

Rachel Broomfield

From: Rachel Broomfield
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2023 11:36 AM
To: Sarah Williams
Cc: Vic Soc James; Keri Dearmer; Matthew Saunders
Subject: Re: St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Yeovil , BA22 9JW, (Faculty: 2023-083588), our ref: 189893

Importance: High

Re: Improve access, heating, opening-up the interior, severy, accessible WC

Dear Sarah

Thank you for consulting the SPAB regarding the proposed works to the Grade II* listed church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker. The parish have clearly given a lot of thought to the proposals and explored various options to get to the point where they are now, which is greatly welcomed. The documentation provided is very helpful and the clearly labeled photographs make it straightforward to understand what is being proposed. The scheme as it stands would impact on the west end of the church, the baptismal font, the carpark and the west door.

Proposals

- Establishing full accessibility for all users through the redesign of the west entrance.
- Remodeling the existing carpark to provide more / better organised parking spaces and a greater space for large vehicles to manoeuvre. The removal of the hedge will be mitigated by new trees / a hedge close by.
- The opening up of the west end of the church, through the removal of some rows of pews and reflooring the resultant space.
- Establishing a severy in the body of the church, adjacent to the newly opened up area.
- Establishing a fully accessible WC either in the nave or outside, very close to the church which would double up as a baby changing facility and possibly provide additional storage.
- Replacing the current heating system with a modern, clean, energy efficient alternative.
- The works to the church path leading to the north porch are part of a separate faculty. Temporary permission has been given to resurface it, but a permanent solution needs to be found to tie in with the car park proposals.

Discussion

Overall, we are happy with the proposals as they stand. We feel that all viable options have been explored and that the justification has been provided to support the proposed scheme. In terms of the Options proposed for the new accessible toilet, we are supportive of Option 1 (External WC). There are a few areas where additional information is required, and we would advise that this should be provided as soon as possible or conditioned if the DAC feel this is more appropriate:

- **Pew report:** we appreciate that the pews are Victorian but generally before pews are removed, a more detailed appraisal is required to establish their age, significance as well as exactly how many are proposed for removal and how many could be re-located (e.g. re-pewning the Transepts). If some are to be made moveable, details should be provided. These can be in a separate report or as part of a

revised Statement of Significance. Details of the new chairs and tables should be provided and should follow the Church of England guidance regarding the seating.

- **External WC:** this will require Planning Permission, so we advise that a pre-application with the local authority is undertaken as soon as possible. To save on fees this could be combined with the proposals for the path to the north porch and the car park (see below). It is sensible to design the WC building to provide additional storage for bulky items such as tables and chairs which can then be brought into the church on a trolley using the platform lift if required.
- **The raised dais, platform lift, lobby, steps, and handrails at west end:** Details of these will be required at an appropriate scale. Has the DAC got an Accessibility Adviser and if so, have they been contacted?
- **Servery:** Details will be required at an appropriate scale to include materials. The sink should have a lid so it can be covered and locked when not in use. Details of the drainage and connection to the water supply should be provided. Will the floor in this area be changed?
- **Storage units:** Details to be provided.
- **Floor at west end where pews removed:** Details of the proposed floor surface in this area should be provided. As many of the existing flagstones should remain as possible, and the ledger stone in the nave should remain visible.
- **Font:** According to the Statement of Significance, this is a 12th century font on a 19th century base. We have no issue with carefully moving the font but details of how it will be done and any works required should be provided by a Stone Conservator.
- **Connections to drainage and water:** Full details should be provided for both the new WC and the servery unit (route and section). Archaeological oversight may be required regarding below ground works and the external trenching outside of the church may also require Planning Permission.
- **Path / car park / handrails (north side):** These works will also require Planning Permission so we would advise that a pre-application is undertaken with the local authority as soon as possible. This should include speaking with the Conservation Officer and the Natural Infrastructure Officer if the parish have not already done so.
- **New heating system:** We entirely agree with the suggestions from Inspired Efficiency, which seem to be sensible and pragmatic given the uses of the church. Further details should be provided, but we have no objection in principle.

Summary

We hope these comments are helpful to you. We would be happy to look at these proposals again once the additional information is available and the pre-application with the local authority has been undertaken.

Best wishes,
Rachel

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