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Church Buildings Council

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Church Buildings Officer

Our ref.: CBC(14)246

20 November 2014

(by email: enquiries@birdsallswashblackman.co.uk)

Dear Ruth,

Taverham, St Edmund (Diocese of Norwich) Proposed new hall

Thank you for referring proposals for St Edmund, Taverham to the Church Buildings Council. Following the site visit with the Norwich DAC on 2 October 2014, the Council considered this case at its recent meeting. Its advice is set out below.

The Council noted that St Edmund's has two Sunday services and regular evening, mid-week and Messy Church services, and it is used by four schools in the parish, while some mid-week groups use the rectory. The parish is restricted in accommodating activities in the church due to its small size and the fixed pews, which it wishes to retain due to their aesthetic value. It is understood that the parish therefore proposes to erect a detached building immediately to the south of the church. This will be a two-storey structure, modern in design and materials, and incorporating meeting rooms, a parish office, WCs, a kitchen and storage space.

The Council recognised the need for more space and was sympathetic to the desire of the parish to expand its offering on the site. It supported the principle of a detached building. It was satisfied that the parish had examined the options for the location and felt able to support the choice of the south side of the church. It noted that this is less significant than the north side, which displays more evidence of the church's early development. It was also satisfied that the parish is considering how to mitigate the archaeological risks of the new structure, and encouraged a proper archaeological assessment at an early stage.

The Council did not feel opposed to the principle of a modern design, provided it was of the highest quality in detail, materials and workmanship, and subordinate to the listed building. While noting that the design is at an early stage, it felt the elevations were appropriate (noting that the exterior staircase is likely to be removed) but queried the inspiration behind the curved plan, which did not clearly relate to the existing building.

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However, the Council raised serious concerns over the size of the new building, in the context of a relatively small church. It acknowledged that the parish is keen to provide space for significant expansion, but felt that it would be more appropriate to 'future-proof' the proposed hall with a design that allowed for extension.. The Council therefore felt that the parish should re-examine its needs and consider how the size of the extension could be reduced to a single storey and to a smaller footprint, potentially in conjunction with minor reordering of the west end of the church.

The Council also raised significant concerns over the proposed removal of trees in order to accommodate the new building, particularly as an arboricultural report was not made available. It emphasised the need for persuasive evidence of the Lime trees being in poor condition and a full assessment of their significance before these proposals could be considered. It suspected that the avenue could date to the 1860s reordering, which would make the trees of some significance. The Council was also concerned about sacrificing the Yew trees at the boundary wall and felt that these could easily be retained if the building footprint of the new building is reduced.

We hope that these comments are useful to the DAC and the parish. The Council would welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposals again in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa McIntyre
Church Buildings Officer

cc: Matthew McDade – Norwich DAC Secretary
Rev Rachel Seabrook – St Edmund
David Eve – English Heritage
Sara Crofts – SPAB
Sarah Hinchcliffe/Lynette Faulkes – Broadlands District Council

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