

DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Community Fridge Shed Church of the Holy Saviour, Westbury Leigh, Westbury, Wiltshire

Planning application supporting statement

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies an application for planning permission for a small freestanding timber shed within the grounds of the Westbury Leigh Community Hall at the Church of the Holy Saviour, Westbury Leigh. The shed is required to provide secure, weatherproof accommodation for a community fridge providing free surplus food to local residents.

The Church of the Holy Saviour is a Grade II listed building, National Heritage List for England entry 1036321. The proposal lies within its setting and curtilage and has therefore been designed and assessed with particular regard to the significance of the listed building and the effect of the proposal on the way that significance is experienced.

This statement expands the earlier heritage submission by identifying the heritage asset, describing its significance, explaining the contribution made by the application site and assessing the effect of the proposal on that significance.

2. Supporting information

- Site/location plan showing the application site and proposed shed position.
- Proposed shed floor plan and elevations.
- Photographs of the proposed shed and its intended location.
- This Design, Access and Heritage Statement.

3. Site and existing use

The application site forms part of the grounds of the Church of the Holy Saviour at Westbury Leigh. The chancel of the listed building remains a place of worship while the remaining majority of the building and grounds have been adapted for community use. The building and its grounds therefore have an established communal as well as ecclesiastical function.

The proposed shed is to be positioned to the side of the building shielded by a buttress of the tower rather than in a principal approach or prominent frontage. The immediate area is grassed. A small area of grass will be removed to form the shed base and associated hardstanding.

4. Description of the proposal

Planning permission is sought for a single small freestanding timber shed to accommodate a community fridge. The shed will measure approximately 2.0 metres wide by 1.5 metres deep. It will be 2.0 metres high at the front, with a mono-pitch roof falling to approximately 1.8 metres at the rear.

- The shed will be freestanding and will not be fixed to the church.

- It will stand on a small purpose-built hardstanding/base, requiring removal of only a limited area of grass.
- External materials and colour will be recessive and appropriate to the setting, with a timber shed appearance.
- Electricity will be taken from the existing building through an existing air-brick opening, avoiding the formation of a new opening in historic fabric.
- Any external lighting in addition to that already provided by the existing flood lighting to that side of the building will be low-level and downward-facing for safety and security, minimising light spill. Existing low-level lighting serves the approach path.

5. Design, scale, layout and appearance

The proposal has deliberately been kept modest in footprint and height. Its domestic-scale timber form is visually subordinate to the church and does not compete with the massing, roof form, tower, stonework or architectural detailing of the listed building.

The side location reduces the prominence of the structure in principal views of the church. Installation of the shed is readily reversible: it can be removed in the future without alteration to the historic building, leaving only the small base to be removed or made good if required. This reversibility is an important part of the design response to the sensitive historic setting.

6. Access and community use

The proposal does not alter the existing vehicular or principal pedestrian access arrangements to the site. The community fridge will be located close to the community hall function of the building, enabling convenient access by local residents. The proposal supports the established community role of the building by providing a practical location for the redistribution of surplus food.

7. Heritage significance

7.1 Church of the Holy Saviour

The Church of the Holy Saviour is Grade II listed. It was built in phases in the late nineteenth century and is a small Victorian country church of Gothic Revival character. Its heritage significance derives principally from its architectural and historic interest as a purpose-built place of worship, its surviving external form and materials, its internal architectural features and fixtures, and its historic role within Westbury Leigh.

The church is constructed in honey-coloured limestone, with tiled roofs, and includes a nave, chancel, south aisle and short tower. The interior contains notable timber roof construction and other nineteenth-century fabric. The later adaptation of the nave for community hall use forms part of the building's more recent history and demonstrates the continuing communal use of the site.

7.2 Contribution of setting

The grounds around the church contribute to an appreciation of it as a freestanding ecclesiastical building within Westbury Leigh. Open space immediately around the building enables its form, stone elevations and tower to be perceived. The most sensitive aspects of setting are therefore the principal views and approaches from which the church is experienced and the open relationship between the building and its grounds.

The specific location proposed for the shed makes a more limited contribution to heritage significance because it is a small side area partly shielded from view by existing shrubs and trees, rather than a principal

ceremonial approach or designed view. Nevertheless, as part of the curtilage it forms part of the setting and the effect of introducing a new structure requires consideration.

8. Assessment of heritage impact

The shed will introduce a new built element into the grounds and will replace a small area of grass with hardstanding. The potential heritage effects are therefore principally visual and relate to the setting of the listed building rather than to direct loss of historic fabric.

The effect is considered very limited for the following reasons:

- The structure is exceptionally small in relation to the church and remains visually subordinate to it.
- Its position to the side avoids obstruction of principal elevations, key architectural features and the main appreciation of the church as a historic building.
- No part of the shed will be physically attached to the listed building.
- The electrical connection uses an existing air-brick opening, avoiding a new penetration or loss of historic masonry.
- The timber appearance is simple and recessive and will not imitate or compete with the historic architecture.
- The works are reversible and can be removed without permanent alteration to the church fabric.
- The area of new hardstanding and loss of grass is small and does not materially change the overall landscaped character of the church grounds.
- Lighting is restricted to a low-level downward-facing fitting, limiting visual intrusion.

On this basis, the proposal is assessed as preserving the architectural and historic significance of the listed church and the ability to appreciate that significance from its setting. No direct harm to historic fabric is proposed. Any perceptible change to setting would be localised and minor.

9. Public and community benefit

The shed has a specific community purpose rather than being general storage. It enables a community fridge to operate from the site, allowing surplus food to be redistributed free of charge to residents. This complements the established community use of the former nave/community hall and helps sustain the building as an active local facility.

The public benefit has informed the choice of a small, reversible and unobtrusively located structure so that the community function can be provided with the least intervention reasonably achievable in the setting of the listed building.

10. Heritage balance and conclusion

The significance of the Church of the Holy Saviour has been considered at the outset. The development is modest in scale, located away from principal views, physically independent of the church and designed to avoid alteration of historic fabric. The proposal therefore represents a proportionate and sensitive addition within the curtilage of the listed building.

The small shed and base will result in only a limited physical and visual change to a secondary part of the grounds. It will not diminish the architectural interest, historic interest or legibility of the church, nor prevent

the listed building from remaining the dominant and defining feature of the site. The proposal is consequently considered to preserve the significance and setting of the Grade II listed Church of the Holy Saviour.

In addition, the community fridge delivers a clear public benefit by providing local access to surplus food and reinforcing the building's established community role. The development is therefore considered a sympathetic, reversible and proportionate response to an identified community need.

Sources used in preparing this statement

Historic England, National Heritage List for England: Church of the Holy Saviour, Westbury Leigh, List Entry 1036321.

Applicant information, proposed shed drawings and site information.