

Date of Meeting	26/02/2015
Application Number	14/11528/FUL
Site Address	St.Thomas Church, St Thomas Square, Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP1 1BA
Proposal	Installation of new glazed outer doors to western entrance
Applicant	The PCC of St Thomas' Church
Town/Parish Council	Salisbury City
Ward	St Edmund and Milford
Grid Ref	414361 129970
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Lucy Minting

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Dr McKeown has called in the application for the following reasons:

- Visual impact upon the surrounding area
- There should be a public debate about the arguments for drawing in the local community and visitors verse the objections from conservationists for a citizen's decision.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission should be **REFUSED with reasons**.

2. Report Summary

The main issues which are considered to be material in the determination of this application are listed below:

- Principle of development
- Extent of proposals requiring planning permission
- Impact to the character, appearance and significance of the listed building and conservation area
- Other material considerations

The application has received support from Salisbury City Council. The application has generated 60 letters of support from third parties.

3. Site Description

St Thomas's Church is a highly significant Grade 1 listed church within Salisbury city centre. The list description is as follows:

The Parish Church of New Sarum. Probably founded 1220. Enlarged C14 and C15. Tower 1400. Rebuilt and extended C15. A very picturesque and interesting building

of stone, part plastered. The tower has an almost detached position. Belfry contains bells formerly in Cathedral belfry. Painting of Last Judgment across head of chancel arch mid C15. Some fine timber work in roofs of aisles etc. Attractive setting in Churchyard and surrounded on 3 sides by old buildings, those on the west and south having been tile hung and forming a richly coloured background to the church.

St Thomas's Church forms a group with the rear elevations of Nos 1 to 17 (odd) Minster Street and of Nos 36 to 52 (even) Silver Street.

The site is also within the Salisbury Conservation Area.

4. Planning History

Application ref	Proposal	Decision
14/08810/FUL	Installation of new glazed outer doors to western entrance	Withdrawn
14/04416/TCA	Trees in conservation areas - T1 & T2 Yew, reduce height of canopy's by 20%, crown thin by 15%, crown raise by 4 metres and reshape, T3 Yew, crown raise by 2.5 metres	No objections 18/06/2014
S/2009/0926	Replacement glazed doors to tower south entrance	AC 05/08/2009
S/2008/2115	Trees in conservation areas - reduce and prune 2x yew trees, 1x cherry and 1x holly toward southern boundary of church yard	No objections 07/01/2009
S/2004/2680	Trees in conservation areas - pollard prunas from 8 metres to 1 metre and top and trim holly by 25%	No objections 25/02/2005
S/2004/0450	Trees in conservation areas - cutting back of canopy to reduce ground footprint in churchyard. Current shading is causing deterioration in churchyard grassed area	No objections 07/04/2004
S/2003/1126	Trees in conservation areas - Felling of a flowering cherry tree	No objections 20/06/2003
S/1999/0754	Trees in conservation areas - Various works to trees	No objections 16/06/1999
S/1996/0280	Change of roof covering material from copper to lead, South Aisle & Lady Chapel	AC 21/05/1996

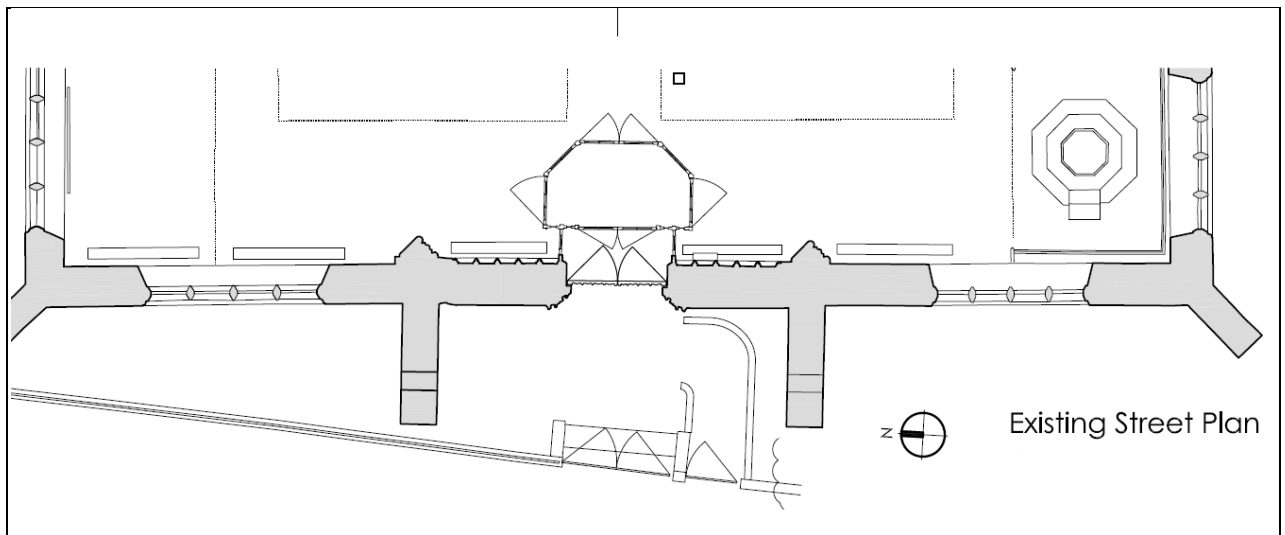
S/1988/0714	Trees in conservation areas - Felling of conifer tree in a conservation area	No objections 14/06/1988
-------------	--	-----------------------------

5. The Proposal

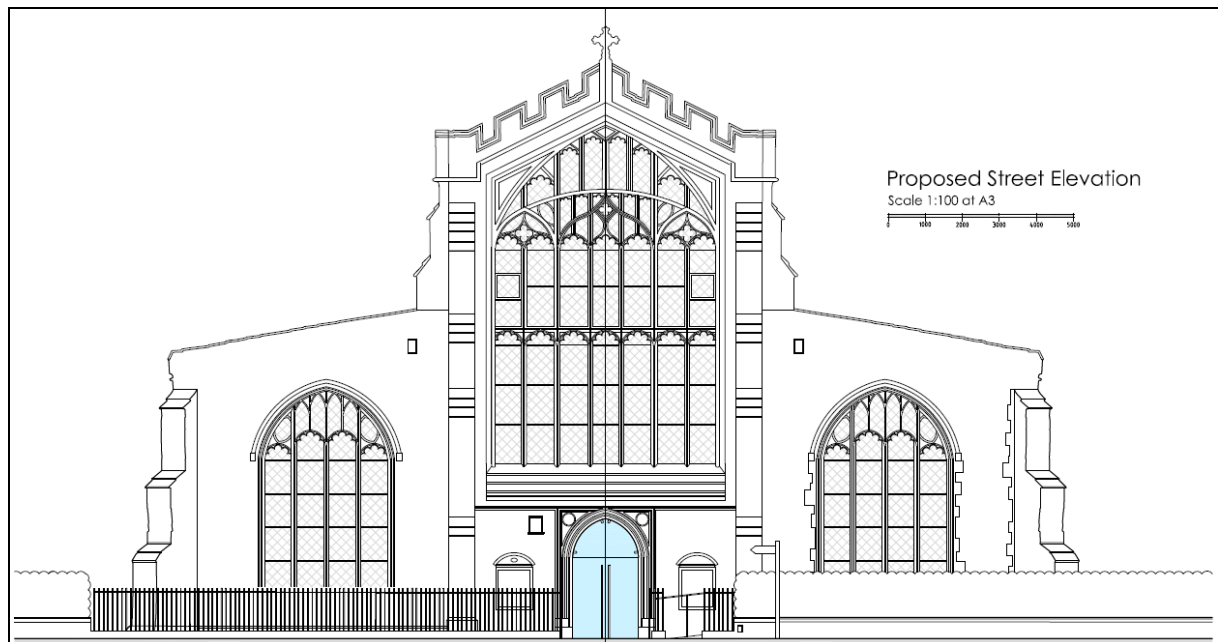
The church is accessed from St Thomas's Square by timber doors:



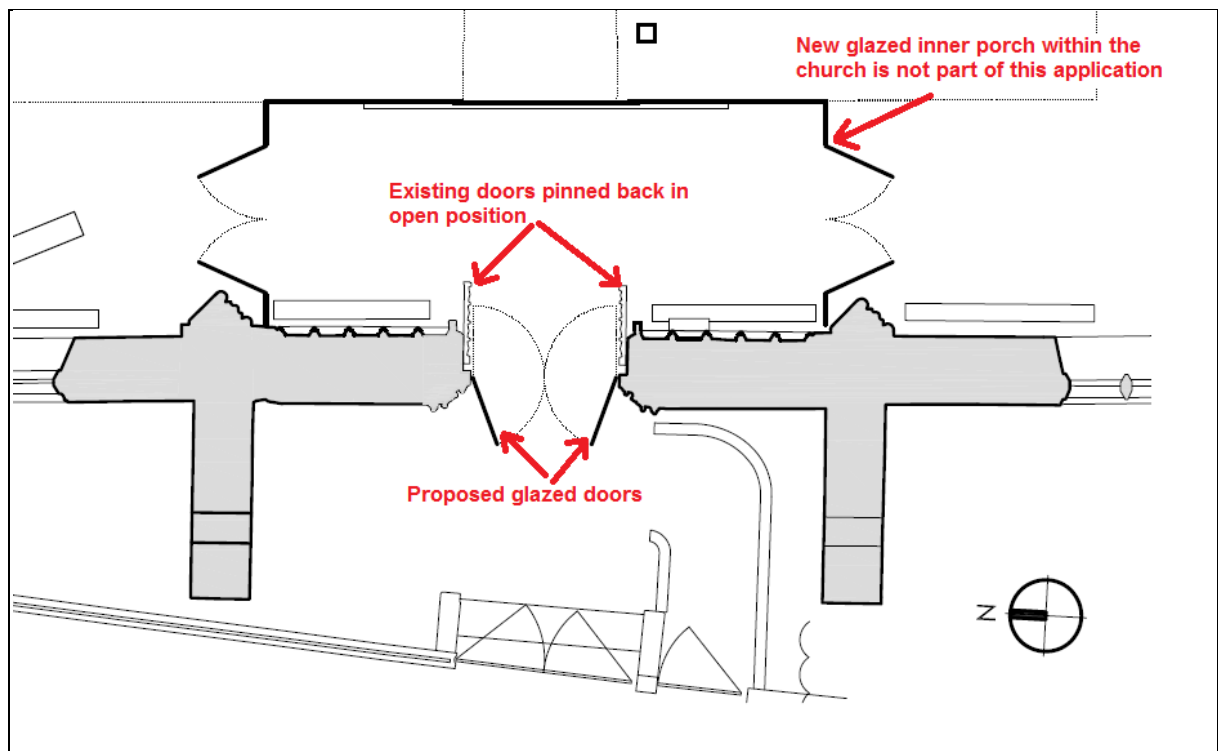
Behind these doors, set within the church is an early 20th century timber draught lobby, visible in plan form:



It is proposed to install new glazed outer doors to the western entrance to the church:



The design and access statement explains that the original timber doors will be pinned in the open position when the building is open for business and also when the church wishes the interior to be appreciated from outside when closed, as indicated on the proposed plan view below:



6. Planning Policy

The Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) was adopted by Full Council on the 20th January 2015.

Wiltshire Core Strategy:

CP57 (Ensuring high quality design and place shaping)

CP58 (Ensuring conservation of the historic environment)

Government Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012

NPPG

DCMS guidance on 'The Operation of The Ecclesiastical Exemption'

English Heritage guidance on church alterations 'New works in Historic Places of Worship'

7. Summary of consultation responses

English Heritage

This is a highly significant Grade 1 church within the city centre. It is an early structure dating in part from 13th and 15th century's. The proposed alterations to the main entrance will entail the installation of external glazed doors and an internal glazed lobby.

The outer glazed doors will significantly alter the character and appearance of the prominent west elevation of the church in a detrimental way and this in turn will have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area; a detrimental impact on the intrinsic character of the historic building and the application does not meet the requirements of 131 and 132 of the NPPF.

Conservation

Installation of glazed doors will have a significant impact on the outward appearance of the church and the character of the external space (and internal within the doorway). I am not persuaded that the benefits of the scheme would be sufficient recompense for the damage to the character of the space (external and internal) that would be caused if these glazed doors were installed.

Archaeology

No objections. It is unlikely that significant archaeological remains would be disturbed.

Salisbury City Council

At a meeting held on the 12th January 2015 it was decided that Salisbury City Council strongly supports this application, and notes that it also supported the previous application regarding this matter. The Committee were particularly keen to emphasise the benefits of being able to see inside the church, even when closed, the improvements to the flexibility of the internal space and that this will make the

church more welcoming. It also recognises that churches, and other old buildings, must evolve and adapt if they are to remain viable.

8. Publicity

This application was advertised through the use of a site notice, press notice and letters of consultation.

60 letters of representation have been received, summarised as follows:

- The church is very important to the life, community and townscape of central Salisbury
- The church is a welcoming place, a spiritual place and a place of hope and refuge
- Need to make the church and its services as continuously accessible, flexible, vibrant, open and welcoming as possible to all to fulfil its mission 'Welcoming, praying, transforming'
- Community and civic events include Mayor making, British Legion Remembrance service, Christmas Tree festival, bell ringing
- The church is one of the main attractions in Salisbury especially due to the Doom painting and exceptional lightness
- Church is integral part of town history, located in a very public space with both commercial and religious setting and should be celebrated and a focal point for tourism
- Proposals have been carefully, consultatively constructed by expert ecclesiastical architects reflecting wishes of the congregation
- Subjective arguments from statutory consultees that church should maintain a barrier between sacred space and world outside is misunderstanding – historically the nave would have been open to local people for community and business uses – the sacred space was the chancel and altar which are unaffected by proposals
- Closed heavy wooden doors (necessary for security) are an unwelcoming barrier deterring worshippers and visitors entering the church
- St Thomas's Square looks very uninviting to passers by attracting anti-social behaviour
- Wooden doors were historically the only way to secure the building – now there are alternatives
- Interior of active church should be seen, used and enjoyed by everyone
- New ideas and innovations should be embraced otherwise church will cease to be relevant and we will have failed in duty of preservation and care for future generations
- This is the external but essential part of a much bigger project inside the church including a new glazed lobby
- Proposals as a whole are necessary to enable church to continue to support the local community in an active and positive way
- A more open view into the church will project an outward reach to all in the wider community and encourage openness and inclusivity
- Existing doors are 19th or 20th century and do not add value to appearance of church

- Will update and help make the church fit for purpose - replaces dark and uninviting entrance – dark Victorian lobby and cluttered impression obscuring views of interior
- Salisbury needs to maximise its potential as a tourist destination. Proposal should be encouraged and church should not be forced to continue being closed off to passers by
- Glazed doors will welcome everyone making church more appealing and attract more visitors both day and night when church is closed but interior can be seen through the glazed doors 24 hours a day.
- Glazed doors will not make a major impact on the external appearance as being transparent will be looked through
- It is not possible to place outer glazed doors inside church
- Similar glazed doors have been installed at many churches in Salisbury (Salisbury Methodist Church, United Reform Church, St Pauls new entrance), the UK (reference to Great St Mary's Cambridge and Ripon Cathedral although glazing set back within the church, St Catherine's Wimbourne) and Europe
- Will allow view of Doom painting day and night
- Modern but sympathetic - old historic wooden doors are retained; remain fully functioning and visible through the glazed doors
- Proposal will enhance appearance and appeal of church and further improve the presence of the church in St Thomas's Square placing at heart of the community
- Enable everyone to enjoy heritage and ensure church continues its vital function and mission within the community
- Without visitors and worshippers there would be no funding for upkeep
- Will have a beneficial effect on neighbouring businesses

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Extent of proposals requiring planning permission

The legislative framework for protecting the historic environment includes the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which makes provision for the protection and management needs of listed buildings through the 'Ecclesiastical Exemption'. This provides a mechanism for certain denominations to be exempted from the listed building consent system administered by local planning authorities. St Thomas Church is Grade I Listed, but being a Church of England church in use for ecclesiastical purposes, the Ecclesiastical Exemption applies.

The design and access statement explains that a replacement internal lobby is proposed and also outlines future proposals for internal alterations including re-ordering of the nave and aisles.

Listed building consent is not required for these associated internal alterations (including the replacement lobby) which will instead be subject to Faculty approval under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Exemption Measure 1991.

However, the Ecclesiastical Exemption does not exempt denominations from the need to obtain planning permission for 'development' (works which affect the external appearance of the church building and its setting). The only element of the proposal requiring planning permission is the outer glazed doors.

9.2 Principle of development

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.

Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 place a duty on the local planning authority to 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 and Section 72(1) requires the local planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated Conservation Area.

Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that 'designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance.'

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment (Section 12). Paragraph 131 in particular states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF goes on to advise that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 133 goes on to advise that 'where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

The DCMS guidance on „The Operation of The Ecclesiastical Exemption“ states the following general principles should be applied when carrying out work to any historic ecclesiastical building:

- Be based on a full but proportionate analytical understanding of, and respect the historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest of the building, its contents and setting

- Be found on a clearly stated, demonstrable and sustainable, medium to long term need;
- Minimise intervention in or alteration or removal of significant historic fabric, features or furnishings; and
- Achieve high standards of design, craftsmanship and materials.

It is recognised that in order to survive and to continue to serve their local communities, churches might need to adapt to meet changing liturgical preferences and to meet the needs of today's worshippers and other users.

In all cases, decisions about proposals and works should be based on a balanced judgement between the need for the works proposed and the significance of the structure or feature which would be altered or lost.

9.3 Impact to the character, appearance and significance of the listed building and conservation area

English Heritage has advised that St Thomas' is a highly significant church within the context of the City's ecclesiastical heritage and an important testament to the formation of New Sarum, as the Parish Church for the new settlement. Of significance externally are the bell tower and the west elevation and their prominence when viewed from Silver Street. English Heritage explains that the church is especially renowned for the 15th century Doom painting, although there are other important wall paintings within its impressive interior and as such recognise that the church wishes to allow easy access for visitors.

English Heritage refers to their guidance on church alterations which states '*existing doors often contribute to the special interest of a church by virtue of their age, design of traditional role*' and although the proposals retain the timber doors, they will no longer be the outer doors to the church.

The conservation officer explains that a strong characteristic of parish churches is entering a very large space through a comparatively modest door to behold the 'wonder' of the interior (and in St Thomas' – the Doom painting) and is a long-established character of St Thomas'.

Third party comments refer to other churches having glazed doors such as those proposed and the design and access statement refers in particular to glazing at Chichester. The conservation officer explains that glazing at Chichester is set within a porch so shadow softens the impact and isolates the glazing from the windows above, whereas at St Thomas', the glazing will be flush with the main elevation and in close association with the traceried window above.

English Heritage consider that the glazed doors will have an adverse impact on the evidential and aesthetic significance of the church creating a modern and discordant visual impact on the traditional structure and recommend that the timber doors should be retained in their current location.

English Heritage have opined on the internal alterations in their consultation response, although these are not considered as part of this planning application,

being Ecclesiastically Exempt. It is clear from these comments that neither English Heritage nor the conservation officer have objected to the inner lobby glazing proposals, nor the use of glazing at the entrance per se.

An alternative proposal, which would not require planning permission, is to retain the existing solid timber doors in their existing position and set glazed doors back from these within the church/lobby. This has been used in other churches and Cathedrals (including St Mary's Cambridge and Ripon Cathedral) and has been suggested to the applicants but discounted.

9.4 Other material considerations

As set out earlier in the report, planning legislation states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The applicants have explained that the purpose of the glazed doors is to control draughts and to see in to the building's interior, both when the building is 'open for business' and when closed. However, it is not considered that this would be sufficient recompense for the damage to the character of the space (external and internal) that would be caused if these glazed doors were installed.

English Heritage advise that demoting of the main timber doors to an internal door will undermine their status and alter the visual character of the church and advise that the proposal is contrary to paragraph 131 of the NPPF as it is not an enhancement to the significance of the heritage asset. English Heritage also considers that there is not a persuasive justification that would outweigh the harm caused by the proposals and as such the development proposal is also contrary to paragraph 132 of the NPPF.

10. Conclusion

English Heritage and the Council's conservation officer consider that the external glazed doors will significantly alter the character and appearance of the prominent west elevation of the church in a detrimental way and this in turn will have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Recommendation

That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:

- (1) The proposed external glazed doors will significantly alter the character and appearance of the prominent west elevation of the church in a detrimental way and this in turn will have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The development is considered to be contrary to policies CP57 and CP58 of the Adopted South Wiltshire Core Strategy, paragraphs 131, 132, 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.