

MEETING:	PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE
DATE:	15 MAY 2018
TITLE OF REPORT:	<p>174528 - PROPOSED SINGLE STOREY EXTENSIONS TO NORTH CHAPEL AND TO NORTH SIDE OF TOWER TO REPLACE EXISTING PLANT ROOM, DISABLED DROP-OFF PARKING BAY AND LIFT ENCLOSURE ON NORTH-WEST SIDE OF CHURCH AND GLAZING OF SOUTH PORCH TO CREATE DRAUGHT LOBBY. INTERIOR ALTERATIONS TO CREATE MULTI-USE VENUE. CHANGE OF USE FROM D1 CLASS ONLY TO D1, A3 AND D2 USES AT ST JAMESS CHURCH, CASTLE STREET, WIGMORE, LEOMINSTER, HR6 9UD</p> <p>For: Mr Casbourne per Mr Matthew Hollingsworth, 4 Haycroft Road, Sherborne, Cheltenham, GL54 3DY</p>
WEBSITE LINK:	https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200142/planning_services/planning_application_search/details?id=174528&search=174528
Reason Application submitted to Committee – Redirection	

Date Received: 1 December 2017

Ward: Mortimer

Grid Ref: 341291,269088

Expiry Date: 31 March 2018

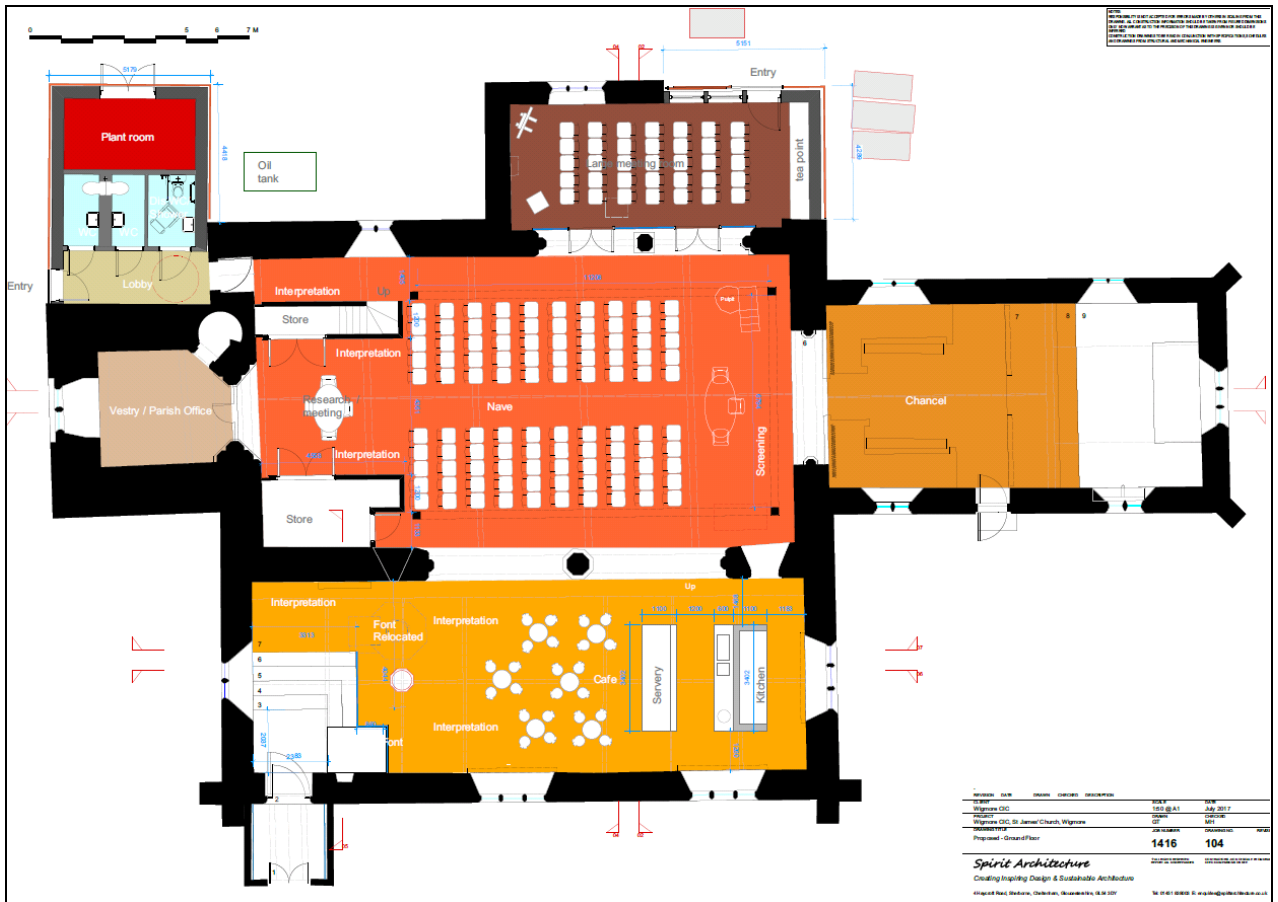
Local Member: Councillor CA Gandy

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 St James' Church is a Grade I Listed church that lies in an elevated hillside position to the north-west of the village of Wigmore, within the Wigmore Conservation Area. To its south lies Castle Street that is an adopted road serving a number of residential properties. Access to the Church is via either Castle Street (U92020) and then School Lane (a private road that is also a PROW) or from Church Street to its east.
- 1.2 The overall site included within the application is the Church, churchyard area immediately surrounding the building to the boundary walls and the area of land to the north and north west of the building which falls away sharply through the trees to the A4110 below. The area has a public right of way through it to the road.
- 1.3 The Church is visually prominent in the wider area and landscape due to its elevated position, raised above the surrounding houses. The site also has a number of trees of significance, some of which have Tree Preservation Orders on them and a tree survey supports the application.

- 1.4 The application that seeks planning permission for the change of use of the building and associated works is supported by a significant amount of information contained within the Historic Impact and Supporting Statement
- <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents?id=405a819a-f5fc-11e7-8cb0-0050569f00ad>
- 1.5 As it stands the Church now has “Festival Church” status, which means that there are due to be only 4 services a year alongside weddings and funerals, and while the church wardens currently keep the church open during the day, this may not be possible long term. The submission advises that it is possible that the church will have to remain shut for long periods in its current form and use. The church currently has no basic facilities – no running water and hence no toilets or kitchen, an antiquated electricity supply, a defunct heating system, neglected and poor pathways, very slippery and muddy in wet weather and access for people with mobility problems is very difficult if not impossible. The lack of facilities makes it very difficult to run any fund-raising events and those that are possible barely provide sufficient donations to pay even the basic bills like insurance and electricity. The applicants advise that the church will close in the foreseeable future unless this project is undertaken.
- 1.6 It is intended that the project will re-order the church to make it an Interpretive and Heritage Centre for Wigmore, its castle and the surrounding area and return the nave to its original use as a busy community space. The project will improve access, replace inadequate lighting and heating, connect to mains water and drainage, create flexible exhibition, heritage, private study and refreshment spaces and install state of the art audio-visual facilities, thereby finding a contemporary role for the building. The aim is that in putting it to a commercial and financially sustainable use it will not only help safeguard the building but offer a unique community space and visitor facility for many years to come.
- 1.7 The “Wigmore centre” will be run by the Wigmore Centre Community Interest Company (CIC), which is a “not for profit” organisation that will “lease” the church facility on a long term lease to allow it to run the wide programme of proposed events. The scheme, which is part of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application to fund the project, has been created by a volunteer-based team of Wigmore residents to run and host events for the local and wider community as well as providing a café facility for residents and visitors to the Church and Castle sites along with interpretation exhibitions on the local history of the church and the village of Wigmore.
- 1.8 The current use of St James’ Church falls under the D1 category “Non-residential Institutions” which includes “Places of Worship”. This use class would also cover some of the other activities proposed under descriptions such as: “Art Gallery” and; “Non-residential education and training centre.” In addition to this Use Class the building will be used for Class D2 Activities such as: “Music and Concert Hall” Alongside this, the proposals include a café facility which would fall under the A3 “Restaurants and Cafés” category which will be open on a daily basis.
- 1.9 The proposed primary use of the facility will be to offer “live” Theatre, Opera, Ballet and other events via Satellite streaming linked to National facilities, these forms of live streaming occur in large cinemas, but not in regional areas in this part of Herefordshire so this will greatly improve the offering to the local community. The application advises that one sizeable event is to be scheduled per week with the maximum capacity of the venue being 120 people: - however event organisers expect the typical number of attendees to be around 70, attracting both local residents and those from further afield.
- 1.10 In addition there will be live music recitals, spoken word performances and talks held in the facility on a regular basis. It is proposed that the facility will work alongside the Wigmore School to provide educational links to the school and wider community by providing research areas and record the history of the village, and the wider community. Meeting rooms will be hired for local and wider usage to allow larger community groups to meet and use the facility.

- 1.11 Works to places of worship in use by one of the exempt religious denominations are exempt from the requirement for listed building and planning permission for relevant demolition in a conservation area but are not exempt from the requirements for planning permission. Where the exemption applies the practical effect is that listed building consent is not required for the alteration or extension of a listed ecclesiastical building. These matters are considered by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) who consult with the appropriate amenity bodies and interested parties much like the application process for planning permission.
- 1.12 Whilst internal works are not being considered by the Local Planning Authority, the proposed ground floor plans are inserted below to assist understanding of the uses and proposals and to aid understand of the siting of the extensions to the Church that are explored further below.



1.13 The key areas considered by this application are described in more detail below:

1.14 South Aisle

This area is a continuation of the floor level of the Nave and increased towards the south porch and new steps up into the church level with a balustrade. The south aisle will then house the café area, kitchen facility and interpretation display areas. The application is supported by images of how these may appear internally.

1.15 Provision of Toilet accommodation

The toilets (including disabled accommodation) are accommodated within a new extension, which replaces the existing plantroom and oil tank to the north west of the building. This structure would be constructed in lightweight construction with Corten steel cladding and would also house a new plant room.

An image of the proposed extension supplied in the Heritage report is inserted below:

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Ms Kelly Gibbons on 01432 261781



1.16 North Chapel: Re-instatement of the North Chapel East section to provide a multi-purpose meeting room

This area will be a continuation of the floor level of the Nave with the current timber deck step removed. This area would provide a 40 seat meeting room area, increasing the current chapel in the form of an extension to the north elevation of the church. This extension, constructed of Corten Steel, is located within the footprint of an historic structure that was recorded on the site. The existing arch would be reopened to allow a physical connection to the new extension. In association with this it would be necessary to remove the infill side wall of the North Chapel to reconnect the spaces to enable the original footprint of the North Chapel to be re-formed.

An image of the proposed extension supplied in the Heritage report is inserted below:



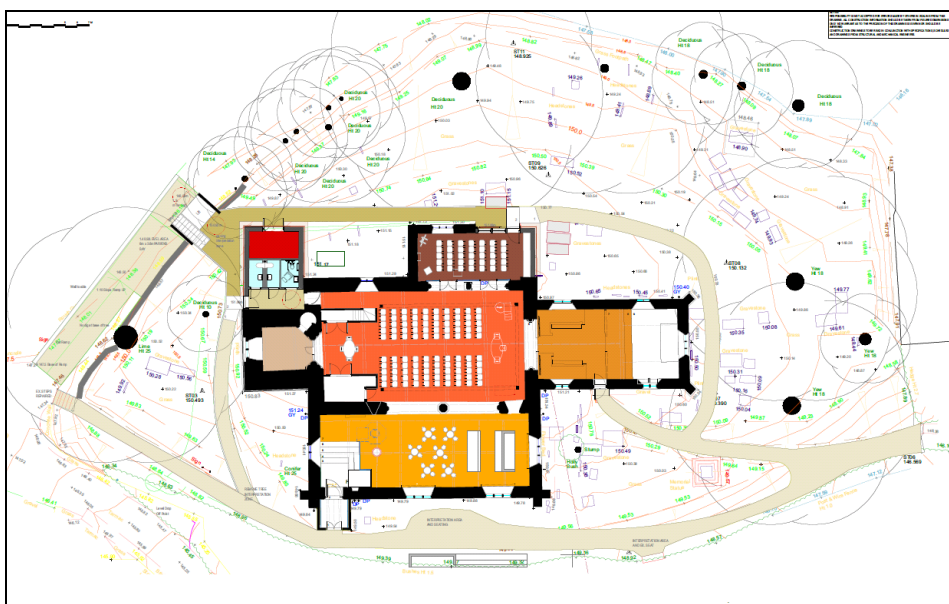
1.17 External Access

At present there is no parking at the site that can be considered DDA compliant. The proposal includes the formation of a level disabled drop-off parking bay (6mx3.6m overall) to the north west of the church accessed from School Lane. This will require a concrete supporting structure to be formed into the bank to the north-west and the footpath route altered to accommodate the parking bay. A lift and stair access, again in Coreten Steel is proposed at the end of the parking area to provide level access to the north side of the church round to the North meeting room and door by the Plant Room WCs.

An image of the proposed lift access, with the proposed extension for the toilet accommodation also detailed, when viewed from School Lane, has been supplied in the Heritage report and is inserted below:



The existing pathway from the East is sub-standard and as such should be improved to create a steady gradient with shallow steps; this will be extended to the Chancel door on the south side. This pathway will not be DDA compliant. The East access path will also be linked to the North side Café area. The site plan is inserted below for ease of reference.



1.18 Following responses received to initial consultation, some additional information was submitted, addressing matters of detail and also in relation to queries in respect of parking. The initial

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Ms Kelly Gibbons on 01432 261781

traffic report considers the issue and proposes that parking be provided at Wigmore School and the village Hall. Further information was provided, including letters from both the School and village hall in respect of the agreement to the strategy. The matter is explored further in the officer's appraisal.

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy

SS1	-	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS4	-	Movement and Transportation
SS6	-	Environmental Quality and Local Distinctiveness
SS7	-	Addressing Climate Change
RA5	-	Re-use of Rural Buildings
RA6	-	Rural Economy
SC1	-	Social and Community Facilities
MT1	-	Traffic Management, Highway Safety and Promoting Active Travel
E4	-	Tourism
LD1	-	Landscape and Townscape
LD2	-	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LD3	-	Green Infrastructure
LD4	-	Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
SD1	-	Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency
SD3	-	Sustainable Water Management and Water Resources
SD4	-	Wastewater Treatment and River Water Quality
ID1	-	Infrastructure Delivery

The Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy policies together with any relevant supplementary planning documentation can be viewed on the Council's website by using the following link:-

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200185/local_plan/137/adopted_core_strategy/2

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

In particular chapters:

Introduction - Achieving sustainable development

Section 1	-	Building a strong competitive economy
Section 3	-	Supporting a prosperous
Section 4	-	Promoting sustainable communities
Section 6	-	Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
Section 7	-	Requiring good design
Section 8	-	Promoting healthy communities
Section 11	-	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 12	-	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

2.3 National Planning Practice Guidance

2.4 Wigmore Neighbourhood Development Plan has completed its Regulation 14 consultation and the Parish Council are considering the responses before progressing to Regulation 16. At this time the NDP has limited weight in the decision making process,

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/3121/wigmore_group_neighbourhood_development_plan

3. Planning History

- 3.1 No Planning Applications of relevance are recorded on the site although there have been some applications for works to trees.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 **Historic England: Objection comment 17th January 2018**

Summary

St James is a Grade I listed building in the Wigmore Conservation Area. The adaptation of the building to create the Wigmore Centre whilst retaining its use as a place of worship is an ambitious proposal involving extension, alteration and access works that impact on the significance of the listed building in terms of its interior, exterior and setting. Historic England does not object to the principle of adapting the church to create a multi-use venue including the creation of extensions. However, the lack of detailed information and concerns regarding the design and appearance of the access arrangements and extensions and their impact on the significance of the listed building mean that we are unable to support the application in its current form.

Historic England Advice

St James is a Grade I listed building in the Wigmore Conservation Area. The significance of the building rests in its evidential, historical and communal values with its aesthetic value being more fortuitous than designed. The history of alteration culminating in the Bodley restoration of 1868 means that the interior is a relatively unadorned, simple space which is less outstanding in its appearance than the exterior with its herring-bone masonry and commanding position in the town.

The adaptation of the building to create the Wigmore Centre whilst retaining its use as a place of worship is an ambitious proposal involving extension, alteration and access works that impact on the significance of the listed building in terms of its interior, exterior and setting.

Section 3 of the NPPF relating to the importance of retaining and developing local services in rural areas including meeting places and places of worship, and Section 8 which deals with promoting healthy communities by ensuring that established facilities are able to develop and modernise are both relevant to the application. Section 7 requiring good design is particularly relevant given the architectural aspirations of the proposal and the heritage sensitivity of the building and site.

The requirements of these sections are implicit in paragraphs 131 and 137 of Section 12 which require planning applications to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets while putting them to a viable use that contributes to the sustainability of communities and making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraphs 132 and 134 are clear that, as a Grade I listed building the conservation of St James should be given great weight and that any harm to significance resulting from alteration or loss requires a clear and convincing justification including public benefit.

In this case Historic England provided pre-application advice on draft proposals which was supportive of the principle of broadening the use of the church to achieve a sustainable future and appreciative of the real challenges faced in achieving this. We welcomed the approach that introduced contemporary design in the historic context but advised that design details are critical to delivering this whilst avoiding harm to significance. We therefore recommended that detailed drawings were produced for the extensions and the new work within the church. In assessing the impact of the submitted proposals we are therefore disappointed that more

detailed drawings have not been submitted. In their absence we cannot be confident that the impact of the works is not unjustifiably harmful or that modifications to the proposals might not result in a scheme which conserved the significance of the building to a greater degree. Thus, while we do not object to the principle of adapting the church to create a multi-use venue including the creation of extensions, we are not able to support the application in its current form.

Particular areas of concern are as follows:

The proposed external elevations are presented in a diagrammatic form that does not convey the appearance of the historic church, the proposed extensions or the relationship of the building to local ground levels. These fall away from the church on the north side suggesting that substantial plinth courses will be required for the extensions which are not shown. In the absence of more detailed information Historic England does not therefore have confidence that the impact of the proposals is without harm.

The proposed internal plans, elevations and illustrative images are also presented in diagrammatic form. It is difficult to tell what material finish is proposed for the gantry structure, how its construction will be reflected in its appearance, why its horizontal rail needs to be the depth that is proposed, what structure will support the drop-down screen in front of the chancel arch, how this will appear relative to the chancel arch when in the retracted position, how the vertical members support the balcony at the west end and are linked to its floor structure and balustrade and whether the vertical members are entirely free-standing or are supported in any way by connection to historic fabric. Historic England has similar concerns and questions in respect of the construction, materials and appearance of the stores below the balcony, the servery, kitchen and glazed balustrade (and platform lift?) in the south aisle, the tea point in the north chapel, the curtains to the chancel and glazing and doors to the south porch. This information is important in justifying the impact of the proposals on significance.

The impact of the new vehicular disabled access is impossible to assess without sections through the site from the church to the boundary including ground levels of the footpaths and the neighbouring bungalow which demonstrate the impact of the proposed earthworks on the character of the historically important eminence on which the church sits. The information provided suggests that the platform lift and steps will form an intrusive visual feature in the setting of the listed building that will have a negative impact on significance. Without information on the materials and construction of the new access road and paths in the churchyard and sections elevations and materials for the new retaining wall, platform lift, steps and railings it is not possible to be confident that the impact on significance is acceptable and without harm.

In addition to the general concerns raised regarding the external elevations we are concerned that the extension to the north elevation of the tower will appear as an intrusive contemporary structure that has a negative impact on the aesthetic and historical value of the listed building in its setting. The drawings lack details (sheet sizes, door design, drainage, roof structure, junction with historic fabric) that are critical to understanding the architectural quality of the proposed Coreten box. We are concerned that the dimensions of the extension and its relationship to ground levels as it extends northwards will create a structure that fails to enhance either the designed or fortuitous aesthetic quality of the listed building. In the absence of the detailed design work needed to convey the success of this design we question whether a less ambitious design concept might not conserve the significance of the listed building to a greater degree.

We have similar concerns regarding the extension of the north chapel. The drawings do not illustrate the appearance or materials of the roof, the foliage design of the Coreten steel, visual impact of necessary rainwater goods and location of the threshold relative to external ground levels. The submitted drawings do not convince us that the high quality of design required to

conserve the significance of the listed building has been achieved. We would question whether significance would not be better conserved by a less ambitious proposal that extended the existing chapel roof in its current tiled form with traditional drainage while using a contemporary approach below eaves. It is clear from the archaeological report submitted that the foundations of the historic chapel survive below ground, additional information is required to demonstrate that these are conserved.

The construction of a glazed lobby in the south porch is indicated only by lines on the proposed floor plans with no construction details or allowance for existing bench seating. In our pre-application advice Historic England considered that glazing here was worth exploring as we regarded the cumulative impact of a lobby and meeting room pod in the south aisle as harmful to significance. The latter has been omitted from the submitted scheme and the proposal drawings do not provide confidence that the latter will conserve the significance of the listed building. We therefore query whether, given the glazing proposed for the balustrade in the south aisle, an internal lobby would not more effectively conserve significance.

The existing floor finishes are a particularly attractive feature of the church interior and contribute much to its aesthetic quality and a considerable amount to the evidential and historical value derived from Bodley's phase of restoration. While Historic England does not object to the principle of raising floor levels to achieve level access, we consider that relaying the existing materials in their existing pattern at the new level would better conserve significance and the individual character of the south aisle and nave. The proposals refer to the re-use of some of the materials but no detail of the laying pattern is provided, nor is there information regarding the proposed floor finishes in the existing and extended north chapel. This information is needed in order to evaluate the impact of the proposed changes.

Finally we are concerned that in our experience storage is a critical ingredient to the success of a flexible multi-use venue. The proposal requires large numbers of chairs and the need for other furniture and equipment may develop over time. In the context of an ambitious architectural vision for the interior in which the quality of spaces is an important element of significance, the very limited storage accommodation currently proposed is a concern in terms of sustainability.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, we consider that the issues outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 131, 132, 137 and Section 7 of the NPPF.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If, however, you propose to determine the application in its current form, please treat this as a letter of objection, inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

4.2 **Historic England: Amended comments 5th March 2018: Objection maintained**

As stated in our letter of 17 January 2018, Historic England does not object to the principle of adapting St James Church to accommodate additional uses. We welcome the provision of further information regarding the design of the extensions but consider that the application still lacks sufficient information regarding access arrangements. We remain concerned that the amount and design of the proposed alterations and extensions results in harm and does not meet the requirements of the NPPF to conserve and better reveal the significance of this Grade I listed building.

Historic England Advice

Our letter of 17 January 2018 advised that Historic England did not object to the principle of adapting St James Church to create a multi-use venue but that we were unable to support the application in its current form due to the following concerns:

1. The lack of detailed information
2. The design and appearance of access arrangements and extensions and their impact on significance

You have consulted us on the more detailed information that has been provided regarding the vehicular access arrangements, the plant room extension the north chapel extension and the glazing of the south porch. The applicant has suggested that the internal alterations are a matter for faculty jurisdiction rather than planning permission, our comments regarding these have not therefore been addressed. On this basis we remain concerned that internal elements of the scheme that are critical to the change of use will have an unjustifiably negative impact on significance.

In respect of the additional information provided on the vehicular and pedestrian access, platform lift and steps, we remain concerned that the access will form an intrusive visual feature resulting in harm to the significance of the church and we are unable to support this element of the proposals.

The provision of additional information on the plant room extension is welcomed. The arrangement of Coreten panels has been clarified though we remain unclear about the detail with the concealed gutter and regret that the boiler flue punctures the east wall. We note that at its northwest corner the floor level of the extension is about 0.8m above natural ground level necessitating a raised path supported on Gabian baskets with an unspecified handrail. Where the floor level is closer to the ground level (on the eastern side) a washed gravel dressing retained by an oak plinth is proposed. In our view, the result is an extension which appears isolated from the ground and contrasts awkwardly and unproductively with the natural junction made by the historic building with the ground. The sections suggest considerable excavation for foundations and potential archaeological impact. We remain concerned that this extension will have a negative impact on the significance of the listed building by virtue of its size, proportion and design.

We welcome the additional information regarding the extension to the north chapel which allows a fuller understanding of the appearance of the building, particularly the roof and its junction with the walls. However, we are not convinced that taken together with the plant room extension, the design preserves and enhances the listed building. As stated in our letter of 17 January 2018, we consider that a less ambitious and perhaps softer design could conserve significance to a greater degree.

We welcome the additional information on the glazing to the south porch which has addressed our concerns regarding the fixings required and the impact on the appearance of this part of the church. We remain concerned however, that the relationship of the existing timber south door to its stonework surround will not physically allow the introduction of a useable glass door. The loss of the timber door would harm the significance of the building, this element of the scheme therefore needs further clarification before a decision should be made.

To conclude, Historic England remains concerned that the amount and design of the proposed alterations and extensions does not meet the requirements of paragraph 131 and 137 of the NPPF requiring new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and better reveal significance, or that the harm we have identified has been justified in accordance with paragraph 132. On this basis we remain unable to support the application.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If, however, you propose to determine the application in its current form, please treat this as a letter of objection, inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

4.3 Georgian Group: No comment

Thank you for consulting with The Georgian Group in regards to the above application. The date of the listed building falls outside of our remit, we kindly defer to other amenity societies,

4.4 Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings: 25th January 2018: Objection

We have already commented on a previous iteration of this scheme under the Ecclesiastical Exemption. While the impact of the scheme has subsequently been reduced by the omission of certain elements, we remain very concerned about what is being proposed for this grade I listed building.

In general terms, the society is sympathetic to the desire to upgrade the facilities and improve accessibility to the historic church and churchyard. The challenges of up-keeping a large church building, with a relatively small congregation are fully appreciated. In principle, therefore, we would wish support improvements to the accessibility to the site, including the provision of a sympathetically designed extension to the northwest of the church, to include WC provision. Similarly, we would not object, in principal, to the reinstatement of the easternmost bay of the north aisle (extant in the mid-19th Century), with the proviso that it is sensitive to the principle listed building in terms of its design and detailing. However, on the basis of the information provided, we do not feel that a balance between proposed use and heritage impact has yet been achieved. While we are not opposed to the use of modern materials, to differentiate new work from old, we would question whether the bold design statement made by the introduction of Corten is the most appropriate response to this location. In our view, a material pallet which focuses on reducing the visual impact of the intervention would be more acceptable.

The volume of the western extension is also a cause for concern, being flush with the West face of the tower and greater in width than it. Consideration should be given to reducing the overall footprint and addressing the relationship between the two structures, so the new addition is set back slightly, and reads as subordinate to the historic structure.

We accept the need for a disabled access lift, and agree that the proposed location is the most suitable. However the present design reads as large rectangular steel block, which jars with the rural landscape setting and detracts from views of the church beyond. Consideration should be given to how the visual impact can be mitigated. This might involve increasing visual permeability and/or the use of traditional materials to screen the structure, so that it blends more effectively into its rural setting.

Overall, we are extremely concerned that the Heritage Impact Statement suggests that this Grade I listed building is not, architecturally, of national importance. The fundamental lack of sensitivity to the exceptional heritage interest of this site means that no attempt has been made to systematically understand the significance or to assess and address the potential impacts that will result from this proposal.

The suggestion that the project is acceptable because it will result in 'less than substantial harm', is far from reassuring and indicative of an entire lack of appreciation for what makes this building important. The present submission introduces a number of substantial

architectural elements, which will dramatically alter the character and appearance of the interior, but there is no constructional or drainage information, nor detail about materials, finishes etc. At present, this remains a scheme which falls some way short of the approach required to meet the objective of preserving and enhancing the special interest of this building and its rural surroundings.

4.5 **Ancient Monuments Society: 26th January 2018 Objection**

We particularly wish to commend the observations of Historic England and SPAB in this case.

The scheme has the excitement of the bold but we very strongly share the view that the business case does need to be unequivocally established before such extensive, intrusive work at a Grade 1 listed building can be countenanced. If the pews and other contents are cleared, the character of the interior compromised and large extensions constructed and then the project fails, we have the worst of all worlds – visual compromise without a guaranteed future for the building.

Herefordshire has shown the way with dramatic schemes which offer possible, indeed innovative, ways forward, in giving new life to ancient parish churches. The examples at All Saints, Hereford, Peterchurch and Yarpole stand out.

The occasional audacious approach should be encouraged but it must be critically assessed, perhaps more so than the more traditional scheme precisely because it is less conformist and therefore less obviously contextual in visual terms.

Is Corten Steel really appropriate ? This is a hard-edged “urban” material, in dramatic contrast with the softer masonry of the present building. As it is a very exact material how will junctions be achieved with an ancient building which does not have exact edging with a history, like all such ancient buildings, of slight seasonal movement ? Corten Steel originated as the “pre-rusted” load-bearing shells for office blocks – it is an extraordinarily hard material and again we do ask what guarantees are being offered on its performance in juxtaposition with traditional construction, and just as important as the material is the location. St James, Wigmore is noted for the survival of Anglo-Saxon masonry. We are unclear from the documentation supplied just how the extension will impact on it.

The photo-montages show an interior with modern seating and gantry lighting of theatrical standard, a new shiny floor and a substantial new western gallery – the best schemes combine sensitive upgrading with the retention of historic character. This example does not achieve that balance by aiming for function over character.

This scheme is dependent upon HLF money. It is vital that it is an exemplar of good practice and I’m afraid that we are not persuaded that it will be.

4.6 **Victorian Society: Objection**

Thank you for notifying the Victorian Society of this proposal. I write now to register our objections and recommend that the application is refused consent. In addition to offering the following comments I attach a copy of our recent advice to the Hereford DAC in response to the proposed adaptation of the historic building.

The plans have been developed and amended somewhat since we last commented on them. We welcome, for instance, the omission of the substantial pod and mezzanine from the south aisle, which would have had a serious impact on the church interior, and for which no serious case for had ever been made. *(please note that these have not been removed from this planning application submission)*

However, the concerns expressed in my letter to the DAC - particularly so far as they pertain to the scheme's impact on the building's nineteenth-century elements - remain entirely applicable. What is proposed would see much of the church's significant nineteenth-century layer, the result of a major restoration by the distinguished G. F. Bodley, either destroyed, heavily disfigured or (in the case of the porch) physically imperilled. The remaining benches would be disposed of (are these indeed mobile, as the Heritage Statement suggests?), and the highly characterful floor within the nave entirely lost. This latter intervention would have a particularly large and harmful impact on the special quality of the interior. We are concerned also that the glazing-in of the porch would greatly intrude on its spatial and visual character, in addition to which (depending on how it is achieved) it could well result in far more rapid physical deterioration, and we object strongly to this aspect of the scheme.

We can understand the rationale for a draught lobby of some sort, but, as we did previously, we would advocate an internal solution, something which should be far easier to deliver now that the large glazed pod has been omitted from the plans. No details are provided of chandelier, and it is not included in any submitted sections or plans.

We must reiterate our objections to the proposed external additions, which, as we suggested previously, are "aggressive and hostile in form and character". This is in part a result of the proposed materiality. Corten, despite its relative vogue in certain contexts, seems wholly alien and inappropriate here.

More broadly we are disappointed that there remains, so far as we are aware, no detailed options appraisal that might clarify why so intensive and impactful a proposal has been developed. This is a historic building of the highest grade and, while there is clearly scope for intervention and adaptation, without an options appraisal objectively assessing the benefits or otherwise of a variety of approaches we cannot accept that the one adopted is suitable. We remain of the view that a far less interventionist approach could deliver the active and community-focussed future the applicant seeks for the building whilst preserving more of the building's extraordinary significance.

4.7 **Natural England: No comment**

Internal Council Consultations

4.8 **Transportation Manager: Comments from 7th December 2017**

The proposals for the development aren't clear as to how the impact of the proposed multi use venue will be mitigated, there needs to be a clear access strategy and a proposal to ensure appropriate safe connectivity to the site from the proposed parking.

The strategy needs to look at the impact on the parking in the area and include measures to mitigate for all events. The strategy must look at disabled, vulnerable users, able bodied and all modes of transport including public, school and private transport. There is very little in parking on the existing network, in School Lane and Castle Street, a number of properties, and minimal turning opportunities. How will this be addressed?

There are proposals, some discounted, that may enable links from the proposed parking areas to the church, these include street lighting, controlled crossing and shared space footpath link for Wigmore Street.

No detailed plans are submitted; therefore details required together with a Road Safety Audit, the audit brief will need to be agreed with the Council.

The Gateway Features, including carriageway narrowing appear to be discounted, not sure why but there could be benefits which assist in mitigating the impact of the proposal. Clear signage plan will assist.

In conclusion, there needs to be a strategy which deals with parking and mitigates the impact in the locality, specifically Castle Street, Church Street, A4110 (Broad Street) and Ford Street.

An audited plan of the proposed improvements is required to be assessed by the team, a plan showing the signage strategy is required.

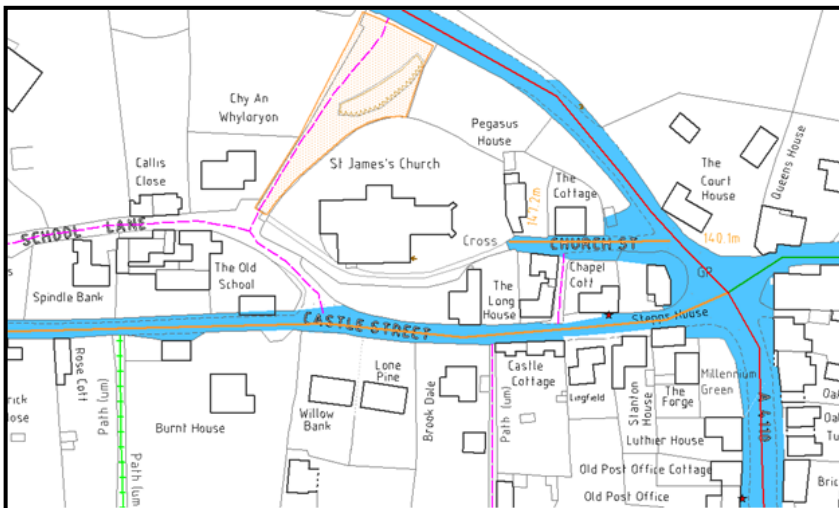
Until we have such detail, I will have no option but to recommend refusal.

4.9 Transportation Manager : Amended comments received 17th April 2018

The proposal remains to change the current use from D1 to D2 and A3 to allow for music, concert hall, café and allow for education and training.

From the information it is envisaged to have 1 sizeable event per week of max 120 people but typically 70 people. There will also be facilities for performers who will arrive by coach.

The surrounding network is identified below:
(Public highway in blue and PRow in purple).



- The A4110 is N to S and splits the site from available parking.
- Ford Street does not have a footpath linking to the A4110.
- The crossing of the A4110 is a local concern due to the volume of traffic and the appropriate location to cross is wide.
- West of the A4110 is served by lanes, some public highway with no parking for the development site.

In support of the application, the applicant has provided traffic and parking plan which has identified potential parking which is reliant on private agreements with the school and the village hall.

The application looks to bring tourism, a Heritage Centre, Café and a meeting room for up to 40 people.

I recognise the existing attraction of the site though the draw from the proposal is a concern due to the number of vehicles coming to site with no suitable appropriate parking facilities apart from those identified on the opposite side (east) of the A4110, school and village hall.

I am aware of the local community's concern in the village in relation to the A4110, crossing and Ford Street. The intensification and demand from the proposals will exasperate the issues and require mitigation.

I understand this is lottery funded and therefore there will be no S106, though this is a business, there should be a contribution to the mitigation of the impact either by contributing to a crossing, gateway features or improving Ford Street for pedestrians.

I can only support the application if the events, café, meetings have an appropriate enforceable Travel / Traffic Management Plan which prevents parking west of the A4110 and has appropriate measures in place to ensure safe crossing of the A4110 and safe walking along Ford Street. This will either be by managing the event and location or providing the facilities above either by full contribution or in part enabling the facilities to be delivered.

The current plan doesn't set out the principles or give confidence that this will be achieved and maintained for the life of the development.

In assessing the impact of the proposed development, the network has been assessed and there remains a concern in regularly holding events that being in the numbers as set out in the application without appropriate mitigation. At present there is potential for conflict in the location due to the volume of traffic proposed, exiting traffic flows on the A4110 and the proposed pedestrian movements along Ford Street which must include vulnerable users.

There is also a requirement for a Construction Phase Traffic Management Plan. The plan is to ensure minimum disruption to the location and minimise the risk of conflict which could result in accidents.

**4.10 Service Manager Built & Natural Environment (Ecology): 4th January 2018
No objection subject to conditions**

There is significant bat diversity at this location as demonstrated by the numbers and species around and within the church; the survey which has been carried out clearly identifies roosts in regular use as laid out in the report which I have read. I am happy with its findings regarding the swift nesting and the basic proposals for mitigation for bats. If there is any capacity for extending the swift nesting colony as part of this development it would be welcomed in an enhancement plan. I would recommend that, if given approval, the following non-standard condition is applied:

The recommendations for species mitigation and habitat enhancements set out in the ecologist's report from Protected Species Ecology Ltd dated November 2017 should be followed unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority and the scheme shall be carried out as approved. A working method statement for protected species present together with an enhancement plan should be submitted to the local planning authority in writing. The plan shall be implemented as approved.

An appropriately qualified and experienced ecological clerk of works should be appointed (or consultant engaged in that capacity) to oversee the ecological mitigation work.

Reasons:

To ensure that all species are protected having regard to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (with amendments and as supplemented by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (and 2012 amendment).

To comply Herefordshire Council's Policies LD2 Biodiversity and Geodiversity, LD3 Green Infrastructure of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 – 2031 and to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4.11 **Service Manager Built & Natural Environment (Historic Buildings): Original comments (17th Jan 2018)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Approval with Conditions

Reason: The less than substantial harm the proposals would cause to the listed building and conservation area is mitigated by the improved viable use of the site and as such is in accord with policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy.

1.2 Conditions

a. With exception to further conditions below, the scheme is carried out exactly in accordance with the supplied Historic Impact and Supporting Statement and drawings: (please see consultation response for drawing numbers)

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

b. Before the relevant work begins, details in respect of:

- The new materials and finishes (clay roof tiles, any new stone, concrete, Coreten steel, surface material for landscaping paths and new vehicular access)
- The new oak door to the chancel
- The glazed door to the north chapel extension
- Doors to the plant area
- Intersections of walls, floors and ceilings at the new plant room, and extension to the north chapel
- Further details of the lift access, including elevation drawings and information on the material and finish of the steps.

The above details shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the new doors and wall intersections details should include section drawings at 1:2 or 1:5 scale. The work shall be carried out in full in accordance with such approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2.0 *BACKGROUND TO RECOMMENDATIONS*

2.1 Description & Location of Development

St James's Church dates back to the 11th century and is listed at grade I. The church underwent significant alterations and re-buildings in the 14th, 15th and 19th centuries.

The amount of surviving early fabric makes St James's an important archaeological record of past building techniques. The 11th century herringbone stone work is still visible in the north wall of the north aisle and in patches elsewhere. The church is of great historic value for its

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Ms Kelly Gibbons on 01432 261781

connections to the Mortimer family, London and Wigmore Castle (circa 500 metres north-west of the church). Although in a dominant position over the village of Wigmore, the church is not easily viewed externally due to its position on top of a small mound with the ground falling away from the building on all sides. Views are further obscured by a surrounding ring of mature trees. The interior is defined by the large open space resulting from the high south aisle being open to the nave. As a centre of worship and community gatherings for centuries, the church holds high communal value for the inhabitants of the Wigmore area.

2.2 Policy background

The advice has been given with reference to relevant policies, guidelines and legislation:

- National – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs
 - 131 (enhancing heritage assets and enabling their viable use)
 - 132 (development should conserve the significance of heritage assets and development within the setting of a heritage asset can be harmful to it)
 - 134 (weighing less than substantial harm of proposals against their benefit)
 - 137 (treating favourably schemes which conserve or positively enhance conservation areas or the settings of heritage assets)
- Local - Herefordshire Council's Local Plan Core Strategy policies:
 - LD4 – Historic Environment and heritage assets (which states that development must enhance and protect listed or other buildings of acknowledged importance).
 - SS6 – Environmental quality and local distinctiveness (which states that development proposals should conserve and enhance heritage assets which contribute towards the county's distinctiveness).

3.0 COMMENTS

3.1 Proposals

The proposals are:

- a. Externally - landscaping and a lift to aid accessibility, to add a new W.C and plant store, to reinstate the north-east end of the north aisle
- b. Internally - re-order the interior to provide a kitchen and café, facilities for meetings and live streaming events on a large projection screen and to add a draught lobby to the porch.

The proposals under 'b' are to be controlled through the Ecclesiastical exemption process under Herefordshire's Diocesan Advisory Committee.

3.2 External appearance, impact on character of conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings

The main visual changes are to the traditionally least significant and unfavoured north elevation of the church. The cumulative impact of the scheme on the church exterior as a whole is somewhat lessened by the surrounding trees and topography, which also limit the impact of changes on nearby listed buildings. Similarly, the proposals will not detract from the character of Wigmore Conservation Area. The choice of a unified colour palette and plain, solid shapes gives a uniformity to the changes that makes them both complementary to the church and surroundings and identifiable as a single phase of works. The use of corten steel gives interesting colour and texture to the otherwise plain forms. Overall we feel that the external appearance of the church will not be negatively affected by this concept, but the quality and detailing of the new external structures will be key to their success.

3.3 Change of use

There will be no objection from a building conservation perspective from a change of use from a place of worship to a mixed use venue. We have no concerns over the internal proposals which we trust have been scrutinised by the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

3.4 New lift access

The location of the new disabled lift on the north-west side of the church is suitable as it keeps clear the important route from the church to the castle and will be viewed more in association with the new plant store and W.C. than the church itself. Together with the improved vehicular access and alterations to the rest of the north elevation, this will be a considerable visual change, but the scale, location and association with other new elements (some of which act to enhance the church's setting) will not make this change overly negative.

3.5 New plant store and W.C.

This will be a significant visual change to the north and west elevations of the church. This addition sits up against the 14th century tower and is visible from north and west, although largely screened by the topography and trees. The plain, cuboid form and relatively low height mean it does not distract from the tower. The choice of corten steel provides interest and texture, but is subtle and intriguing rather than dominating, so is a good choice of material for this shape.

3.6 Reinstatement of north aisle

There is clear evidence in the east wall of the north chapel and north wall of the nave that the north aisle extended to the area proposed for extension of the north chapel. This makes the proposal easy to accept on grounds of affecting the character of the building. The choice of treatment is acceptable – a reinstatement in the same stone could mislead as to the age of this work, and the choice of corten will identify this with the current proposed phase of alteration. This clearly modern re-instatement will also allow the improved access desired for wider use of the church. The external glass doors allow the extension to be read as a solid shape, but also pose interesting questions for their relationship to the trees to the north.

3.7 Landscaping

Exterior foot level lighting and paths levelled and re-laid in suitable material will improve the appearance of the church.

3.8 New vehicular access

This will consist of improvements to the surface of the existing road. There will only be temporary drop off parking at the west end of the church which will ensure the church's setting is kept clear of unsightly vehicles and the link to the castle remains open. Detail of the surfacing material should be supplied.

4.12 **Service Manager Built & Natural Environment (Historic Buildings): Amended comments**

Following the submission of further supporting documents describing recesses for shadow gaps and rainwater goods at intersections between stone and new work, and details of doors and the lift access, we are satisfied that the initially stipulated conditions for more details on:

- The glazed door to the north chapel extension;
- Doors to the plant area;

- Intersections of walls, floors and ceilings at the new plant room, and extension to the north chapel;
- Further details of the lift access, including elevation drawings;

have been fulfilled. The comments submitted by the Building Conservation Office on 17 January should be amended to read:

1.2 Conditions

a. With exception to further conditions below, the scheme is carried out exactly in accordance with the supplied Historic Impact and Supporting Statement and drawings: (please see consultation response for drawing numbers)

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

b. Before the relevant work begins, details in respect of:

- The new materials and finishes (clay roof tiles, any new stone, concrete, coreten steel, concrete finish to steps to lift access, surface material for landscaping paths and new vehicular access);
- The new oak door to the chancel;
- Details of the interpretation patterns on stone flags and coreten panels to the north chapel extension and plant room
- The above details shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The work shall be carried out in full in accordance with such approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4.13 Service Manager Built & Natural Environment (Arboriculture):

A large proportion of the trees within Wigmore church yard are identified on the Ancient tree inventory and the National Planning Policy Framework, in January 2018 amended, it states,

Ancient woodland or veteran trees are irreplaceable, so you should not consider proposed compensation measures as part of your assessment of the benefits of the development proposal.

You should not take account of the existing condition of ancient woodland/veteran tree (if this is poor) as a factor in favour of the development proposal, because you can usually improve its condition with good management proposals. It may be relevant to consider the scope to improve its condition as part of the compensation measures, if you decide to grant permission for development.

T2 – the Common Lime located at the west of the site does have significant decay, demonstrated by the PICUS decay detection. However, this is a tree of high amenity value with a Tree Preservation Order and the recommendation to pollard does put a significant threat on the ongoing health of the tree.

I would prefer to see efforts made to retain this veteran specimen by carrying out alternative remedial works that would both reduce the risk of failure and retain its amenity value.

I am not clear as to how the path which will provide access around the church will be designed but it does appear to go within a number of Root Protection Areas, especially T11 & T13, the Yew trees near the main access. As suggested in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment a no dig design should be used where RPAs are breached.

The proposed tree removals are acceptable and will be mitigated by replacement planting which is recommended 14-16cm.

Recommend Conditions as follows:

None of the (existing trees) (and/or) hedgerows on the site (other than those specifically shown to be removed on the approved drawings) shall be removed, destroyed, felled, lopped or pruned without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the area and to ensure that the development conforms to Policy LD2 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy

a) An Arboricultural Method Statement. This shall provide a methodology for any aspect of development that has the potential to result in loss or damage to a tree. (It will include details of a monitoring regime of ongoing development operations by a qualified arboriculturalist to ensure full compliance with the Arboricultural Method Statement and the approved Tree Protection Plan.

C92 G06 – Remedial works to trees

Any damage caused to any tree which is to be retained, in accordance with the approved plans shall immediately be notified to the Local Planning Authority. Any remedial work as advised by the Local Planning Authority, or by an Arboricultural supervisor, shall be undertaken within a timescale agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The remedial work shall be undertaken in accordance with BS 3998: 2010 – Recommendations for Tree Work.

Reason: The trees form an integral part of the visual environment and this condition is imposed to preserve the character and amenities of the area and to ensure that the development conforms with Policies DR1 and LA5 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

4.14 **Environmental Health (Contamination and human health): No objection**

I refer to the above application and would make the following comments in relation to contaminated land and human health issues.

Although graveyards and the like may be considered potentially contaminative, given what is proposed, I've no adverse comments to make.

5. **Representations**

5.1 **Wigmore Group Parish Council: Object (January 2018)**

At its meeting on Monday 8th January 2018 Wigmore Group Parish Council considered the application and make the following comments:

Wigmore Group Parish Council recommends that the planning application be rejected for the following reasons:

Inadequate parking

As noted in the Wigmore CIC's Traffic report 2.3.1 'There are few parking opportunities near to the church'. This is an understatement of the actual situation. St James' Church, Wigmore is located on top of a rocky outcrop on the western side of the A4110 which divides the village in two. From the A4110 there are two routes to get to the church namely by Church Lane, a short, narrow and privately owned road. Only pedestrian visitors should use this route as there is a 'Residents only' sign at the entrance to the lane from the A4110. Drivers frequently ignore this sign and attempt to park here. The other route is by Castle Street, a narrow, single track, poorly surfaced dead-end road, and then taking a right fork up School Lane, a privately owned un-made up track that also leads to a dead-end.

There is no designated parking area for the church. Instead there is a sign post at the junction of Castle Street and the A4110 directing visitors to the church and Wigmore Castle to park at Wigmore Village Hall car park and then walk along Ford Street, cross the busy A4110, walk up Castle Street then School Lane, about a 450m walk.

The Traffic report states at 2.3.2 'It is understood that weekend tourists / walkers are relatively few in number.....' even so and in spite of directional signs, residents complain that these are ignored and visitors try to drive up both Castle Street and Church Street looking to park as close to the church as possible, and on occasions, causing grid lock as Castle Street and School Lane are narrow with very limited turning space with the result that cars block residents access to their driveways and garages. If, as anticipated, the proposed Centre is open 7 days a week and hosts one event a week, the increased visitor numbers are likely to put an unsustainable strain on residents of Church Lane, Castle Street and School Lane.

Disabled Access

As highlighted in the Traffic Report 3.4.1 '..... access to Church Street is problematic and cannot be recommended, especially to the ambulant, impaired on-foot'. The plan shows one disabled parking bay and the Traffic Report suggest using a shuttle bus for disabled visitors. If there are the anticipated 70 visitors for an event, it is a reasonable assumption that there will be more than one person with a mobility issue who will wish to use the one disabled parking bay.

The scenario of the shuttle bus, plus a car with a disabled driver who cannot park because another disabled driver arrived and parked first, plus cars whose drivers ignored the parking signs plus the residents who are actually entitled to drive up Castle Street causing gridlock can well be envisaged.

Traffic Generation

The A4110 runs through Wigmore village (aka Broad Street) where a 30mph zone is in place. This road is used by cars, HGV's, tractor-trailers and, during term time, by school buses transporting pupils to and from the Primary and High Schools located off Ford Street. For some time the parish council and residents have been concerned about the number of vehicles travelling along the road, the speed of those vehicles and the lack of a safe crossing zone for pedestrians.

The parish council recently requested Balfour Beatty to do a site inspection with a view to putting in a zebra crossing on Broad Street but this was deemed not possible because of inadequate visibility splays and that the required increased kerb width on both sides of the road would narrow the A4110 below the recommended lane widths.

It was noted that Broad Street residents' park their cars on either side of this road as well as customers to the village shop. On occasions the number of parked cars on Broad Street (A4110) has caused traffic hold ups as vehicles negotiate around the stationary cars.

Ford Street (C1019) is another area of concern to residents and the parish council. This road turns off the A4110 and goes east onto to Ludlow through the villages of Leinthall Starkes, Elton and Pipe Aston. Ford Street provides road access for two pubs, a care home, the village hall, the Wigmore Schools campus and over 60 residential dwellings.

In Wigmore village, the junction of Ford Street with the A4110 is a funnel that then narrows significantly resulting in a bottle neck by the entrance to The Oak Inn. There are frequent hold-ups as vehicles driving in opposite directions negotiate past each other. There is no footway along this stretch of Ford Street. Parents have raised concerns that pedestrians have no protection from vehicles at this point but several suggestions from the parish council to ameliorate this situation have been turned down by BBLP. Further down Ford Street many residents with no off-street parking tend to park their cars either in the village hall car park or, more usually, on the street. Again there are frequent hold-ups as vehicles coming in opposite directions find Ford Street partially obstructed by cars parked along most of its length.

The Traffic Report acknowledges 'potential difficulties along the relatively narrow access roads' 3.2.2 but the proposed parking at the school and village hall car parks does not adequately address the inevitable increase in traffic along both the A4110 (Broad Street) and Ford Street. The increase in traffic will simply add to the existing traffic problems in Wigmore.

Highway safety

As indicated above, the proposal for a 7 day a week opening plus a weekly event will inevitably generate more traffic on the roads in Wigmore. The Traffic Report at 2.4.4 assumes that 'A number of those attending any event will be attracted from the local community. These people are most likely to walk to the venue.' Wigmore is a small village of fewer than 600 residents (as per the electoral register). It is unlikely that Wigmore residents will patronise events on a weekly basis thus, to be viable, the project will have to attract visitors from outside the village. This will inevitably increase the traffic on the access roads, adding to the wear and tear on the road surfaces. The Herefordshire part of the C1019 (Ford Street and Wigmore to Ludlow road) is already in a poor state with disintegrating camber and multiple pot holes that have caused damage to several car wheels and present a danger to motor bike riders and cyclists. The increased traffic and inevitable deterioration of the roads are a matter of concern for the safety of road users.

5.2 Wigmore Group Parish Council: Amended comments 9th April 2018: Objection maintained

This planning application came before the parish council a second time because the Wigmore CIC had submitted a new Traffic Parking Plan which the councillors wished to examine. Following discussion, Wigmore Group Parish Council again recommends that the planning application be rejected as this second Traffic Parking Plan has not added anything new to address the issues of concern to the parish council, namely the problems of inadequate parking facilities, unrealistic disabled access, increased traffic and highways safety as described in the parish council's initial response.

5.3 There have been 33 letters of support for the proposal. The content is summarised as follows:-

- This proposal represents perhaps the only opportunity to viably support the continued use of this Grade I listed building of national significance.
- Without sensitive repurposing the church will close after nearly 1,000 years

- The church enjoys a commanding position near to the castle ruins, with which it has strong historical association and with the numerous other heritage assets in the vicinity combine to create a significant area of cultural, social and historical importance. The church is central in this and the re-use will better reveal its own architectural and historical interest.
- If permission is refused the church will likely close and the hard work and endeavour of a dedicated band of volunteers will count for nothing. It is testament to the hard work and expertise of these volunteers that Heritage Lottery Funding has already been obtained, with the likelihood of more should planning permission be forthcoming.
- The multi-faceted use of the church will act as a catalyst for increased tourism and expenditure locally.
- Although concerns in respect of parking and access are understood, there are viable solutions and these concerns should not be used as a means of frustrating the project.
- The Wigmore CIC proposals appear to be the only viable way of maintaining the church.
- The church, castle and wider area have historical associations with the Mortimer family, which are only now being better appreciated. These associations can be seen in place and street names in the capital. These associations represent an opportunity to increase wider understanding and are a basis for increased heritage-led tourism.
- There is tremendous local support and pride in the church which is evidenced by the recent renovations.
- The school has confirmed that their parking facilities can be utilised as weekends and evenings if the village hall car park is full.
- Creative thinking like this is required if the church is to survive and this could be an exemplar that others follow. Congregations are falling, maintenance costs are high and contrary to popular belief the Church of England is now awash with money. There are numerous social and economic benefits in support of this proposal.
- There is very little provision of similar community facilities in northern Herefordshire.
- Locally, despite much effort over the last decade or so, St James' has exhausted both human and financial resources. Other churches in Wigmore Abbey Parish are struggling to meet their obligations and there are no resources to redeploy. The one hope of saving St James' from closure seems to lie in the CIC proposal, which has been endorsed by the PCC. Closure would mean inevitable deterioration and an increasing eyesore = 'blot on the landscape', doubtless becoming a magnet for vandalism.
- The imaginative CIC Scheme will retain provision for church services, but increase community facilities to the benefit of tourism - and thus employment - as well as local cultural activities. Undoubtedly the site - which cannot be changed! - produces challenges as regards access and parking, but these have been addressed responsibly and sensitively. It is disappointing that the council, having summarised present realities and concerns, could not have gone on more positively to see the CIC scheme as one which would strengthen its hand in pressing for infrastructure/highway improvements which are surely necessary in any case. I hope that it may yet review its stance.
- There has been objection to the planned provision of disabled access to the west of the church. Meeting such present-day requirements will always be a challenge with a medieval building, constructed at a time when there were no such considerations.

5.4 There have been 7 letters of objection to the proposal. The content is summarised as follows:-

Highway safety and parking

- Existing access roads are used by residents who have no other options. Result is a narrow, single lane access.
- Impacts on the lane is already felt when the church is used, for example by bell ringers or occasional services. Those existing groups know of alternative parking options but experience suggests that they use the local road irrespective (albeit this is infrequent).
- Parking impedes access for deliveries / emergency services. Concern that the frequency of the proposed uses (daily) could make this a permanent state.

- Junction of School Lane and Castle Street is used as a turning head but is restricted. It would be gridlocked. Alternative is top of Castle Street.
- Potential conflict when dropping off / assisting wheelchair users with other road users and local residents. Surface and area is not suitable.
- Concern about operation of a marshalled system. Is this viable and what powers would they have to move vehicles that are causing congestion?
- Walk from proposed car parking area is considerable – result being vehicles will get as close as possible to park or drop off / then turn around at same time as being pedestrians. Conflict / safety concerns.
- Concerns about the ongoing management / viability of the transport plan.
- Pre-sale of 70 tickets before a requirement for traffic management kicks in. Potential for events attracting between 20 and 50 vehicles no traffic management other than easily ignored signage? What is the contingency for those that turn up on the day?
- Junction of Ford Street and the A4110: recognised this is a narrow junction. The proposed narrow pavement area seems a sensible option for the school children etc but is it really safe for 120 people at max capacity to walk along for the events. Junction known for number of fatal and serious accidents either side of this junction.
- Management of construction traffic? No consideration to parking / amenity / ground conditions and land stability?
- How will deliveries be made? Waste collection? and how would these be managed?

Amenity and potential local impacts

- Lighting and security not provided (documents suggest borrowed lighting from the other properties). No provision has been made to provide the considerable lighting needed for the accessible access ramp and the approach to the church via Church Street.
- Wigmore enjoys considerable 'dark skies' and it would seem unreasonable to have this existing natural feature of village life taken away plus impact upon amenity.
- Lighting also needed for security. The church is at a higher level than neighbours opposite, so the effect of the lighting will be similar to stadium lighting.
- Impact of the increased parking, lighting, littering, handrails etc will impact on the Conservation area and setting of the listed buildings.
- Impact upon amenity of the local residents whose houses abut the site?
- The village already enjoys a vibrant social and commercial scene for its size. The Oak and Castle Public houses already provide food, coffee and entertainment evenings. What will the impact be on them and what assessment has been made to the effect of a competitor cafe further dispersing trade? It would be unfortunate to lose one of our public houses due to a competitor that enjoys an unfair commercial advantage. Concerns also about impact on the store.

Other

- The village hall is a large space that can hold an audience comparable to the proposed development. Can this not be accommodated here?
- Concern about viability and fall back position. Who will maintain this if it does not work? Not a normal commercial proposal.
- Infrastructure: Is the high speed broadband needed for live streaming available? What would the route be for this if available? Impacts upon local service ben considered?
- Funding: What if all funds are not secured and only part of the project is delivered making increased pressures on road networks etc.
- Proposal is out of scale the location is simply unsuitable for the proposed development
- Other fundraising options exist such as using the existing village hall for live streaming events that would be more practical, if less glamorous, to provide shared revenue on a sustainable footing and maintain the Grade 1 atmosphere of the church.

5.5 The consultation responses can be viewed on the Council's website by using the following link:-

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200142/planning_services/planning_application_search/details?id=174528&search=174528

Internet access is available at the Council's Customer Service Centres:-

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/government-citizens-and-rights/customer-services-enquiries/contact-details?q=customer&type=suggestedpage>

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 S38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states as follows:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

6.2 Under Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Herefordshire Council, as the local planning authority, is required, when considering development which affects a listed building or its setting:

"to have special regard for the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

6.3 The decision-maker should also be aware of the statutory duty imposed by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which states as follows:-

"In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

Case law has established that preservation is equivalent to doing no harm.

6.4 The development plan is, for the purpose of this application, the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031 (CS). The pursuit of sustainable development is a central tenet of the CS. In the language of the CS this means the pursuit of a series of objectives arranged under the headings 'social progress', 'economic prosperity' and 'environmental quality'. The parallel with the NPPF is clear. Indeed, Policy SS1 reflects the positive presumption in favour of sustainable development and the NPPF paragraph 14 decision-making process insofar as development according with the CS should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where policies are silent or otherwise out of date, SS1 imports the two-limb approach set out in NPPF paragraph 14.

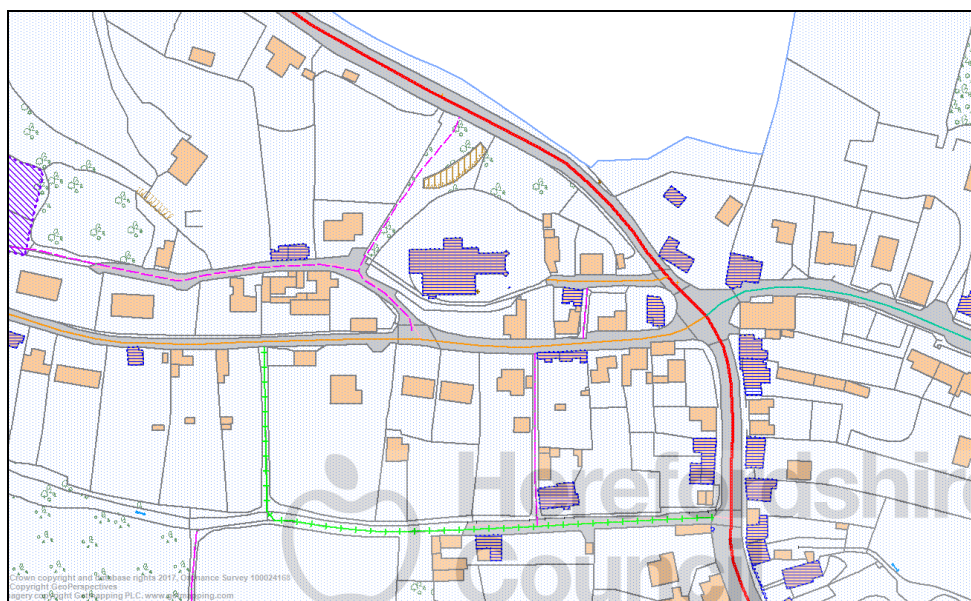
6.5 Officers consider the following as the main issues relevant to the determination of this application.

- Heritage impacts on the setting of the church
- Impact upon the Conservation Area
- Impact upon other designated heritage assets
- The impact of the proposed use and development on highway and pedestrian safety;
- Amenity of local residents;
- Other issues including arboriculture and biodiversity.

Heritage

6.6 In this case, there are a number of designated heritage assets affected – principally St James' Church (grade 1 Listed) itself but also the Wigmore Conservation Area and a number of other listed buildings in the vicinity. The listed buildings (designated heritage assets) are shaded in blue

on the plan inserted below. Along with the remnant Wigmore Castle (Scheduled Ancient Monument) and numerous other designated heritage assets, the historic, cultural and architectural value of the area surrounding the church is considered to be high.



- 6.7 As explained in Section 1, there is no accompanying Listed Building Consent application, (the work being exempt but governed by a separate application to the DAC). Accordingly, Members are not being asked to take a decision in relation to the internal works as these are subject to a separate approval process. Members are, in effect, being asked to consider the external manifestation of the proposed extensions in relation to the church itself and the wider setting. In this respect it is necessary to consider the proposal with regard to the guidance contained within the NPPF and policy LD4 of the Herefordshire Local Plan, Core Strategy. Policy LD4 describes the approach to preservation and conservation of heritage assets but does not prescribe the approach to decision-making in the event that harm to significance is found. This is left to paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF; informed by paragraph 132 which relates that the more important the asset, the greater the weight to be applied to the conservation of the asset. That the church is Grade I listed means that the greatest level of weight must be applied to the asset's conservation.
- 6.8 The adaptation of the church building to create the Wigmore Centre whilst retaining its use as a place of worship is clearly an ambitious proposal involving extension, alteration and access works that impact on the significance of the listed building in terms of its interior, exterior and setting. There is undoubtedly support, in principle, for reuse of the church as detailed in the consultation responses above. It is common ground among Historic England, the amenity bodies and the Council's own heritage advisors, that the principle of development is acceptable and supported as a means of promoting a viable re-use for the building. This is something to which considerable weight may be attached. However, it is equally clear that with the exception of the Council's heritage advisor, other heritage advice, including that of Historic England, tends to the view that the external alterations proposed are not sufficiently detailed to convince them that the scheme, whilst supportable in principle, can be supported in terms of the overall impact to the setting and in some instances the fabric of the building. The overriding message from these consultees is that whilst the approach to finding a sustainable re-use of the building is laudable and something that should attract weight in its own right, there are perhaps more sensitive ways of achieving this ambition i.e. ways of extending and adapting the building that better reflect the building's architectural and historical interest and setting.

Summary of Heritage Advice

- 6.9 Referring to the comments from Historic England above (para 4.1 and 4.2) the Government's Heritage Advisor remains concerned that the scale and design of the proposed alterations and extensions results in harm to the significance of the church and does not meet the requirements of the NPPF to conserve and better reveal the significant of this Grade I listed building. Historic England in particular details concern that the internal elements of the scheme that are critical to the change of use will have an unjustifiably negative impact upon significance, yet those matters are not before the committee for consideration, as previously explained in this report.
- 6.10 In terms of the external manifestation of the external elements of the scheme, Historic England retains concerns that the amended access will form an intrusive visual feature resulting in harm to the significance of the church.
- 6.11 Moreover, despite the submission of additional details they also remain concerned about the plant room, in that the size, proportion and design would have a negative impact upon the building's significance. They also remain unconvinced about the design principles of the extension to the north chapel and raise concerns about the viability of the proposed works to the south porch. They conclude that the amount and design of the proposed alterations and extension does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 131 and 137 of the NPPF requiring new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and better reveal significance, or that harm identified has been justified in accordance with paragraph 132.
- 6.12 The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), also raise significant concerns as can be seen in their comments above (para 4.4) concluding with their opinion that the scheme falls some way short of the approach required to meet the objective of preserving and enhancing the special interest of this building and its rural surroundings.
- 6.13 The Ancient Monuments Society acknowledge and commend the observations of Historic England and SPAB in the representation (para 4.5), raising concern about the business case; the acceptability of the use and Corten steel; as the external cladding material; which they describe as a hard edged urban material, as well as the proposed modern interior that fails to deliver the balance between function and character.
- 6.14 The Victorian Society also objects to the proposal, reiterating comments that the external additions and the use of Corten are inappropriate describing them as "aggressive and hostile in form and character" being alien and inappropriate in the context. They also comment on the lack of options appraisal that would help clarify why what they consider so intensive and impactful a proposal has been developed.
- 6.15 However, as a counter to these objections, the Council's Historic Buildings adviser has, as referred to at paragraph 4.11, concluded that the proposed alterations and extension would have a less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset. In concluding this, they consider that the public benefits brought about by this proposal, in the provision of a long term use of the building for the community, would outweigh what they perceive as 'less than substantial harm' falling within the purview of paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

The approach to decision-making when "heritage harm" is identified

- 6.16 Paragraphs 132-135 of the NPPF deal with the approach to decision-making according to the significance of the heritage asset and the degree of harm arising as a consequence of development. Paragraph 132 confirms that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 133 is a restrictive policy and directs refusal where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a

designated heritage asset. This is unless such harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss or where all 4 stated exceptions criteria apply.

- 6.17 Paragraph 134 explains the approach to decision-making where less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset would arise. It states that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. Paragraph 134 is thus also a restrictive policy.
- 6.18 Accordingly it is necessary for the decision-maker to judge, on the evidence before them and having particular regard to expert heritage advice, whether the proposal in this case represents substantial harm to or total loss of significance of the Grade I listed building (in which case paragraph 133 directs refusal unless the scheme achieves substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm) or whether the harm falls within the purview of paragraph 134; in which case it is necessary to weigh the less than substantial harm against the public benefits in an unweighted planning balance. Even if harm is less than substantial, it is absolutely clear that such harm weighs heavily in the planning balance – the fact that it is not necessary to demonstrate that harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits gives weight to paragraph 134 as a restrictive policy.
- 6.19 As detailed above, the Statutory bodies do not expressly conclude that the proposed works would lead to substantial harm within the purview of paragraph 133, but there are evident concerns that lead officers to conclude that the harm to significance in the view of Historic England and the ‘amenity bodies’ tends towards the upper end of the less than substantial spectrum. That the heritage asset involved is Grade I listed, lends credence to this view. Historic England and the amenity bodies are unconvinced that the level of harm they consider is evinced is necessary to achieve the benefits associated with finding a sustainable and viable re-use of the heritage asset. The principal reasons for this appear to be:-
- a) That there are other design solutions that would better ameliorate the degree of harm to significance; &
 - b) The current scheme drawings are not sufficiently detailed to convince Historic England and the amenity bodies that the impact of the scheme upon the historic fabric, appearance and setting of the church will be appropriate.
- 6.20 For decision-making contradictory advice from experts in the same field is potentially problematic. Historic England and the amenity bodies have clear objections and fail to be convinced that the proposals would comply with the requirements of paragraphs 131, 132, 137 and Section 7 of the NPPF. In the view of officers and as expressed above, this amounts to less than substantial harm at the upper end of the spectrum and a significant material consideration that directs that refusal should ensue unless the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use, outweigh the harm.
- 6.21 However, if the advice of the Council’s Historic Building Officer is preferred i.e. that the harm to significance falls at the lower end of the less than substantial spectrum, then the public benefits arising from the scheme may be weighed accordingly, with the heritage harm being attributed less weight in the planning balance than if one prefers the advice of Historic England and the ‘amenity bodies’. Officers return to this point in the planning balance below

Other designated Heritage Assets

- 6.22 The application site also lies within the Wigmore Conservation Area and there is some limited concern raised locally about the impact of the proposed works on the character of this Area. The church itself is visually prominent within the Conservation Area and local landscape, and the proposed extensions and alterations to the west of the church will be particularly prominent from the west (School Lane). Whilst there will, undoubtedly be a visual impact, this will be localised

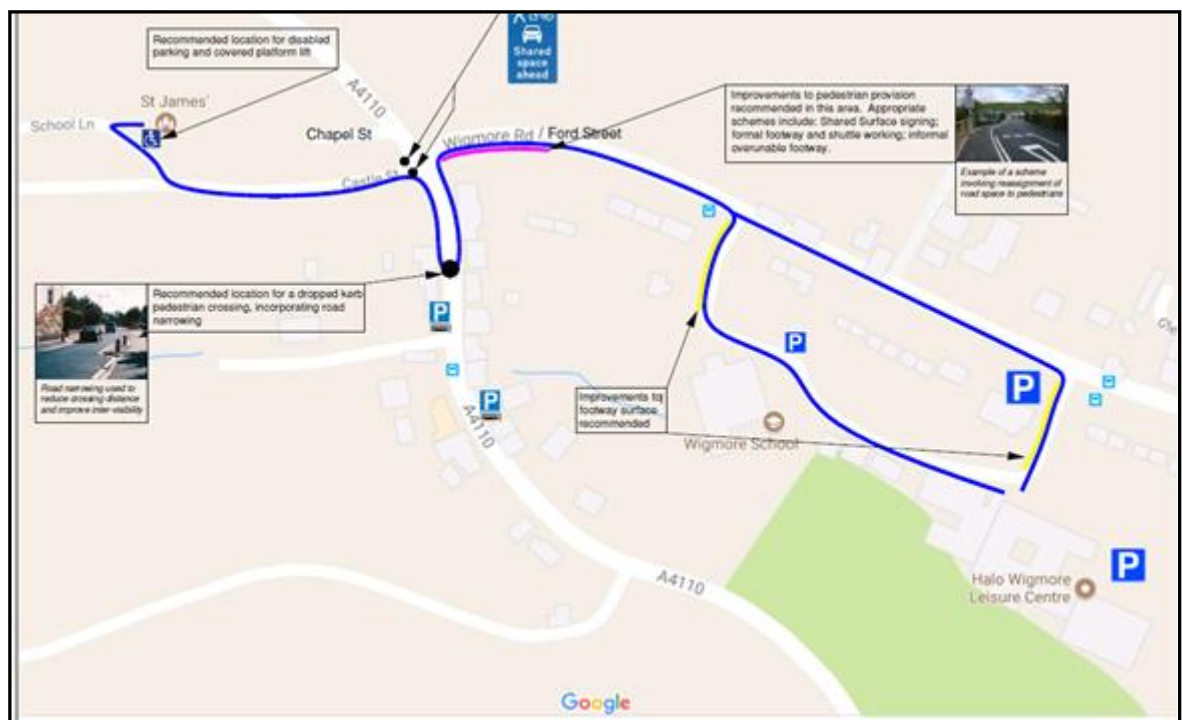
and would not be considered to result in substantial harm to the designated heritage asset and as such paragraph 134 of the NPPF would apply.

- 6.23 As can be seen from the plan inserted above, there are also a number of other listed buildings in the vicinity of the Church and consideration must again be given to the effects of the proposals on these designated heritage assets. Officers are of the opinion that given the relationship of the buildings and the local context, the proposed works would not adversely affect, and would therefore preserve the setting of the designated heritage assets and that the proposal would therefore comply with the requirements of policy LD4 of the Core Strategy and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

The impact of the proposed use and development on highway and pedestrian safety

- 6.24 The second main issue relates to the impact of the proposals on the safe operation of the highway network. Policy MT1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy, requires development proposals to demonstrate that the strategic and local highway networks can absorb the traffic impacts of the development without adversely affecting the safe and efficient flow of traffic on the network or that traffic impacts can be managed to acceptable levels to reduce or mitigate any adverse impact from the development. Developments should also ensure that they are designed and laid out to achieve safe entrance and exit and have appropriate operational and manoeuvring space.
- 6.25 Local residents and the Parish Council have raised significant concerns about the impact of the development on highway safety and these are detailed above in the representations. The Council's Transportation Manager has also considered the proposal raising a number of concerns and I would draw Members attention to these comments at 4.8 and 4.9 above.
- 6.26 St James' Church does not benefit from any facilities for parking. Acknowledging that this matter would need to be addressed in a resulting application, the applicants have provided two documents that provide an overview of the use of the building and seek to provide a strategy for staff and visitor parking and the operation of the site. These can be viewed online at:
- Final Traffic Report (June 2017):
<https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents?id=a7f82f43-e3d5-11e7-8cb0-0050569f00ad>
 - The Wigmore centre Traffic and parking management plan (March 2018):
<https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents?id=8f3bea08-26d6-11e8-8ae0-0050569f00ad>
- 6.27 The Wigmore Centre scheme would result in a wide range of events being held at the church which will include concerts, streaming, and other cultural events. The nature of these particular events will attract the higher numbers of customers up to circa 120 per event on what is stated likely to be, in time, a weekly basis. The other facilities and services will include a tourism and heritage centre, a café, and meeting rooms seating circa 40 people. All this is in addition to the existing lawful use of the building as a church. It is expected that these facilities will attract between 5 and 40 visitors at any one time.
- 6.28 The resultant multi-use venue is likely to receive visitors spread between the opening times of 10 am to 5 pm. It is estimated that visitor numbers are currently around 2,500 per year with the forecast over the period 2020 to 2025 being that visitor numbers will increase to around 6,000 per year representing some 15 to 20 per day. The applicants consider that the existing arrangements are considered adequate to cope with such modest increases. It is expected that the majority of tourists will be on foot having been directed by English Heritage to park at the existing Castle/Church car park (the Village Hall) and following their visit to the church they will proceed to the adjacent Wigmore Castle. It is clear, however, that the village hall car park is not of sufficient scale to cater for large-scale events and thus peak demand and that use of village hall car park will not, in any event, be exclusively for the benefit of the Wigmore Centre.

- 6.29 The parking strategy, in particular for the larger events is detailed in the documentation and advises that instructions in respect of parking will be provided with bookings and that during larger volume events the entrance on Castle Street will be signed with an information board giving details of designated car parks and additional signage will make it clear that vehicular access is limited to residents and their families, service vehicles and those with a pre-authorized booking. Marshals will be used to man crossing points before and after the event. Marshals will be volunteers that have received appropriate training.
- 6.30 The documents detail parking at Wigmore High School (when not in use by the school) and the Village Hall. The Wigmore School and Village Hall car parks comprise a mix of formal delineated parking bays and some non-formal parking areas with parking capacity conservatively estimated to be 80 spaces. They are accessed from Ford Street.
- 6.31 The plan inserted below identifies the Church to the west, with pedestrians exiting via Castle Street, turning south to a *recommended* uncontrolled crossing point of the A4110 before heading north along the existing footway. This footway terminates at the junction with Ford Street and there is a section that does not have a public footway (highlighted in pink) before re-joining the footway along Ford Street and providing access to the parking areas. The walk would take around 10 – 15 minutes, with narrow pavements, poor surfaces and no street lighting. These are all factors that may discourage visitors from using this parking option, thus resulting in seeking parking or a drop off opportunity closer to the venue; for example, on Castle Street, the A4110 or as near to the venue as possible on Ford Street.



- 6.32 The Traffic Management Plan makes a series of recommendations in respect of improvements that should be considered to enhance the pedestrian experience, including the provision of a footway on Ford Street (in pink), street lighting or providing lighting on nearby buildings (such as public house) that can be 'borrowed', installation of a pedestrian crossing, speed reduction measures, warning and directional signage, resurfacing of Castle Street and School Lane.
- 6.33 As a result of this assessment, and as shown on the inserted plan above, the following improvements are proposed:

- Dropped pedestrian crossing, incorporating road narrowing across A4110;
- Improvements to pedestrian provision (in pink) to possibly include shared surface, signage formal footway, informal overrunable footway
- Signage to end of castle street
- Disabled parking and covered platform lift
- Improvements to footway surface on entrance to school

Improvements including, alternative pedestrian routing, speed reduction measures and a pedestrian priority crossing were discounted and are not proposed as part of this application.

- 6.34 The A4110 is a significant barrier for pedestrian movement around the village, and this is recognised by the existing request and exploration for improvements. The proposed development, if operated in accordance with its traffic management plan, will be heavily reliant upon pedestrian access along substandard roadways, with its busiest times being in the evenings and during the hours of darkness. Officers are unconvinced that the proposal will be able to consistently deliver a traffic / travel plan that will be able to put into place measures that will ensure a safe crossing place for the busy A4110, nor safe walking for pedestrians along Ford Street onto the A4110 for all users. The likely result is that vehicles will try to access the church via Castle Street, whether to park on road, or to 'drop off' to avoid the walk to the car parks for some of the occupants of the vehicles. Being discouraged from doing so at the junction of Castle Street / A4110 may lead to turning manoeuvres and additional traffic exiting a substandard junction with poor visibility.
- 6.35 In addition there is potential for congestion on Castle Street, which is often single width due to the parked cars that belong to existing residents and could result in an increase in turning movements on the junction with School Lane at the same time as there would be an increase in pedestrian activity as visitors access the Church for the event.
- 6.36 Whilst the proposals of the traffic management plan may be suitable and acceptable for, for instance, an annual event, the frequency of the events proposed result in a continued pressure on the local highway network that may not be able to absorb the impacts of the development affecting the safe and efficient flow of traffic on the network. The mitigation proposed, in the form of the traffic management plan and proposed improvements (as listed above), is not considered sufficient to address either the highway and pedestrian safety concerns for example:
- There is no road safety audit that demonstrates that the build out, crossing points and alterations to the highway on Ford Street to provide pedestrian refuge are acceptable;
 - There is no agreement with owners of buildings to provide lighting solutions;
 - Whilst the school and village hall have written to confirm agreement to the use of their car parks, this can't be guaranteed; and
 - There is no contingency plan for long term / alternative provision.

As such the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of policy MT1 of the Herefordshire local Plan – Core Strategy.

- 6.37 Turning to the NPPF, paragraph 32 states that safe and suitable access to the site should be achieved for all people and decisions should take account of whether improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe. In practice this means that where post-mitigation impacts of development on the highway network are still considered to be severe, then refusal of planning permission is directed. In this way paragraph 32 operates as a restrictive policy.
- 6.38 In this instance, the Transportation Manager has identified some improvements that could improve safety for pedestrians that would support the traffic management proposals in a

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Ms Kelly Gibbons on 01432 261781

permanent manner. The applicants have advised that due to the way in which this project is funded, they do not have the resources to make this provision. So, although there may be measures that can improve the situation, officers are presently unclear that these are deliverable for a variety of reasons, but principally the feasibility in a physical and financial sense. As such, the significant impacts of development remain and are considered to be severe. Officers therefore recommend refusal on highway safety grounds.

Amenity

- 6.39 Policy SD1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development proposals create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community and will need to be carefully considered. This policy also seeks to ensure that the amenities of existing and proposed residents are maintained. This should be read in conjunction with the requirements of policy RA6 which acts in support of proposals that diversify the local economy whilst acknowledging that such schemes should not cause unacceptable adverse impacts to the amenity of nearby residents by virtue of design and mass, noise, dust lighting and smell.
- 6.40 It is acknowledged that the church is an existing community facility that whilst underused now, could potentially be actively used for a variety of activities associated with use as a church. The majority of the proposed changes of use are quiet, unobtrusive uses that would have little impact upon the amenities of the local residents per se. However, the residual impacts of the uses, such as delivery vehicles, and additional car movements must also be considered. For the reasons detailed above, officers have raised concerns about the potential impact of additional movements along Castle Street. Whilst the residual impacts of the traffic movements in the area generally are considered to be severe the impact of the potential additional traffic and pedestrian movements along this lane, or locality for limited periods during normal working daytime hours, would result in impacts that could be considered to be significant.
- 6.41 It is assumed that the live streaming of events / live concerts within the church itself will involve the use of amplified equipment and this is something that could occur at the church already. The proposed pedestrian access and lift is immediately adjacent to residential properties, the fact that increased activity will have an impact upon amenity of these residents is again important, especially as some events will be in the evening. Officers would suggest that a suitable noise management plan could be sought that would consider the impacts and provide robust review mechanisms to address problems as they arise. Nonetheless, given the fall back position, limited period of potential for impact, and proposed mitigation, officers would conclude that the impacts from noise and disturbance would not outweigh the benefits of continued use of the heritage asset.
- 6.42 The proposal does not include the provision of any lighting, but officers recognise that there may be demand for this. A condition could be imposed that requires the submission of lighting proposals before installation allowing for consideration to ensure compliance with policy SD1 and also to allow consideration in respect of impacts upon the designated heritage assets and policy LD4 of the Core Strategy.

Other issues including arboriculture and biodiversity

- 6.43 Policy LD2 of the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy requires development proposals to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity through the retention and enhancement of nature conservation site and habitats and important species. The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 states that “The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity wherever possible”. It goes on to state that “when determining planning *applications*, *local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity*” and “*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*. Appropriate

reports have been submitted with the application and the council's ecologist has recommended that conditions be imposed to ensure that works are undertaken in accordance with the recommendations and to secure enhancements proposed. The proposal would comply with this element of policy LD2 of the Core Strategy.

- 6.44 Policies LD1, LD2 and LD3 of the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy along with guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework seek to preserve important trees. A large proportion of the trees within Wigmore churchyard are identified on the Ancient Tree Inventory. The Parish Council has raised some concerns about the tree works proposed to facilitate the development. The Council's arboriculture officer has considered the proposals and raised some queries, but has formed the view that the proposed tree removals are acceptable and will be mitigated by replacement planting. Conditions are also recommended to ensure compliance with policies LD1, LD2 and LD3 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy.

Planning Balance and conclusions

Heritage

- 6.45 The application seeks the change of use of the Grade I listed Church of St James's Wigmore to a multi-purpose venue, known as the Wigmore Centre. Such beneficial use is described as the only viable means of ensuring the future maintenance of the building, which it is stated will otherwise close in the near future.
- 6.46 The officer's appraisal identifies two main issues relevant to the determination of this application. Firstly there are the heritage matters and Members will be aware of their statutory duties in respect of the listed building and wider conservation area. Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 rehearse the local authority duty when exercising its planning function to:
- a) have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and
 - b) special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that [conservation] area.
- 6.47 It is clear that as a Grade I listed building St James's is a heritage asset of great significance. The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset '...great weight should be given to the asset's conservation' and that 'the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.'
- 6.48 In order to make a decision in respect of the impact of the development upon the Grade I listed church itself, it is necessary to determine the degree of harm, if any, evinced. Substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset should be refused unless it is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all four of the stated criteria at paragraph 133 apply.
- 6.49 However, whilst Historic England and the amenity bodies voice their objection, it is nonetheless apparent that the harm to significance they identify does not fall within the purview of paragraph 133 i.e. those bodies do not appear to allege that the harm amounts to substantial harm to or total loss of significance. However, they are nonetheless stating significant objections which must, in the context that this is a Grade I listed building, tend towards the upper end of the 'less than substantial harm' spectrum that is dealt with by paragraph 134.
- 6.50 The Council's own heritage advisors conclude that whilst the scheme will evince harm, they consider the scheme to be less damaging to the heritage asset than Historic England and the amenity bodies, leading them to a position towards the lower end of the 'less than substantial harm' spectrum.

- 6.51 In any event, for a decision to properly follow the test prescribed at paragraph 134 it is necessary to consider whether the less than substantial harm to significance is outweighed by the 'public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.'
- 6.52 If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative viable uses, the optimum use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.
- 6.53 In this case, the public benefits derive, subject to the development receiving funding, from securing a re-use of the building that will provide a wider community resource and focus for community-led activity; the potential for greater and more diverse use and understanding of the heritage asset and consequent economic benefits that derive from uplift in visitor numbers.
- 6.54 Officers understand the concerns of those who comment that in the event the work is executed or even partially executed and the business model then fails, the outcome is an unnecessary intervention that should have been avoided. Again, Members are perfectly entitled to take viability of the proposed use into consideration as a material consideration.
- 6.55 Having regard to the expert heritage advice received, which encapsulates and refers to all relevant policies and guidance, officers hold the view that the heritage considerations in this case are very finely balanced. Whilst a number of objections persist in relation to the internal works, these are not for determination by the committee, as previously explained in this report. In relation to the external manifestation of the development proposal, officers are persuaded that the harm to significance tends towards the lower end of the less than substantial spectrum and that with regard to the public benefits arising, the unweighted balance at 134 i.e. harm to significance vs. public benefits, is passed.
- 6.56 Moreover, the scheme is not considered prejudicial to the character or appearance of the conservation area nor the setting of the Scheduled Monument and/or other designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 6.57 Ultimately, if Members hold the view that the scheme *would* result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the asset that nonetheless *outweighs* the public benefits (including securing the optimum viable use), then they should object to the scheme on that basis.

Highway Safety

- 6.58 Whilst officers would acknowledge the public benefits of the proposed development the NPPF directs that decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved. Where residual cumulative impacts of the development are considered to be severe, the NPPF directs that development should be refused. Accordingly decision makers should not consider the benefits of the development when forming a view on matters of highway safety.
- 6.59 The potential impacts of the development, along with the potential mitigation measures have been described above. These have not been subject to a road safety audit and officers cannot form an objective assessment as to their acceptability or effectiveness. Moreover a number of these measures rely on the incorporation of third party land not forming part of the application site to the effect that officers are not satisfied that long term and effective traffic management procedures can be maintained. Given the above stated concerns officers have no option but to conclude that the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe and that the applications should be refused accordingly in that it conflicts with the guidance contained within paragraph 32 and with Policy MT1 of the CS.

- 6.60 Therefore, even if there was unanimity in terms of the heritage matters and an acceptance that the scheme is acceptable in that regard, then due to conflict with Paragraph 32 and Policies SS4 and MT1 the scheme should be refused in any event. In short, the concerns in respect of impacts relating to the safe operation of the public highway are in this case overriding and it would be incorrect to weigh the public benefits of the scheme (i.e. sustainable re-use of the heritage asset and potential increased tourism and economic benefits) against such highway-related harm.
- 6.61 Whilst recognising the very evident endeavour of the applicants in devising this scheme and responding positively to the various challenges presented, it is nonetheless the case that the proposal has drawn significant objection from heritage bodies and Members will form their own view in this regard. However, the evidence provided in respect of highway matters is, in the view of officers, compelling and in the absence of demonstrable and deliverable highway improvements such that refusal must be recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reason:

The application promotes the change of use and extension of an existing Grade I listed place of worship to create a multi-use venue allowing for continuation of the existing lawful use, along with A3 and D2 uses. The potential impacts of the development upon the safe operation of the public highway network have been identified, but the suggested mitigation measures have not been subject to a road safety audit and the local planning authority is unable to form an objective assessment as to their acceptability or effectiveness in mitigating these impacts.

Moreover a number of these measures rely on the incorporation of third party land not forming part of the application site to the effect that officers are not satisfied that long-term and effective traffic management procedures can be maintained. Given the above stated concerns officers have no option but to conclude that the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe and that the application should be refused accordingly in that it conflicts with the guidance contained within paragraph 32 and with Policies SS4 and MT1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy 2011-2031.

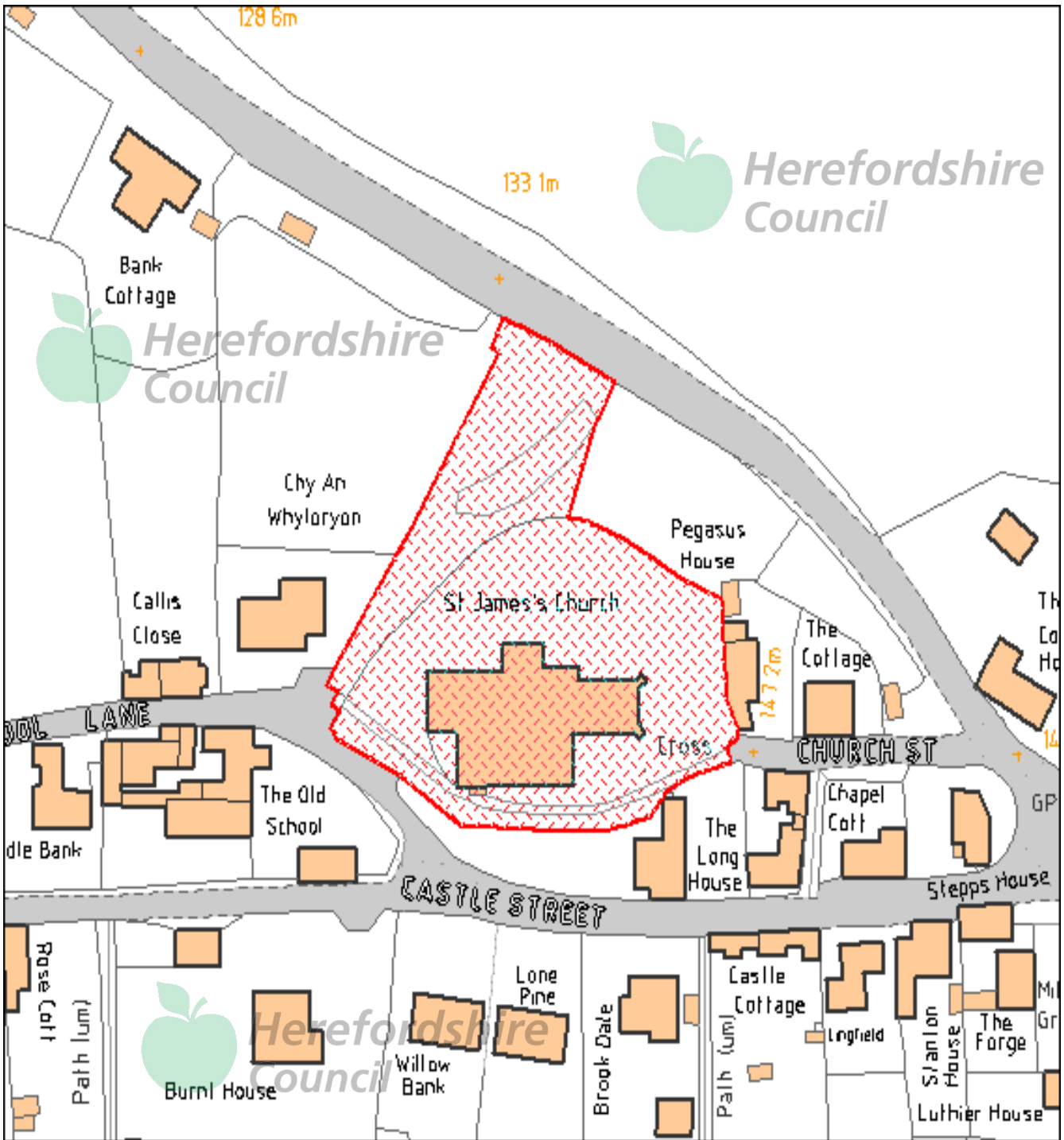
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: 174528

SITE ADDRESS : ST JAMES CHURCH, CASTLE STREET, WIGMORE, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 9UD

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