish needs to check the position on VAT with the VAT office who he had always found to be quite helpful.

Hugh Richmond said that a building parallel to the church, rather than at right angles, was the right way to proceed; the building should not be too dominant in profile, perhaps with a stepping down of the roof lines which can then represent a stepping down of the hierarchy of the buildings. The west façade should be gabled. He also strongly urged the parish to employ the professional services of an experienced church architect. Fr Howard expressed concern about funding as the majority of the project was for the development of the church. Charles Carus said that there are many grant aiding bodies which give money specifically for churches and that the voluntary services based in the Maddermarket had information which could help them. David Eve indicated that he would send a separate response to the proposals.

Fr Howard asked the committee if they could look at a mock up of an application that the parish are about to submit to provide three oak choir desks/pew fronts, designed to be in keeping with the three pews to which they will be attached. The stalls will be made of oak to match the existing pews, with a slight modification to make the book shelves slightly larger. Members indicated a general sympathy with the proposals.



Summing up, the Archdeacon of Lynn confirmed that the detailing of the project would be crucial and therefore that the commissioning of a first-class architect was imperative. He also felt that the parish needed to identify the graves likely to be affected by the development and explore the pastoral concerns now. The Chairman indicated that this is only a small group from the DAC which will report back to the main committee its observations; obviously only the committee as a whole is able to make decisions. The Chairman indicated that the committee were delighted to have come to Holt, and thanked the parish for supporting the church and injecting life into the building. Fr Howard thanked everyone for coming and hoped that this time the project would succeed.

Caroline Rawlings
October 2007