



Mr Peter de Voil
Colsterworth Church Isaac Newton Project
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Direct Dial: 0121 625 6870

Our ref: PA00993610

Your ref: N/A

30 June 2019

Dear Mr de Voil

Pre-application Advice

COLSTERWORTH CHURCH, SOUTH KESTEVEN, LINCS

Thank you for your email of 3 May 2019 requesting pre-application advice for the above church. Thank you also for the further information provided on 14 May, 7 June and 24 June. We previously provided advice on proposals for this church on 8 August 2014. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you.

Advice

Significance

As previously advised, the church of St John the Baptist is listed grade I which means that it is part of a small proportion (about 3%) of listed buildings which are of exceptional architectural or historic interest. The church dates from the 11th century onwards and was restored in 1876. As well as its historic fabric, a key part of the significance of the church are the principal internal spaces, and the architectural relationship between them. The church's association with Sir Isaac Newton, who was baptised in the church, is also an important part of its significance and the church contains a sundial reputedly cut by Newton, aged 9, and a memorial to his parents who were buried in the church. The church also contains an important collection of early sculpture. The pews are likely to have been installed in 1876 and, as plain pews which would have been chosen from a catalogue, they are of limited significance in themselves. Taken as a whole, however, the pews make a significant contribution to the ecclesiastical character of the interior of the church.

Impact of the proposed scheme

The proposed scheme is to introduce substantial new facilities into the church to establish a heritage learning centre and restore the Newton family chapel - the main thrust of which is to celebrate the associations of the church with the Newton family as well as the church's fascinating history. The proposed scheme has a number of elements which are referred to below.



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We welcome the project to establish the heritage learning centre and the restoration of the chapel which would deliver substantial heritage public benefits, especially in association with Woolsthorpe Manor. The project would capitalise on the underappreciated connections with Sir Isaac Newton, one of the most important figures in the history of our country. We are also pleased to see the repairs proposed as part of the project.

Toilets in the tower

We welcome the change of plan to provide toilet facilities within the tower rather than a new, north porch extension, thus ensuring that the historic north doorway, north elevation of the aisle and entrance from the north, through which Newton must have passed, are preserved. We consider that the raised floor at the west end of the nave could be successfully accomplished given the height of the column bases and the method proposed.

Whilst we consider that the tower space is the best location for toilet facilities, you would need to provide sufficient justification for two toilets based on expected numbers attending events as providing access to a new ringing floor from outside the tower space does harm the significance of the church. The proposed west end balcony and stairs would detract from views of the west end of the nave, the historic tower arch and north aisle respond We recognise that a glazed balustrade would retain some views of the west window, although reflected light would be problematic. Careful design of the stairs and balcony could minimise the impact though there would still be some harm. I am unable to comment in detail without seeing elevations and would be happy to provide further advice as the plans progress. Further information on the previous west end balcony would be helpful and inform assessment of this part of the proposals.

In our previous discussions the possibility of ringing from an existing higher ringing floor was mentioned - this possibility should also be addressed.

Relocation of the font and removal of the organ to a nearby church

We do not wish to comment on the relocation of the font or the removal of the organ which we believe can be left in the hands of the DAC.

Removal of the pews

As previously advised we would have no objection to the removal of the pews in the north aisle to create some exhibition space and allow a servery to be located in the aisle. The servery would need to have the appearance of a high quality piece of free-standing ecclesiastical furniture with a folding top to hide the taps and sink etc.

We advise that the removal of all the pews, though not in themselves of much significance, would have a significant impact on the ecclesiastical character of the interior of the church and would need to be fully justified. Any chairs would need to be of high quality and, if necessary, stored in cupboards that have the appearance of





ecclesiastical pieces of furniture.

New commemorative stained glass window

A well designed stained glass window commemorating Newton's life would be a significant addition to the church. The proposal should be informed by the significance of any glazing to be replaced.

Screens to form the Isaac Newton chapel

We understand that the chapel screens would be reused and modified with glass panels to create full height screening. We advise that all screens should be of the highest quality with limited glazing. Where a new screen is proposed where the organ now stands between the chapel and chancel we consider that a full height screen could be justified as it would essentially replace the organ. However we consider that constructing a full height screen in the east arcade between the chancel and the Newton Chapel would be harmful through the insertion of a solid obstruction in the intended open connection between the two important spaces. We consider that a solution to provide a vestry and new chapel in the space of the former chapel would be possible and we would be happy to provide further advice as the proposals develop.

Retractable screen

It is important that the screen when retracted is not visible so that the important open relationship between nave and chancel through the historic chancel arch is retained. It may be that the retracted screen can be located above the arch on the chancel side which would be acceptable.

Solar panels

We would not be able to support solar panels if they are visible from the surrounding area as this would detract from the appearance and significance of the historic church.

Policy and guidance

Historic England advice in 'New Work in Historic Places of Worship,' section 2, page 7, advises that proposed schemes '*take account of the spatial qualities and main architectural lines of the interior*'. Successful schemes result from a close understanding of the building and sensitivity to both scale and detail. Section 1, page 4, also reminds us that applicants need to justify their proposals and whether the changes are essential or merely desirable must be established. Section 1 of 'New Works in Historic Places of Worship' also states that "*the more harm the proposed changes are likely to cause to the significance of the building, the more they will require justification in terms of the public benefits they will bring*'.

Our advice also reflects policy and guidance provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated 2019), the NPPF Planning Practice Guidance and in good practice advice notes produced by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum including *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic*



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Environment.

I hope the above advice is useful. If you encounter any difficulties, please do not hesitate to telephone me if I can assist further at this stage.

This letter is being copied to the DAC Secretary.

Next Steps

Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We are broadly content with your proposals, subject to you addressing the issues as outlined above before any statutory approval is sought.

Yours sincerely

David Walsh

Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

E-mail: david.walsh@HistoricEngland.org.uk

cc: Steven Sleight, DAC Secretary

COLSTERWORTH CHURCH, SOUTH KESTIVEN, LINCS Pre-application Advice

List of information on which the above advice is based

Statement of Need

Plan of proposals

Photographs



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