DELEGATED REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/07371
Application Type:	Planning Permission
Site Address:	St John The Baptist Church, Vicarage Lane, Colerne, Wilts, SN14 8EL
Proposal:	Replacement of existing gravel path from Tower to South Porch with new pennant stone paving
Recommendation:	Planning Permission be GRANTED

PROPOSAL

The application seeks planning permission for the 'Replacement of existing gravel path from Tower to South Porch with new pennant stone paving'. Works to the building to facilitate the conversion include the following;

- Remove existing gravel path and excavate to a depth of between approximately 100-125mm for the depth of the pennant slabs and cobbles plus a further 150mm sub-base below
- Lay a 1m wide wide path of reclaimed pennant stones edged on each side with cobbles / small slabs 15cm width.

The submission suggests that the changes to the path are to improve accessibility and reduce trip hazards within a wider scheme of investment to provide a safe and accessible entrance to the church building.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises of the Church of St. John the Baptist. The church is grade I listed, the highest status of protection for extant buildings. This reflects that the building holds exceptional interest, having national significance in terms of its architectural or historical value. The list entry reads as follows;

> *COLERNE MARKET PLACE ST 8271 (east side) 8/259 Church of St. John the Baptist 20.12.50 GV I*
>
> *Anglican parish church, c1200, c13, much rebuilt c1450 and heavily restored c1854 and in 1877 by Wilson, Willcox and Wilson of Bath. Ashlar and rubble stone with stone tile and slate roofs with coped gables. C15 West tower, c1200 nave with later C13 clerestorey, C13 chancel much altered, later C13 north east chapel and C15 aisles and porch, probably incorporating earlier work. Fine ashlar tall west tower, 3 stages with set-back buttresses and north east stair turret. Heavy moulded plinth and string courses. Lower stage with large 4-light window over small arched door to west front and similar 4-light blank panels to sides. Second stage with 5 long cusped head panels with statue niche to each face and top stage with paired cusped bell-openings continued as blank panels below transom, pierced stonework to bell-openings. Moulded coved cornice and trefoil pierced parapet with corner pinnacles and stone spirelet to stair tower. One-handed clock on west face. South aisle has low roof with parapet, 2 flat-headed 2-light windows flanking much restored porch with sloping buttresses and statue niche, to right a restored Perpendicular 4-light arched window with hood. Clerestorey rebuilt in C19 with moulded eaves and 3 windows. Chancel with slate roof and rebuilt south wall with*

moulded eaves and 2 C19 flat-head Perpendicular style 3-light windows (outlines of lancets were visible' 1855). East C19 decorated style 3-light window. North chapel has slate roof and east end in line with chancel east end. 3-light restored Decorated east window with sexfoil head. corbelled eaves to north side, Cl9 blocked door and restored 2-light window. Attached is 1877 vestry, High Victorian Gothic with large truncated east end stack over octofoil light. North aisle has parapet, carved gargoyles, buttresses and moulded plinth. 3 renewed Perpendicular style north windows, 3-light with pointed heads and large 4-light Perpendicular style west window. Interior: tierceron star vault with octagon bell-rope opening to tower. Screen part of C15 chancel screen. 4 bay nave with heavily restored circular piers and trumpet capitals with square abaci to south side, north side has 2 stiff leaf capitals and octagonal abaci. Pointed arcade with one step soffits to earlier south side and double chamfer to later north side. West arches are C15. Cl9 collar-rafter roof with pierced spandrels to straight braces. South aisle has C19 south door and C19 roof. At east end effigy of R. Walmsley (d.1893) signed H.H. Armstead. North aisle has fine carved corbel heads and C19 roof. Inset fragment of C9 cross and c1200 figure of saint. 2nd window has glass of 1881, 3rd fragments of medieval glass. Chancel heavily restored, east window c1854 with faded glass by Bell of Bristol, stone reredos 1905. On south wall C13 style sedilia and piscina, C19, but piscina part original, and C14 style ogee arched tomb-recess. On north wall elaborate C15 style triple sedilia, originally on south wall next to piscina, but moved and almost entirely remade 1877. C19 roof. 2 heavily restored arches to north east chapel, similar to nave north arcade. North east chapel has Cl9 roof and original carved heads to east window. Tomb recess of c1300 in north wall. Numerous C17 to C19 wall plaques colledted in north east chapel. In north aisle plaque to E. Teyly dated 1627 with Ionic,pilasters. [E.W. Godwin: Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine 3 1857 358-366.

The site is located within the defined settlement boundary of Colerne, classified as a Large Village in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The site is located within the Colerne Conservation Area and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). PRoW COLE41lies approximately 48m to the south and whilst not a formal right of way, there appears to be a permissive right of way to the side of the former garages attached to 7 Watergates onto the church grounds.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and there are no further landscape or ecological designations.

PLANNING HISTORY

ENQ/2023/00478 – Replacement pathway

LOCAL POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015

Core Policy 51: Landscape
Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment

Colerne Community Neighbourhood Plan

Policy BE1: Character and Design
Policy BE2: Heritage
Policy NE1: Landscape and Natural Environment

Colerne Design Statement

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Scale and design
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Heritage

CONSULTATION

Colerne Parish Council: No comments received

Conservation Officer: No objection

> *The application follows the same ground explored in the recent pre-application enquiry. Consequently I observe the works would have a neutral impact on the setting of the listed building and are wholly appropriate in this case.*
>
> *The works would amend an existing loose surface for a more durable material and improve access for users of the building therefore providing DDA access and contributing to the preservation of the existing community use of the Church.*

Archaeology: No comment (Following receipt of clarification of the depth of excavation).

Public Protection: No adverse comments to the application

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by site notice. No representations were received.

ASSESSMENT

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a key material planning consideration. Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations.

Principle of Development

Decisions on planning applications are made in accordance with the policies contained in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and government guidance. In principle, the intention to improve public access, particularly inclusive access, and reduce the need for ad-hoc maintenance of the existing surface is supported. The works will clearly have an operational benefit to the Church of St John the Baptist translating to a wider public benefit due to an increased ease of access to a recognised community resource and green space.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant criteria and planning policies.

Scale and design

WCS Core Policy 57 requires development to respond positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, elevational design, materials amongst other things. Policy BE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan requires that development proposals should be designed in a way which takes account of their surroundings in their built form, height, materials, historic character and boundary treatments.

Plans indicate that only minimal external alterations are to be made to the Church grounds. The existing gravel path is to be removed and replaced with reclaimed pennant stones edged on each side with cobbles. This will match the section of path leading from the gate entrance to the Church.

It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with CP57 of the Core Strategy for Wiltshire, BE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan and the relevant sections of the NPPF in this respect.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Core Policy 51 states that development should protect, conserve and where possible, enhance the landscape character. Section 15 of the NPPF explains that decisions should ensure development protects and enhances valued landscapes and that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Policy NE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood plan requires that development should maintain adequate open landscape space, rural and agricultural in character, between Colerne and other settlements in the parish so that the landscape continues to provide the overall character and context of the parish

The AONB Management Plan explains that proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the AONB should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views, including those into and out of the AONB – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced. The relationship between settlements and the landscape should be respected.

The application is located with the settlement of Colerne and the proposal solely results in the changing of surface materials to an existing path with no increase in built form. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to integrate effectively and any effect on wider landscape views and scenic beauty of the AONB would not be harmful. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with CP51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, NE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan and Section 15 of the NPPF.

Heritage

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require Local Planning Authorities in determining planning applications affecting a Conservation Area to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that conservation area. Core Policy 58 states that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for works which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Policy BE2 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset as set out in the Colerne Historic Environment Record, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraph 195 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular

significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by the proposal (including any development affecting the setting of a heritage asset). Paragraphs 200 and 202 require local authorities to assess whether there is substantial harm, less than substantial harm or no harm to the heritage asset.

The significance of the Church lies in its historic, illustrative, communal and aesthetic value. The proposed works are very small scale and will be viewed in the context of the existing path to the north of the same design and materials. It is considered, and is the view of the conservation officer, that in this context the proposal will result in a neutral impact and cause no harm to the setting of the listed building and the wider conservation area, not least because the surfacing materials are wholly appropriate to the locality. The works would replace existing loose surfacing with a more durable material and improve access for users of the building therefore providing DDA access and contributing to the preservation of the existing community use of the Church and its aesthetic value and significance in the wider conservation area.

Although no harm to the setting of the church and wider conservation area have been identified (and no balancing exercise is required, as set out in paragraph 202 to the NPPF), in this instance it is considered that there are in any event material public benefits of significant importance and value that contribute towards the positive impact that this proposal would have. The public benefits arise from the consolidated path would meet the needs of parishioners allowing and facilitating both the optimum viable use of the asset for its intended and historic purpose as a local community church and facility. In so doing the asset is also maintained and thereby retained in good condition avoiding decay and negative impacts on nearby heritage assets. As such it is considered that all the relevant tests as to assessment of impact to the heritage asset are appropriately and fully met and there is sound basis for approval in this regard the commencement of development is considered reasonable and necessary in this instance.

In light of the above, the proposals are considered to comply with the requirements of section 16 to the NPPF. In all respects the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of policy CP58 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable. The design represents the standards expected and does not pose any harmful visual impacts. The scenic beauty of the wider landscape and AONB is unharmed. The proposal will have a neutral impact and cause no harm to the Colerne Conservation Area, and setting of the listed church. Taking into account the above considerations, it is found that the application is acceptable with regard to Core Policies CP51, CP57 and CP58 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy, BE2 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan and Sections 12, 15 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

WA1
WM13
Design and Access and Heritage Statement
Location Plan
Site Location Plan
Existing and Proposed Layout Plans
Received 30.08.23
WP6
WP18
WP31