

Diocese of Norwich Advisory Committee

Report of a Visit

Church: Taverham St Edmund Grade I BrdDC 14/136

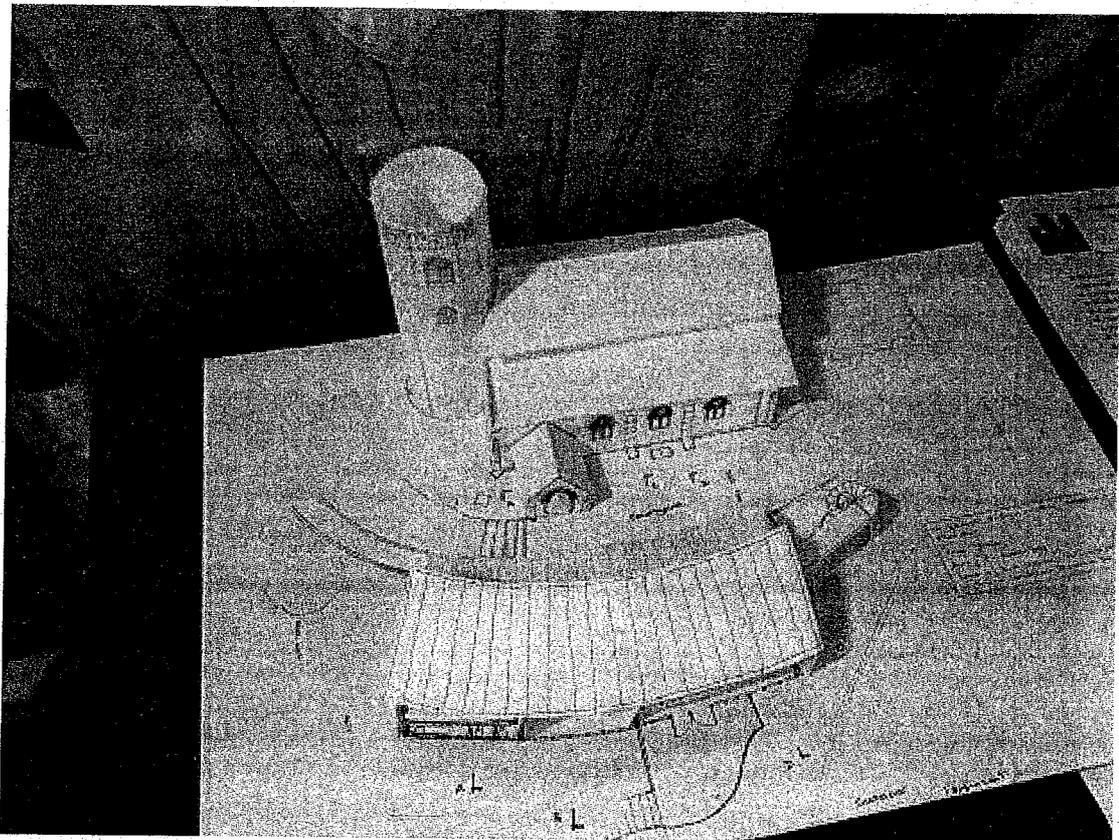
Date of Visit: 2nd October 2014

DAC Representatives: Mr Hugh Richmond (Vice Chariman), the Archdeacon of Norfolk, Mr A Rogerson (DAC), Mr Neil Birdsall (DAC), Mr N Sunter (DAC), Mr Charles Carus (DAC), Mr Matthew McDade (Executive Officer to the DAC)

Parish Representatives: Mrs R Seabrook (Licensed Lay Worker), Mrs S Beaver (Churchwarden), Mr D Johns (Fabric Officer)

Interested Parties: Mr T Allen (CBC), Ms L McIntyre (CBC), Mr D EVE (English Heritage), Ms E Chamberlin (English Heritage), Ms S Lyncliffe (Broadland District Council)

Church Architect: Ms Ruth Blackman



Purpose of Visit: new building on south side of church

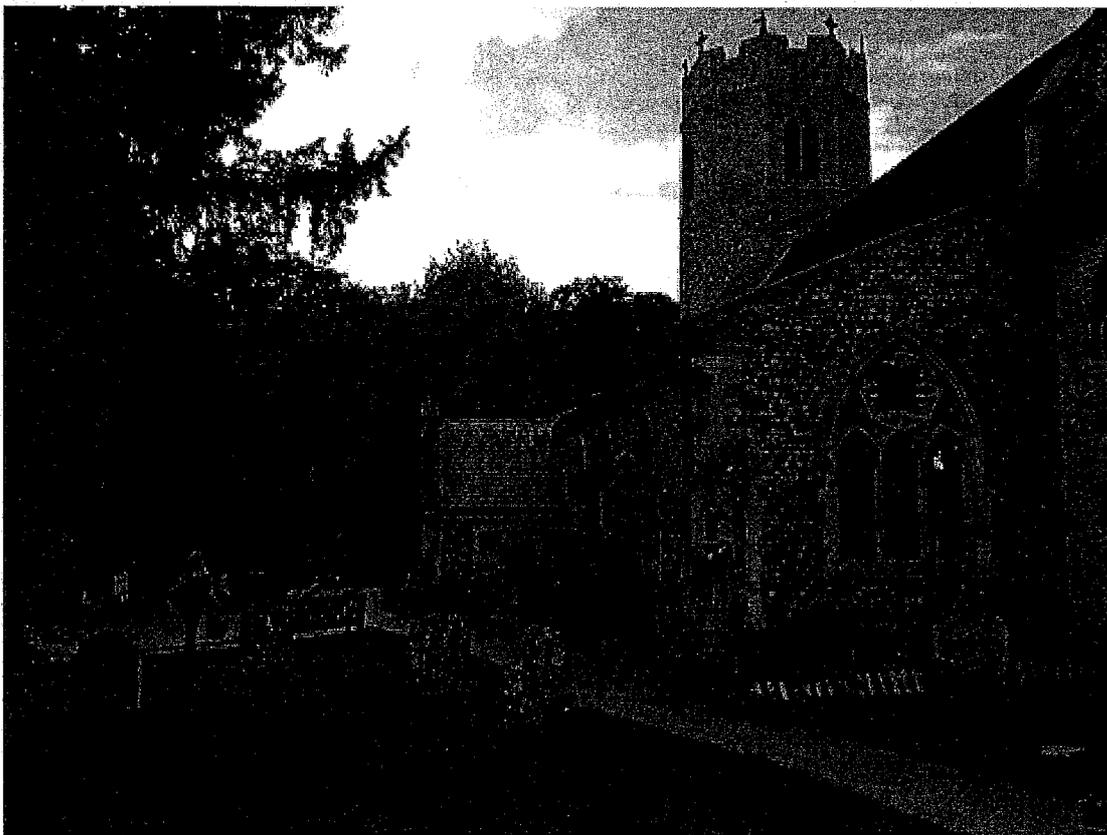
The parish was blessed with a vibrant and growing congregation with an increasing number of young families attending. The current configuration of the church was felt to not best serve the needs of the local community but the parish wished to alter the internal layout as little as possible. Therefore they were proposing to erect a new building (hall) on the south side of the church. This would comprise a large hall, small hall, meeting rooms and a room for counselling. It would also provide space for the parish office.

The new facility would allow a number of activities to take place in it that could not happen inside the church. These included work with the four local schools and community groups as well as for church functions.

Given the scale of the building it was noted that the Highways Agency would stipulate that spaces for 17 cars should be available. It was noted that parking already took place on the glebe land north of the church and that the primary school 200 yards up the road allowed the church to use its car parks.

The aesthetics and practicality of the proposed new building was discussed at length and the following points made:

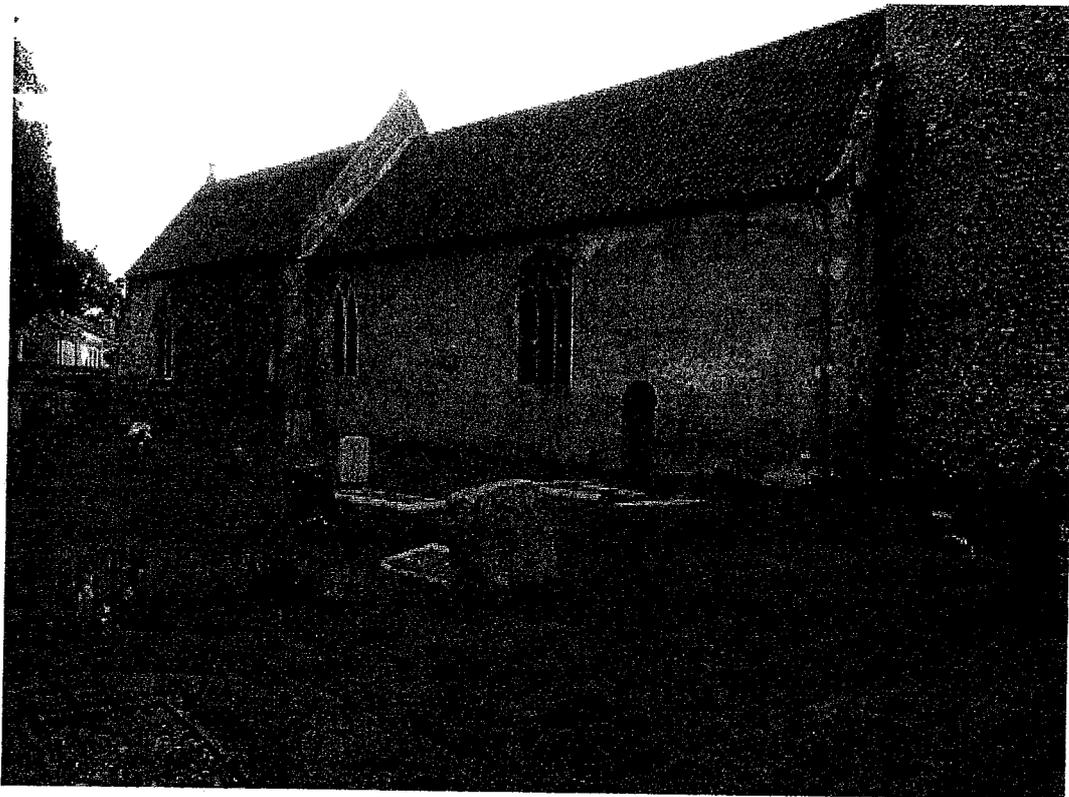
1. The concept behind the hall was to emphasise the liminal spaces within and around the church and to accentuate the concept of journey through and with the architecture. It was noted that an external narthex would, in effect, be created and that the model had clear Trinitarian overtones.
2. A link between the church and hall had been considered by the parish but it was felt that this would not be appropriate and would alter the concept behind the first point.
3. When it was asked why the hall needed to be two storeys high it was stated that this would allow for more space to be created, lessening the footprint of the building whilst allowing an exciting design opportunity.
4. The fact that lots of unmarked graves would be underneath the footprint was stated and the question of the foundations was raised. These would either be piles or floated on slabs: trench foundations would cause too much disturbance. The archaeological sensitivity of the site was noted and it was confirmed that the Historic Environment Service was considering the application.
5. The topography of the churchyard was inclined away from the church to the south and therefore pontoon levels would be required.
6. Possible loss of light levels was discussed but not felt to be an issue by the parish.
7. In order for the hall to be erected several lime trees would need to be felled. The parish stated that the latest inspection report recorded the fact that the likely remaining lifespan of the trees was only around 5 years.



After the discussion relating to the rationale for the hall those present were asked to provide their considered opinion.

English Heritage and the local planning authority felt that, in essence, the hall was too large and too close to the church. They believed that an internal reordering, possibly coupled with a new building on the north boundary or attached to the north side of the church would be more acceptable. The southern new build option competed with the church and obscured the view from the south side. The acceptability to the Planning Department could be compromised and it was possible that permission would be denied. A rethink was therefore in order.

DAC members formed a different view. They felt that the scheme in its current configuration showed promise and architectural flair. Whilst they did feel that a strong case had been made for such a building, the size of the hall was questioned as no reasoned case had been put such a large development. This would be required. The DAC members did not agree to the north side being developed. This was partially due to the historically much more important north elevation (with its rare Saxon doorway and medieval windows) was highly sensitive to change, whilst the southern elevation had been seriously compromised. It was stated that there would be a large number of graves on the north side of the church and this would be archaeologically very sensitive. It was also noted that the roofline would need to be high for any north extension and that borrowed light would need to be factored into the project, as the interior of the church would be considerably gloomier than at present. Finally the northern option would cause the 'journey' around and through the building to be seriously compromised.



The Vice Chairman thanked representatives of the parish for their presentation of their proposals and the members of the DAC sub-committee for their reactions and comments. He explained that the purpose of the visit was to provide the members of the sub-committee with a proper understanding of the works and their effect on the church so that the case could be accurately reported to the full committee of the DAC. He also explained that the decision whether or not to recommend the proposals to the Chancellor rested with the full committee of the DAC and could only be judged on the information contained in the application for a faculty submitted by the parish and its agents.

Matthew McDade