

Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC)

Delegation Visit Report 08.12.2022

Parish Church of All Saints, Norton Fitzwarren – Grade II Listed

From the DAC

Simon Hill
Charles Doble
Julian Gibbs
John Beauchamp

From the parish

Clergy Paul Irving, Cathryn Howse
Churchwarden Andrew Ritchie
Re-ordering group Mike Hansford, Daniel Gill
Church Architect Annie Evans (not present)

Purpose of Visit

To give informal advice on planned internal reordering.
To give advice on access to south door.

Options discussed

Background

The parish is seeing a significant number of new houses being built. The current building is restricting the church from being welcoming, inclusive and hospitable. There are strong links with the school and whilst there is a village hall, it is already much in demand.

The parish was congratulated on the detailed work that had gone into its Preliminary Options Study alongside its Statement of Significance and Statement of Need.

The five options for a lavatory and the five options for a servery were all considered. The parish had already put the options in a preferential order in its detailed Preliminary Options Study and the delegation visit was fully supportive of what had been outlined and believed that the preferred options outlined should be pursued further.

Lavatory in west tower

The base of the tower would allow adequate space for a lavatory/ lavatories. The space between the inner and outer west door could be used for storage.

In respect of church exits it was noted that this would mean blocking the west door but that in addition to the south porch there was a further door in the south side of the chancel.

The footprint of the tower is relatively big, and as the parish have already accepted the west doors will be blocked by any intervention, there should be enough space to create a walk-up staircase. This will always be preferable to a ladder.

Servery in north west corner

The preferred space indicated in the options study was considered the best option. Any servery would need to be of a decent quality. The parish is encouraged to look at other churches for good ideas. eg locally at Staplegrove and at Kingston St Mary

In order to make the space work, it would be necessary to remove the two back pews in the centre aisle and three pews in the north aisle. Medieval pew ends would need to be relocated (but this has already happened with other pew ends in the church). There was discussion around the retention of the pew frontal. Architecturally there was a feeling that this should be retained. Should the parish feel for the project and future work of the church that it should be removed, then they should make a case for its removal.

Summary of advice

The parish is encouraged to work with its architect in taking forward these plans for a lavatory and servery. The preferred locations are deemed to be the most appropriate and detailed work can be done on ensuring work is of a suitable quality. The parish is encouraged to bear in mind future trends and possibilities for the building, but in order for the project to move forward, to concentrate specifically on the two areas outlined of a lavatory and the servery.

A significant amount of clutter was in the church which was to the detriment of the aesthetics and the worship space. Alongside this project, the parish is encouraged to declutter following advice on how any items may be disposed of.

Other issues

The parish raised a couple of other areas that it sought advice on.

1. Flagstones around the font. The DAC delegation agreed that it was logical to have a consistent floor level in the church and that the higher flagstones around the font were not helpful and a potential trip hazard. The most appropriate solution would be to lift

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the flagstones, take away soil from beneath them in order that they could be level with the rest of the flooring. Lowering the flagstone floor will require an architect's

specification and an archaeological watching brief. This work could be part of the overall plan for reordering.

2. Access to the south door.

(a) In the porch itself a wooden ramp could be used

(b) Outside the porch the path could be raised back to the low wall in order to improve the gradient.

Planning permission and a Faculty would be necessary

The parish may wish to consider a handrail alongside the path down to the churchyard entrance.

Simon Hill
Archdeacon of Taunton

15.12.22