
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2024

by S Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/U27540/W/24/3338506

St Roberts Church, Robert Street, Harrogate HG1 1HP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by St Roberts Church against the decision of North Yorkshire Council.
 - The application Ref is ZC23/03506/FUL
 - The development proposed is installation of frameless glass doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of frameless glass doors to replace the existing entrance doors at St Roberts Church, Robert Street, Harrogate HG1 1HP, in accordance with the terms of application ref ZC23/03506/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
 1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted site plan and existing and proposed elevations and plans.

Main Issue

2. St Roberts Church is a grade II listed building. Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The site lies within the Harrogate Conservation Area and s. 72 (1) of the Act requires that special regard is had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area
3. The main issue in this case is therefore whether the proposal would preserve the special interest, or significance, of the listed building and, linked to that, whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Harrogate Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The Church of St Robert and the associated presbytery and repository date from the mid 19th century with early 20th century alterations. The church is constructed in red brick with ashlar dressings under a slate roof and is designed in a gothic revival style. The front elevation features an impressive

ornate projecting gabled porch in brick and stone with double doors flanked by pink stone shafts and carved capitals.

5. The significance of St Roberts Church, as a listed building, lies primarily in its architectural qualities as well as in its historic social significance as a longstanding physical, spiritual and community focus for the parish.
6. Permission is sought to replace the front entrance doors with fully glazed frameless doors with stainless steel handles, set into the existing timber frame. The obscure glazed panel above the doors would be replaced with clear glazing.
7. The existing entrance doors are timber doors with a number of narrow, vertical obscure glazed panels set in a timber frame. I understand the doors date from the 1970's and are not original. They have little, if any, architectural merit in themselves and do not reflect the quality of the building. Accordingly, the doors make, at best, a neutral contribution to the significance of the building as a heritage asset and their removal in itself would not harm the listed building.
8. The proposal will not involve any physical alteration to the historic fabric of the building including the masonry of the gothic arch. Moreover, the replacement doors would have a simple appearance and indeed because of their transparent nature would be scarcely visible. The fittings would also be discreet. As such the doors would not visually compete with the ornate detailing of the porch around them but rather would allow the architectural design of the building to be better appreciated. Accordingly, in that respect the proposed doors would enhance the architectural significance of the building and the ability to appreciate it.
9. Furthermore, the proposed doors would have attributes which would enable the building to be better used and more welcoming to the community. The glazed doors would, among other things, provide more light into the entrance and a greater visual connectivity between the outside and inside. In those respects, the introduction of the glazed doors would enhance the historic social significance of the building.
10. I acknowledge that glass doors would have a different appearance to the solid timber doors that might have originally been present. However, solid timber doors have not existed at the site for some time and are not now a proposal for consideration. Moreover, I am not persuaded that the proposed frameless glass doors represent poor quality design in themselves. My attention has been drawn to another church in the centre of the town, also a listed building, which has glazed doors as a modern alteration. Although I have no details about their planning history, to my mind the doors enhance the significance and appearance of the building. Moreover, there is no evidence before me that convinces me that glazed doors are in principle inappropriate in this context.
11. The church is highly prominent on Robert Street because of its size and scale. It can also be seen from Station Parade. As a result of its significance as a heritage asset it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. For the reasons set out above, the

proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the listed building. On that basis the proposal would also preserve, if not enhance, the character and appearance of the conservation area.

12. For these reasons the proposal would meet the statutory duty as set out in the Act and would comply with Policy HP2 of the Harrogate Local Plan which seeks, among other things, to ensure that proposals affecting a heritage asset or its setting, protect or enhance those features which contribute to its special architectural or historic interest; ensure that proposals affecting a conservation area protect and where appropriate enhance those elements identified as making a positive contribution to the character and special architectural or historic interest of the area. It would also comply with Policy HP3 of the Local Plan which requires development to incorporate high quality design that protects, enhances and reinforces those characteristics and features that contribute to local distinctiveness.

Conditions and Conclusion

13. No conditions have been suggested by the Council in the event the appeal is allowed. Nevertheless, to provide certainty and in the interests of proper planning, the standard time condition and a condition specifying the approved plans are necessary.
14. For the above reasons and taking into account all other matters raised, the appeal is allowed subject to those conditions.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR