

TALE VALE
(Awliscombe)

07/1629/FUL

Target Date: 02.08.2007

Applicant: Awliscombe P.C.C.

Location: St Michael's All Angels Church, Awliscombe

Proposal: Remove boiler room and chimney and construct new kitchen and disabled WC extension.

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

No objection

English Heritage

- Sympathetic to church's case for provision of facilities
- Interior of church does not lend itself to installation of WC. Small extension between the north aisle and tower is the most practical position.
- EH understands there is concern about size of extension in relation to prominence of west tower when viewed from approach to Church.
- Extension could be reduced to WC only. Kitchen: a number of churches have a free-standing servery cupboard which incorporates a sink unit concealed when not in use (this option not discussed at site meeting).

Devon County (Director of Environment, Economy and Culture) Archaeology

- Proposal directly affects a site of archaeological importance. The original church is dated to the 15th Century and the settlement of Awliscombe is likely to be Saxon in origin. Groundworks have the potential to impact on buried archaeological remains (and above-ground works on the archaeology of the building itself) likely to need recording.

In any consent that the Authority may be minded to grant, archaeological recording condition recommended.

PARISH COUNCIL

Fully support this application.

WARD MEMBER(S)

No comments have been received at time of writing the report.

REPRESENTATIONS

No letters have been received.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None recorded. There is an existing boiler room sitting close against the west end wall of the north aisle.

PLANNING POLICIES

Government Guidance

PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment
PPG16 – Archaeology and Planning

English Heritage (Controlling Change in Places of Worship)
New Work in Historic Places of Worship

Devon Country Structure Plan (2001 – 2016)

Policy C07 – Historic Settlements and Buildings.

East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness
Policy EN9 – Extension, Alteration, Demolition or Change of Use of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The church stands on high ground (like most churches dedicated to St Michael) above and at the north end of the village. It is a local landmark. Its access lane – Church Hill – leads off the main road (A373) between Honiton and Cullompton.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The plan is to provide a WC and kitchen.

The proposal is to dismantle the existing boiler room (footprint 5.9 square metres, volume 12 cubic metres) and replace it with a considerably larger extension (footprint 19 square metres, volume 49 cubic metres). The extension would fill most of the angle between the tower and north aisle.

To gain access to the WC (disabled standard) and the kitchen, a new opening would be made through the tower. (This raises issues about internal alterations which are outside consideration in this report.)

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Background

The church seek to improve facilities for use during services and village or school events. Access to both kitchen and WC are designed to be disabled – compatible under Part M of the Building Regulations. The location has been previously discussed with Diocesan representatives, English Heritage and other amenity bodies, and is the least difficult choice.

Considerations and assessment

The submission is accompanied by a very brief Design and Access Statement. It rightly considers the Parish needs, but gives scant consideration to architectural and historic considerations. It says that the PCC considered many options, but gives no indication, or summary of the strengths and weaknesses of these. Certainly there is no well-argued rationale of the type indicated in PPG15 (paragraph 3.4) or ‘New Work’ in Historic places of Worship (paragraph 4.2.2).

Highway Issues

There are none.

Impact on Landscape

The effect of the proposal would be very minor in the wider landscape and is not considered to be an issue.

Impact on Listed Building

This is the critical area for consideration. The Church is Listed Grade I “an unusual grand church with impressive Medieval and C19 features”.

It has the typical arrangement of a square west tower (with large stair turret) which adjoins the body of the church on one side only. It stands above the lane.

As one approaches the church up the hill and enters the churchyard, the tower is therefore seen as a strong feature, rising clear from ground level to battlements. The particular difficulty with the proposed extension is that it would stick out in an awkward manner. As a single storey box next to a tall (3-stage) tower, visually, it would significantly spoil the clean form of the tower itself. It would also impact on the north aisle, firstly by absorbing the set-back buttress into the extension end wall, and by its lean to roof running right up to the cill of the “3-light perpendicular west window”.

At present this window has plenty of visible masonry around it. The proposed roof would rather push up against it leaving the window crowded and spoiling the gable.

The proposed extension would be clearly seen from the churchyard to the north and west (besides the southern approach) as an awkward infill. By contrast, the present boiler room was built so low and narrow below the north aisle gable that it is not very noticeable, i.e. being set so far back from the tower, and inset from the buttress, and low, it does not compete with or significantly detract from the principal massing components of the Grade I church.

In contrast, with the current proposal, the use of salvaged stone and matching battlements would not disguise the awkward projection – by massing and detail - which would demonstrably detract from the architectural and historic interest of the church.

CONCLUSIONS

The desirability of providing a WC in particular, and also a kitchen, is acknowledged. However, these do not justify an extension which would harm the character and appearance of a Grade I Listed Building.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposed extension would adversely affect the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade I church particularly because its prominence would detract from the clean form of the tower and the north aisle’s west gable, and would be contrary to Policy EN9 of the East Devon Local Plan, 1995-2011 and Policy CO7 of the Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016.

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.

Informative: the LPA is sympathetic to the provision of WC facilities in particular, and also to kitchen facilities. You are recommended to carry out an assessment of the building's significance (paragraph 2.1 'New Work in Historic Places of Worship') and the needs of users. A clear consideration of the options considered, and the design rationale which follows, should form part of a future application. Dependent on the analysis and rationale, it may be that a much smaller extension – similar to that existing – would be acceptable.