

VISIT REPORT

Weston, St Mary
17th November 2014

Present: Revd Mike Cheshire (Curate-in-Charge), David Walsh (English Heritage), Mary Anderson (Parish Architect), Keith Halliday (DAC Secretary), Peter Duff (DAC Assistant), Richard Taylor (DAC Heating Advisor), Graham Cook, David Stocker and Susan Leadbetter (DAC members).

The church has recently received a sizeable bequest for the benefit of its mission. The parish has therefore been considering improvements to encourage the local community as well as the village school to use the building more frequently. It is also hoped that a Sunday school will be established in the future.

The current proposals are to screen off the south transept (behind the organ) for the Sunday school/children's activities. Two radiant heaters (similar to those already installed in the nave) would be fixed at high level to the transept west wall. The existing curtain arrangement at the tower entrance would be replaced with a high quality timber screen to conceal the proposed new servery (at present there is a water supply and flower arrangers' sink within the tower). The tower floor would be raised to create level access with the nave and storage cupboards would be fitted against the tower's north and south walls. The existing unsightly domestic kitchen units within the western nave south of the tower arch (fixed against the north vestry screen facing north) would be discarded. The carved timber memorial panel (complete with bench pew) currently fixed to the blocked westernmost arch in the north nave arcade would be moved over to where the existing kitchen units currently stand, to allow internal access to the, now defunct, boiler house (on the north side of the church) via a new doorway knocked through the existing blocked arch. The proposed fully accessible toilet would be located in the old boiler house. It is also intended to install two more radiant heaters at high level at the west end of the nave nearer to the tower entrance.

DAC Delegation comments

The delegation thought that access to the old boiler house would be better gained by unblocking the existing blocked doorway at the west end of the present north aisle, rather than making a new doorway through the existing blocking in the western arcade bay. This might mean that the boiler house north wall would have to be moved northwards a little to make the opening fully accessible but would avoid too much disturbance of historic fabric, and appeared to be a much simpler and less obtrusive option (for example, an opening at the west end of the north aisle would be far less visible when entering the building from the main south entrance). This option would also mean that the carved timber screen and pew bench could remain in its present location, but the carved twelfth-century grave cover, on the floor at the west end of the north aisle, would need to be re-located to a more suitable position within the church. The parish should be able to obtain grant aid for a conservation report of the stone memorial, prior to its relocation to a position where it can be more easily seen and appreciated.

The delegation also suggested that instead of raising the floor in the tower to create a level platform, from which to prepare and serve refreshments, the existing domestic

kitchen units could be replaced with a foldaway servery (that would look like an item of ecclesiastical furniture when not in use). A serving trolley (on wheels) could be incorporated in the design. Further discussion ensued regarding whether or not the servery would be better located on the north side of the building nearer to the proposed toilet so that it would be in a more convenient position to link in with the drain. Regardless of which option the parish chooses for the location of the servery, the damp problems within the tower should be investigated and addressed.

The delegation advised the parish to offset the additional radiant heaters, proposed for the west end of the nave, away from the clerestory windows if possible. The radiant heaters proposed for the south transept west wall should not be directed towards the organ mechanism and pipes.

The carpets and rubber underlay in the central gangway and chancel should be removed as soon as possible as they are trapping moisture and damaging the floor and ledger stones beneath. Care should be taken when lifting the carpets due to the release of mould spores. The parquet floor in the nave is rotten in places and needs to be repaired/replaced.

The preparation of the Statements of Significance and Need would be required within the Faculty application and should help to focus the PCC's thoughts. All options and reasoning should be thoroughly discussed in the Statement of Need anyway (even if they have subsequently been discounted). The Statement of Significance should outline the historical development of the church, identifying any special features and paying particular attention to those areas that will be affected by the proposals.

The parish could contact Ben Stoker, the Church Development Officer and Matthew Godfrey, the Historic Churches Support Officer who could help with grant applications (if necessary) and the preparation of the Statements. The better the scheme, the more likely it would be to attract grant aid. Guidance notes for preparing the Statements and links to completed examples can be found on the diocesan website www.lincoln.anglican.org.

Susan Leadbetter and David Stocker

This site visit report records the views expressed at the site visit made by the delegation from the DAC.

It has been offered to the full DAC for comment, correction & alteration. Further comments and suggestions, which did not form part of the discussion at the site visit, might have been added to this report following consideration at the full DAC meeting.

This report, along with any necessary additional information, will be sent to the PCC, English Heritage, and to relevant amenity societies. This report does not necessarily represent the views of the amenity societies.

It is now in the hands of the parish to review the contents of the report and act accordingly. Until a response has been received from the parish the DAC will assume that the matters raised are still being considered by the parish and will not pursue the matter further.