

**7 DCSE0009/0926/F - NEW CHURCH HALL AND ALTERATIONS INCORPORATING GLAZED LINK TO CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, CHURCH STREET, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 5HP.**

**For: Rev P Wheatley per Hook Mason Ltd, 41 Widemarsh Street, Hereford, HR4 9EA.**

**Date Received: 5 May 2009**

**Ward: Ross-on-Wye West**

**Grid Ref: 59720, 23991**

**Expiry Date: 30 June 2009**

Local Members: Councillors CM Bartrum and G Lucas

### **1. Site Description and Proposal**

- 1.1 The application seeks planning permission for the erection of an extension to house a new church hall at The Church of St. Mary's The Virgin, Church Street, Ross-on-Wye. The Church is listed Grade I and occupies a prominent position between Church Street and Wilton Road, being situated on one of the highest points in the town. The spire is 62.5 metres tall and is widely visible from the surrounding area. It is understood that work started on the present building in 1284, although it may have been the site of an earlier Saxon Church. Work was completed and the dedication took place in 1316. The spire was completely rebuilt in 1721, with further extensive alterations during the mid-Victorian period.
- 1.2 The current proposal is to build an extension incorporating a glazed link from the south-west corner of the Church, which would incorporate part of the existing Churchyard. It is understood that the facility would replace the existing detached hall located within St. Marys Hall, Church Row, at the northern periphery of the churchyard. The stone building would comprise an essentially rectangular plan under a twin-gabled roof, reminiscent of the existing aisle extensions. Within the building the principal space is the proposed hall, which is full height. The remainder of the ground floor space is given over to facilities and service functions including a kitchen, lavatories and storage space. There are also stairs and a lift to the first floor meeting room. The hall has a basic footprint of 15.8m x 13.8m (largest dimensions). With the exclusion of the glazed link, the gross external floor area is 205 square metres. The linking structure to the main body of the church is a flat roofed, glazed structure that would join with the West elevation of the South porch. A new arched opening is required to allow access through.
- 1.3 It is proposed to construct the building in natural stone under a natural slate roof to match the Church. Rainwater goods are to be of cast iron, doors in solid oak, with dark grey coloured aluminium window frames. It would be necessary, as part of the application, to relocate a number of existing grave monuments and divert an existing public right of way. Replacement tree planting is also proposed in lieu of the two mature specimens that would be removed.
- 1.4 A Design Statement, a separate Design and Access Statement, a 'Statement of Significance' and an access audit report accompany the application. Listed Building Consent is not required due to ecclesiastical exemption. It will be necessary for the Parochial Church Council to separately make a Faculty application in order to obtain the pre-requisite approval for the proposed works.

## 2. Policies

### 2.1 Central Government Guidance

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

### 2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

Policy S1	-	Sustainable Development
Policy S2	-	Development Requirements
Policy S7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage
Policy DR1	-	Design
Policy HBA1	-	Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings
Policy HBA4	-	Setting of Listed Buildings
Policy HBA6	-	New Development within Conservation Areas
Policy T6	-	Walking
Policy LA1	-	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes

## 3. Planning History

- |     |                 |   |   |   |
|-----|-----------------|---|---|---|
| 3.1 | SH92/0274PF     | Extension to provide a new Church Hall, meeting room and associated facilities, | - | Approved with conditions. This planning permission was never implemented. |
|     | DCSE2007/3902/F | New boiler room   | - | Approved 14.02.08   |

## 4. Consultation Summary

### Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 English Heritage: "English Heritage has no objection to this proposal, but advises that conditions on archaeology and on detailed design should be imposed on any planning permission granted for it.

English Heritage is a strong supporter of the principle that historic churches should have appropriate facilities to enable them to function well as key buildings in their communities: that is the best way of ensuring their continued existence in the longer term. We have had a lengthy pre-application involvement with the evolution of this proposal, and consider that the principles of its scale, location, linkages and accommodation are sound.

The design has already been through a long iterative process, and we are satisfied with it subject to architectural details, materials and finishes.

English Heritage recommends that any planning permission granted for this application should take full account of the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site, with conditions appropriate to that. Conditions should also be imposed to require your Council's prior approval of all architectural details, materials and finishes and all landscape design and details."

### Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Conservation Manager: "No objection. St. Mary's, in common with many medieval churches, is the product of several centuries of expansion, and all the obvious opportunities to extend the core of the building have already been taken. The site in the south-west return was considered to have least impact and it was decided at an early stage that the hall should have an independent identity as a freestanding building rather than as an extension. The double pile

form echoes the parallel roofs of the nave and aisles and also serves to reduce its bulk, and the simplified traditional language, which English Heritage describe as 'collegiate', has been adopted as a response to the strong architectural context. The single storey link element faces the difficult architectural challenge of connecting two buildings without impinging physically on important features such as the south aisle window, and whilst there is no wholly satisfactory solution, the geometry and lightweight construction of the link are considered to be an acceptable compromise.

Conditions are recommended requiring further architectural detail for the link block, together with samples of stone and roof material for the main building.”

- 4.3 Conservation Manager (Archaeology): “Holding objection. Concern is expressed that the archaeological field evaluation submitted with the application is nearly 20 years old. Within the last 12 months, major structural finds of Roman and medieval date have been made within 'The Prospect', just to the west of the application site. These finds put a different complexion on some of the provisional discoveries made in 1991, and raise the serious possibility that the proposed location of the church hall may in fact contain very significant and at risk archaeological features.

As a consequence the old evaluation report is no longer fit for purpose and it is advised that the applicant commission some further archaeological field evaluation to be conducted and reported on prior to the determination of the application. The scope of this would be limited, probably amounting to less than 15 metres square.”

- 4.4 Public Rights of Way Manager: “No objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring that development shall not commence until a Diversion Order, relating to the affected footpath, has been processed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.”
- 4.5 Traffic Manager: Expresses some concern regarding the impact of the development upon the existing route of footpath ZK7, but defers to the Public Rights of Way Manager, who has no objection.

## 5. Representations

- 5.1 Ross Town Council: No objections.
- 5.2 The Ramblers Association: Express concern at the lack of information provided with regard the possible alteration to the route of the public right of way ZK7.
- 5.3 Ancient Monuments Society: The Society does not object to the hall building: 'The new structure adopts a deliberate, and not inappropriate, secular language. The use of natural sandstone in random rubble with dressed stone, and natural slate for the roof, lends it a welcome contextualism.'

However, objection is raised to the link element, which is regarded as “clumsy in its footprint” and “seriously inappropriate in its elevation”.

- 5.4 One letter of objection has been received from Mr. M. Bowring, Oak House, Walford Road, Ross-on-Wye. The letter is summarised as follows:
- Further extension of the church would destroy the character of the building.
  - The proposed extension does not fit in with the overall symmetry of the existing church building. It will extend beyond the line of the tower and obstruct the public footpath. The church is a well-known part of our heritage and should be preserved for future generations.

- 5.5 The Ross on Wye & District Civic Society: Objection: "Under the status quo the scale of the church is in keeping with the location, whereas a major extension would seriously compromise the balance between building and open space."
- 5.6 The architect has responded to the Ancient Monuments Society's criticism of the link structure. It is clarified that the footprint is intended to maximise the available internal circulation space within the constrictions of the existing building and its relationship to the new hall. The sharp simplicity of its glazed modern construction is deliberately in contrast with the weathered masonry of the existing building and what will be the crisper masonry of the new hall, in order for them to 'read' separately. The link is regarded as a necessary part of the design to ensure that the new hall is an extension to the church both physically and in terms of activities. Having two separate buildings would not satisfy the operational needs of the church users, particularly on dark, wet nights.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officer's Appraisal**

- 6.1 The key issue in the determination of this application is an assessment of the appropriateness of the design and appearance of the extension against the Grade I listed building and within the wider context of the character and appearance of the Ross conservation area. It is clear that the design of the proposed church hall and link has evolved during extension pre-application discussion with the English Heritage and the involvement of the Council's Building Conservation Officers, to the extent that neither raises opposition to the proposal.
- 6.2 English Heritage recognise the value that the hall would have in assisting the function of the church as a key building in the community and consider the principles of the extension's scale, location and linkages to be sound. These sentiments are shared by the Council's Conservation Manager, who observes that the location of the development is that which would have the least impact upon the character of the existing building, whilst the basic form and appearance echo the parallel roofs of the nave and aisles. Given such a strong architectural context, the design approach is considered the most appropriate.
- 6.3 The Ancient Monuments Society raises concern regarding the design, function and appearance of the glazed link structure. It is also the view of English Heritage that the finer points of detail regarding the fenestration within the link have not been fully resolved. In any event, English Heritage is satisfied that these details can be addressed through the imposition of conditions requiring the submission of further detail, upon which they would be consulted. It should also be recognised that the challenge of linking a medieval church to a 21st Century hall is one that is unlikely to be met to the satisfaction of all interested parties. In this context, although the concern of the Ancient Monuments Society is noted, so too are the comments of English Heritage, the statutory body, and the Council's own specialist advisors. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with the Unitary Development Plan policies HBA1 and HBA6, which aim to preserve and safeguard the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas respectively.
- 6.4 The Council's advisors on archaeology have advised that further field work is required in order to update the provisional findings of the 1991 evaluation. At the time of writing the agent had confirmed that additional work would be commissioned. As such, the recommendation reflects the fact that the archaeological issues surrounding the application have not yet been fully resolved.
- 6.5 The application relates to a Grade I listed building. As such, the Council cannot determine the application without referral to the Secretary of State.

## Summary

- 6.6 The application proposes the extension of one of Ross's most recognisable buildings. The design of the extension has been subject to close scrutiny by the statutory body prior to formal submission. Neither the Council's advisors nor English Heritage record objection to the proposal, and notwithstanding the concerns raised by the Civic Society, The Ancient Monument Society and the individual objector, it is considered that subject to resolving detailed design issues, an acceptable balance has been struck. As such the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That subject to the resolution of the outstanding archaeological issues, officers named in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be authorised to refer the application to the Secretary of State with a recommendation that the Council is minded to approve, subject to the conditions below and any further conditions considered necessary by officers:**

**1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))**

**Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.**

**2 D10 (Specification of guttering and downpipes)**

**Reason: To ensure that the rainwater goods are of an appropriate form in the interests of the safeguarding of the special architectural or historical interest of the building and to comply with the requirements of Policy HBA1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**3 D04 (Details of window sections, eaves, verges and barge boards)**

**Reason: To ensure that the work is carried out in accordance with the details that are appropriate to the safeguarding of the special architectural or historical interest of the building and to comply with the requirements of Policy HBA1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**4 D05 (Details of external joinery finishes)**

**Reason: To ensure that the work is finished with materials, textures and colours that are appropriate to the safeguarding of the special architectural or historical interest of the building and to comply with the requirements of Policy HBA1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**5 D06 (External finish of flues)**

**Reason: To ensure that the work is carried out in accordance with the details that are appropriate to the safeguarding of the special architectural or historical interest of the building and to comply with the requirements of Policy HBA1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**6 C01 (Samples of external materials)**

**Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings so as to ensure that the development complies with the requirements of Policy DR1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**7 H28 (Public rights of way)**

**Reason: To ensure the public right of way is not obstructed and to conform with the requirements of Policy T6 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**

**Informatives:**

- 1 N19 - Avoidance of doubt - Approved Plans**
- 2 N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**

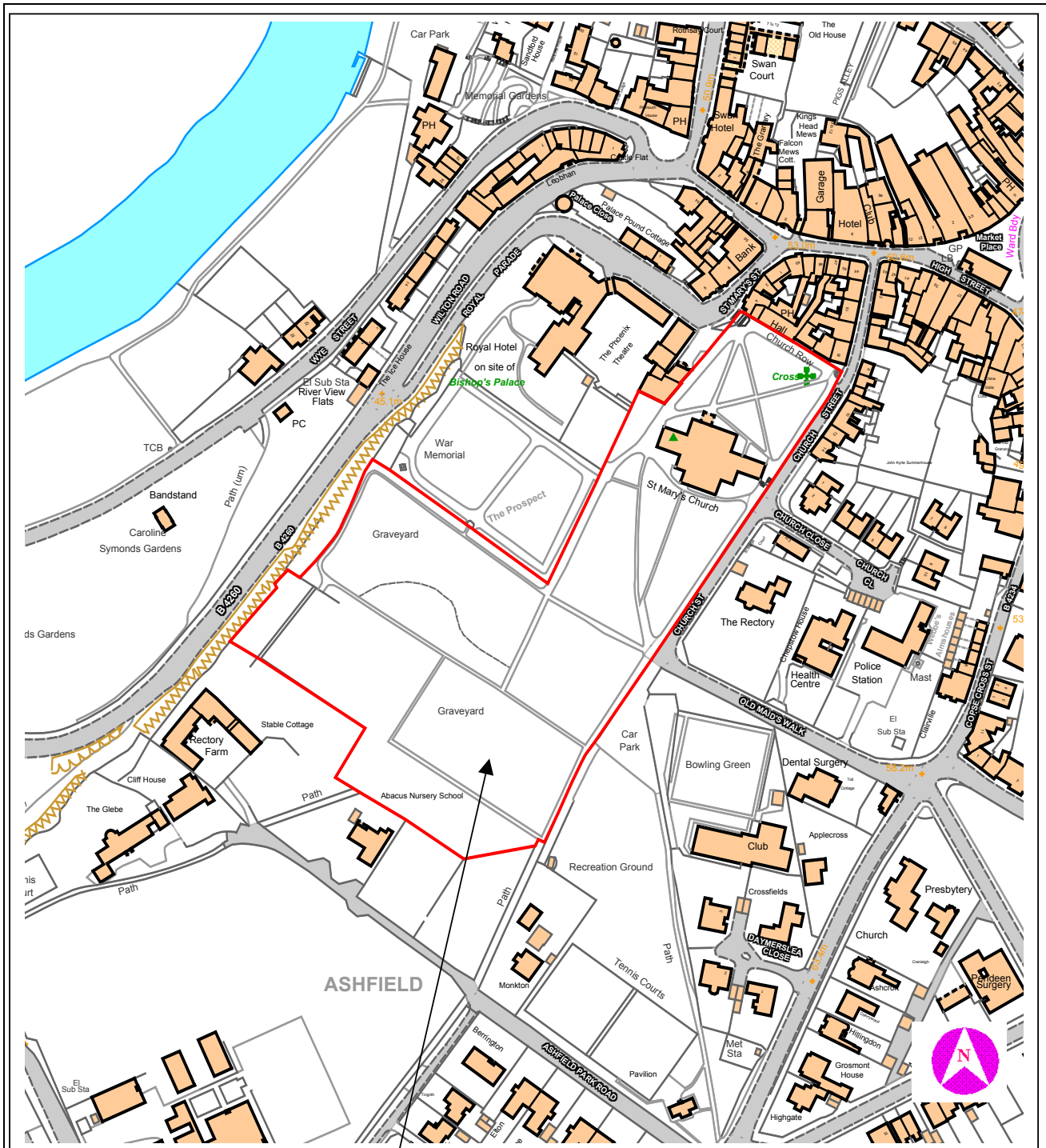
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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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**APPLICATION NO:** DCSE0009/0926/F

**SCALE :** 1 : 2500

**SITE ADDRESS :** The Church of St Mary The Virgin, Church Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5HP

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