



ENGLISH HERITAGE

EAST OF ENGLAND REGION

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Our ref: E00003154

1 December 2010

Dear Mr Cubitt

Notification under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Orders 2010

LOCATION: CHURCH OF ST ANDREW AND ST PETER, BLOFIELD, NORFOLK

PROPOSED WORK: Proposed Creation of New Facilities

Thank you for meeting me at the church to discuss your proposals for development in the nave and tower earlier this year. I have since received a copy of the proposals from Terry Norton including the present scheme and previous versions numbered one to four.

I fully understand the situation in which the parish finds itself and the ambition of the congregation to increase facilities within the building to make it a venue for a greater variety of functions. The plans present various versions ways providing a room in and projecting from the base of the tower with the WC in its existing position and a new kitchen in the south aisle. Linking these elements together has resulted in a design that effectively creates a large western gallery extending into a ringing floor in the tower and to roof over the aisle facilities.

Although western galleries have a long history in parish churches and are sometimes found to extend into aisles, at its fullest extent in the latest design the enclosed area will be a very substantial incursion into the church. The timber screen behind the box pews does create a 'natural' division in the building, but would also obscure views into the church from the north door. When covered by a ceiling extending from the gallery to the WC a visitor to the church would enter a wholly enclosed space with no relationship to the main interior of the building. This seems to me to be a rather unsatisfactory entrance to a building of such grandeur and quite against the traditional experience of entering an English parish church.



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Secondly, the existing screen behind the pews will separate the meeting room from the rest of the church. Creating a room with views in from and out into the nave is not really possible, so the resulting room could have an internalised character that does not share any of the qualities of space the rest of the building enjoys.

In addition to these factors are the general principles of enclosing such a substantial portion of the building and the strong presence the gallery might have when seen from the east. Both of these are of concern and I remain unconvinced by the latest design.

I should say that the DACs suggestion that the east face of the meeting room be curved away from the screen does improve the design as it compensates for some of the problems I have discussed above. Even if this approach were taken, however, I really do not see how the glazed canopy could be successful. I suspect it would be built at an awkward angle, unrelated to anything else in the building, would disrupt the simplicity of the gallery edge in relation to the screen, would be difficult to detail and very quickly become dusty and unattractive.

Looking at the previous versions I feel that many of the above problems are avoided by the relative simplicity of the designs. A smaller gallery, such as in scheme number two, seems more in proportion to the west end of the nave and allows a more meaningful space between the new work and the pew screen. It does not, of course, provide as large a meeting room. However, I see no reason why the meeting room doors should not follow the line of the gallery or even why the stair (perhaps in a different form) should not be outside the room, leading up to the gallery. This would allow a significant increase in the meeting room's size. As I have already indicated, if an acceptable scheme were designed I might not object to the removal of the 1920s tower arch screen, allowing a flexible new screen to connect the two spaces if desired. With the meeting room wall at the gallery line the gallery floor might also be able to continue across the south aisle kitchen, enclosing it and linking it to the meeting room, as desired. A great advantage of this is that the glass lobby at the north entrance, marked on the plan, would make a much more suitable introduction to the church.

This is just one version of one of the previous schemes, but I do think there are a variety of options to be explored that could provide a significant amount of flexible space, but would not have quite the intensity of impact on the church interior as the latest design. I hope you and your architect can return to some of the previous idea afresh and I look forward to seeing the result in due course.



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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

pp Andrew Northfield

David Eve

Inspector of Historic Buildings

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cc: SPAB

Norwich DAC

Church Buildings Council



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