

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Demolition of existing garage and provision of accessible toilet and external store St Helen's Rectory, Oldcotes

Heritage

The Rectory is attached to the Roman Catholic Church of St Helen, which was constructed between 1869 and 1871, probably to the design of S J Nicholl. The church building comprises a nave which is entered by a south porch, to the east of the nave is the chancel which has an arcade to the north, beyond which the organ chamber and Lady Chapel are contained within a shallow arcade. To the north of the nave at its eastern end is a short transept with confessional and sacristy beyond. The church is constructed in coursed pitched face limestone with ashlar dressings and red clay plain tile covered double pitched roofs.

The Rectory would appear to have been constructed concurrently with the church building and as part of a single overall design. The link to the house forms a continuation of the northern sacristy projection and accommodates an office or study together with a passageway leading down into the main hallway. At ground floor level within the house there is a sitting room, dining room and kitchen above which, at first floor level is a shared shower room and two bedrooms, one with en-suite and a sitting area. To the north of the kitchen is a single storey off-shoot accommodating a utility room, toilet and the church boiler room. The house and office are constructed in brickwork with ashlar detailing, the roofs are pitched with red clay plain tile coverings. A carved datestone, 1870, is incorporated into the stone surround of the main entrance doorway.

The church is listed Grade II however the listing description makes no reference to anything north of the wall between the short north transept and confessional and sacristy. At very least the house should be regarded as a curtilage building however, it could be argued that the house forms part of the listed building, as the church and house were clearly built at one and same time to a single overall design. Although it assumed that the house falls under Ecclesiastical exemption by the same token.

The garden area to the immediate east of the church and house is scheduled as an Ancient Monument as it contains the remains of a Roman villa.

The garage is a detached late C20th precast concrete panelled structure with felted flat roof and metal up and over domestic style garage door, all sat on a concrete plinth. The garage is of little Architectural merit and adds little to the setting of the listed church or dwelling.

Need

The church does not have any toilet facilities, with congregation members being permitted access to the Rectory if necessary. This however requires either going outside via the south porch doorway and then in through the front door of the Rectory, or negotiation of a flight of three steps between the sacristy and the hallway to the house. The ground floor toilet within the dwelling is small and is of insufficient size to allow disabled access and limited ambulant disabled access.

Consideration was given to the provision of an accessible toilet at the west end of the church, as well as reworking the confessional area. The reforming of the confessional area within the north-east corner of the main church was deemed to be not very private, should a member of the congregation wish to use the facility during a service. Installing a toilet at the west end of the church would have necessitated the resetting of the font and the loss of congregational seating. The church is well used and the seating capacity is currently over stretched. Drainage may have also proven difficult from this area of the church due to the burials to the west of the main nave.

It was therefore concluded that the required space would need to be outside of the footprint of the existing building in the form of an extension. The possibility of extending the south porch was considered, however this was concluded to be difficult in terms of both the burials in the area and the aesthetic of the building, given its listed status.

Proposal

The existing garage associated with the Rectory is currently used only for storage, as there is a reasonably sized car park adjoining the house. As noted above, the garage is a modern concrete construction which is nearing the end of its economic life and detracts from the aesthetic of its surroundings. The proposal is to demolish the existing garage and construct a new detached building on the same footprint, in materials to match the dwelling, to be more in keeping with its surroundings. Planting is to be provided to partially screen the building from the main church approach. The building will house a fully compliant accessible toilet together with external store. This solving the churches concerns regarding toilet provision, whilst maintaining adequate storage for the dwelling.