

Mr Nick Lee Evans
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Our ref: 15514/GDNS/SPAB/09
Your ref: LTR/06792/X/9/PF

14th April 2009

Dear Mr Evans

St Mary the Virgin, Ashford

I write further to the meeting held in the church on 5th March 2009 at which you presented your proposals for re-ordering and extending the church and would like to thank you, the incumbent, members of the PCC and representatives of the Council for inviting the Society to the meeting. It was very helpful to be able to discuss the proposals together on site.

The Society's Guardians' Committee considered the proposals at their meeting last week. We would like to commend the Ashford borough Council and the PCC for commissioning the excellent Statement of Significance from the Architectural History Practice. In the Society's view this is a model of good practice with the Statement of Significance being used exactly as intended – to guide and inform the design principles.

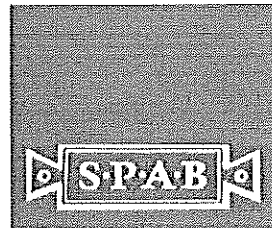
The Society welcomes the broader use of the church for civic, social and cultural events for the town. In terms of the effect of the proposals on the 18th and 19th century fabric and fittings the Society defers to the views of the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society.

The Committee felt that the proposals were broadly acceptable and commented that, in their opinion, the detail of the proposed WCs to be added to the 1927 vestry had been well handled both externally and internally.

They welcomed the fact that the existing ledger stones, stones and grave markers in the nave and aisles would all be re-used and relaid in their present locations. We understand that at Broadwater Church in the Diocese of Chichester where you specified the same type of floor construction requiring deep foundations, problems arose because you could not get sufficient depth as a result of the discovery of vaulted tombs. We therefore urge that preparatory investigations are undertaken soon to establish if the proposed floor is appropriate and to determine whether vaulted tombs do exist in the nave and aisles.

The Committee considered that the chairs should be used only in the nave and aisles and would oppose their use in the chancel and chapels, where the existing seating should, in their view, be retained.

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The proposal for a porch to be attached to the west entrance of the church was discussed at length. There were those on the Committee who questioned whether a porch would help the flow of people from and into the church, and might, in fact, hinder it. The Society would wish to be consulted again when firmer proposals are available.

I have a note to send the incumbent names of conservators who might be approached in connection with the important collection of monuments in the Smythe Chapel and at the east end of the church.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Cullis
Churches and Cathedrals Officer

Cc by email Mr Mark Carty, Ashford Borough Council
Mr Chris Dixon, Ashford Borough Council
Mr Ian Dodd, Secretary, Canterbury DAC
The Georgian Group
Dr Richard Morrice, English Heritage
The Reverend Colin Preece
The Victorian Society
Ms Jane Wade, Joint Committee DAC Nominee