

Sent: 16 April 2025 17:43

Subject: 2025/90439 Church of the Holy Innocents, Vicarage Road, Dewsbury, WF12 9PD

Attachments: Consultation Request 21_32115.docx; FFC Secondary glazing in churches.pdf; FFC CBC stained glass guidance.pdf

2025/90439 FORMER CHURCH of HOLY INNOCENTS, DEWSBURY WF12

Thankyou for your consultation.

As you will know, HBAP wrote at length about this case on 10th September 2023 – and we judge this second application against the critique we offered on the predecessor application and the reasons given by your authority in its earlier refusal (although it is not in our competence to pronounce on the provision of car parking and the retention or otherwise of trees, on which we defer to Kirklees) .

We also defer to Kirklees on the possibility of a new auditorial use (which could exploit the open volume of the nave). We can accept that the viability of such a use is compromised by the position of Holy Innocents, the difficulty in providing sufficient on-site parking and the existence of other auditoria within the town – but it is for Kirklees as the planning authority to conduct that test as required in the NPPF.

On the physical works to the listed building itself I am very pleased to acknowledge the considerable progress that has been made since 2023 :

- a) The external rooflights have been reduced in number from 46 to 8
- b) The top (3rd) floor has been dropped (although I see that Drawing A14 still refers to “Future 3rd Floor Level”)
- c) The omission of the 2nd floor ceiling will reveal more of the fabric.
- d) The preparation of a precise list of fittings to stay now includes the bells and clock, the stained glass (on which see below), the tiled dados and wainscotting, the heating grilles, the memorial plaques, the font and the tiles in the baptistery, the pulpit, the organ casing (but not the majority of the pipes ?), and the external doors (albeit resited)

But that still leaves the most precious, the most sacred, part of the building – the chancel and sanctuary. There are references to its being retained intact but I see that the list of fittings to be retained on pages 7 and 8 of the Heritage, Design and Access Statement does not include the altar/reredos or choirstalls. And the proposed Ground Floor (as on drawing A17) shows a kitchen and dining room in those spaces. I am not sure it follows that such uses are necessarily compatible with retaining the reredos, which is after all already placed against wall nor the retention of some of the stalls, maybe with careful resiting. That must be explored further.

Holy Innocents was designed to be richer in fittings and liturgical power the nearer the worshipper gets to the East End and the altar and surely more of the present appearance can be safeguarded whilst still allowing sensitive new uses ?

We welcome the explicit promise to keep the full cycle of stained glass, a major set by the nationally distinguished artist, William Wailes, and we welcome the external protection being taken down . I see that there is an express reference to the removal of existing perspex protection. I would have thought it a truism

that once an empty church has been brought back into visible use its attraction to vandals and thieves plummets.

But can I press on the secondary glazing. There is firm advice against its use as an inner face to stained glass. I attach two sets of guidance issued in this respect by the single greatest authority on the conservation of churches, The Church Buildings Council. The relevant sentence in the single page guidance appears three lines from the bottom. The principal argument against its use is quite simply that it is not cost effective, But as well as having only a minor effect on heat loss, a second reflective skin will distort aesthetic appreciation of the glass, and unless it is installed with a clear means of ventilation it will create condensation which in turn can hasten the decay of the lead coming and create “blooms” on the second skin. Dismantling the secondary glazing to access the stained glass for repair can be cumbersome whilst the presence of a second skin creates another barrier to emergency evacuation in the event of fire.

As we said above, the issue of the trees (and parking) is something for Kirklees but we would welcome as an express condition to any lbc a requirement that all headstones will stay and that, where any have to be displaced for the new parking, they will be relocated and will not be destroyed.

We understand that that the listed sundial has disappeared so our previous remarks are, sadly, academic and need not be taken into account. In fact it might be neat for DCMS to be invited at some stage to effect an amendment to the List (NHLE) removing the item from statutory protection. That might prevent confusion when it comes to establishing a clean title to the property.

In conclusion, we are now persuaded that the proposed use is the best possible in difficult circumstances. The spatial integrity of the nave will be sacrificed but the conversion displays an architectural audacity not evident in the more routine conversions. The applicant is not motivated by rawly commercial considerations and its is good to see the future of this very fine building being entrusted to a local person with an evident pride in the area and a wish to conserve a major landmark.

We therefore do not oppose the principles inherent in this application but still commend the observations above which we hope will make the scheme even better.

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