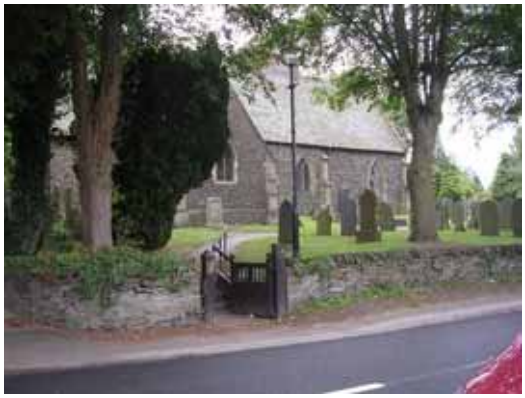
Kirby Muxloe, St Bartholomew

Options Appraisal for the proposed Extension and re-ordering of the Nave

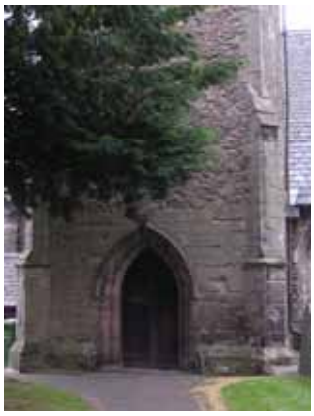
1. The current situation

At present, access to the church is possible from two directions. From the north, the churchyard is accessed via a set of steps up to the main level

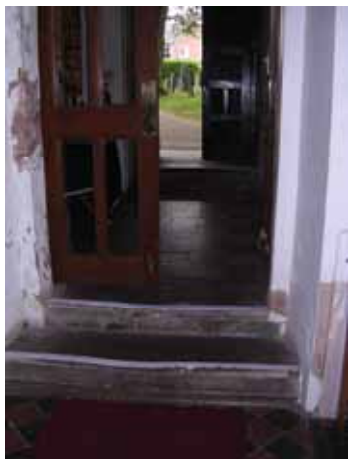


Once in the churchyard, the ground is fairly level, with a fall from south to north.

The main entrance to the church is from the south to the south porch.



The south porch presents those entering the church with a number of steps to reach the floor of the Nave.



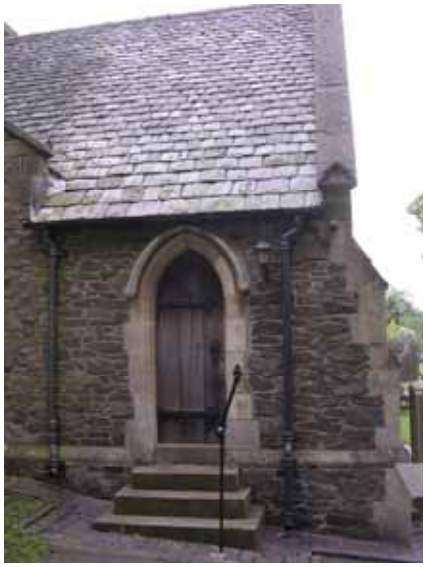
The height of these steps is such that a ramp would extend half-way across the Nave if it were to comply with the DDA legislation.

2. The Options available

a. Providing access through the Vestry

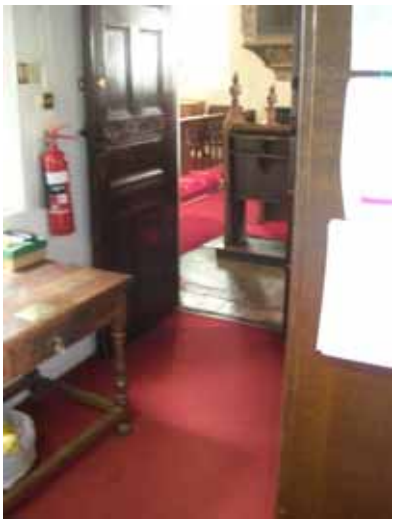
This would be difficult for three reasons: -

Firstly, the external steps to the vestry are steep



and a significant ramp would be considerable either extending to the eastern edge of the churchyard (if not further) or else curving round thus interfering with the graves in close proximity to the northern wall of the Vestry and Nave.

Secondly, internal access from the Vestry into the Chancel is too tight for a wheelchair



and could only be achieved by altering the choir stalls.

Thirdly, adaptation of the Vestry in this way would restrict access for those in wheelchairs or with infirmities during services as it would be impractical to use this entrance during services and its use before services would be rather conspicuous.

Consequently, the PCC does not favour this solution.

Providing access through the porch

The churchyard is of a level height, when approached from the south. It might, therefore, be possible to use ramps at the south door to achieve access for those with disabilities or infirmities. Unfortunately, the entrance through the south porch (see above) is narrow and is also the main entrance into the church.

Whilst ramps could be installed, the ramp on the inside of the church (even if portable) would extend half-way across the Nave, which would be inconvenient for all and it would not be feasible to leave it in situ during the service – especially as the west end of the Nave is used for children's activities during services and thus the need to consider related health and safety issues. Consequently, if the ramp was required for access in / out during services for access to the WC, or in the case of fire, there would be considerable disruption both to the children's activities and the services or other events by the need to re-position the ramp. The PCC does not feel that this would be an acceptable solution.

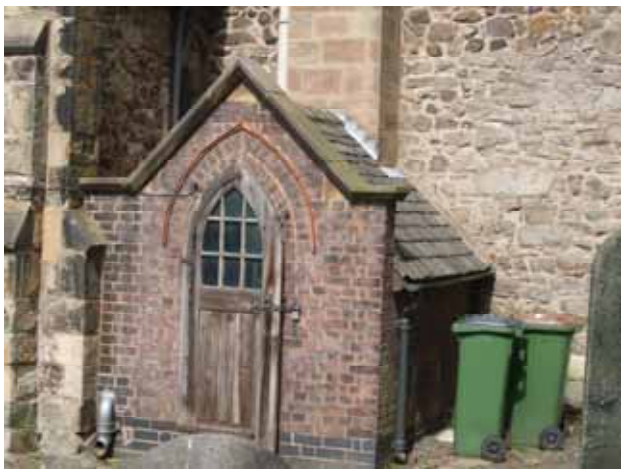
Alternatively, the level of the floor of the porch could be lowered to achieve a better access – especially if the level of the Nave floor were simultaneously raised as proposed. However, this would require extensive alterations to the footpath outside the church and would still leave only a narrow entrance to and exit from the church. The PCC does not favour this solution either.

Altering the porch to provide appropriate access does not, therefore seem to be a viable option.

b. Providing a WC in the boiler house

Assuming that permissions (Faculty and planning permission) were granted for the construction of the extension, which would allow the housing of a smaller sized but significantly more efficient boiler, it might be possible to convert the boiler house into a WC, thus reducing the footprint of the extension desired.

However, the boiler house as it is current constructed has a deep floor – some 2 metres below the level of the churchyard.



Whilst it might be possible (assuming the boiler can be housed elsewhere) to construct a floor at the level of the churchyard, there are three disadvantages to such a solution: -

i) **Internal access**. It would not be possible to create access to the WC from within the church without making a new doorway through the medieval fabric of the south-west corner of the church. Such a door would not be able to utilise the existing window as this would open straight onto a buttress supporting the tower.

ii) **External access**. If it were planned for access to be external, users would be unable to access the facilities without leaving the church and facing the elements. Disabled users would have to exit to the north and make their way around the west end of the building. The PCC is of the opinion that this would disincline members of the congregation to use it during services thus reducing the value added by the conversion.

iii) **Size.** The external door to the boiler house is too narrow for the access needed for a wheelchair. It would, therefore require widening. The height of the present building would be inadequate if a new floor was put in and the space within the boiler house is not generous width-wise. It is doubtful that sufficient turning space could be created within the boiler house to meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. It would be possible to dismantle the boiler house and build a new WC but only with external access. We do not favour building two extensions, where one would suffice complete with internal access.

For these reasons, the PCC does not feel that this is the best option.

c. Providing a Servery and the serving of refreshments at the west end of the church

The PCC accepts that the footprint of the proposed extension needs to be kept as small as possible. However, if a servery were to be installed at the west end of the church, that servery would impact on the only space available for the children's work during services as well as creating significant health and safety issues. Towards the end of the service, there would be disruption caused by both the children's work having to pack up early and the need to start the preparation of refreshments ready for the end of the service. In addition, there are occasions in the year when the numbers attending services require the provision of additional seating. These chairs would effectively block access to a servery on the west wall of the Nave.

Given that the church is small, that space available at the west end is not substantial and the consequences of combining functions would generate a number of further issues, the PCC considers this not to be a satisfactory solution.

d. Raising the level of the floor in the Nave

The PCC has identified the need to address the issue of damp in the south wall of the Nave. This will require the removal of the south pews (and possibly the pew platform as well) followed by the removal of the cement plaster currently applied to the wall. Once this has been done and the new lime-based plaster applied in its stead, the PCC proposes to install: -

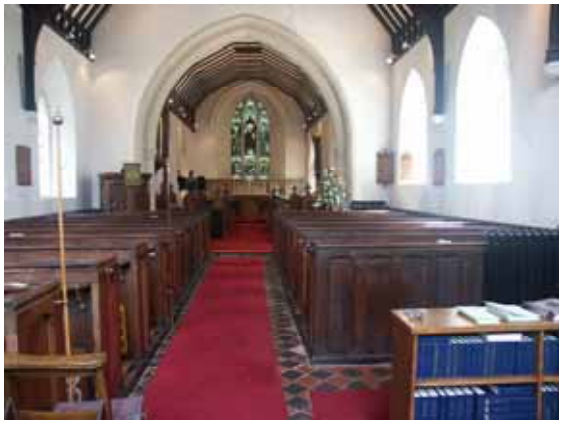
i) Under floor heating

ii) A new floor throughout the Nave at the same height as the Chancel to give uninterrupted access to the Communion Rail and to ensure all seating is at the same level.

iii) Remove six pews from the west end of the north side of the Nave

iv) Re-locate the font to the central east – west axis

Whilst this may seem drastic, the PCC considers this to be the most effective solution both in terms of cost and space.



It would be possible to re-install the south pew platform and "merely" to raise the central aisle to the level of the north and south pew platforms and then install a small ramp to give access to the Chancel. This might also allow a smaller ramp to be used for access from the south porch. However, this solution would require the installation of radiators in the Nave, where present heat output is insufficient and which would reduce the space available for seating. Consequently, the PCC does not feel this is the correct solution.

Given the history of earlier proposals, the option of removing only three pews form the west end of the north side of the Nave has been considered. However, whilst this would create sufficient space to allow for the breaking through the north wall into the extension, it would restrict the circulation space available at the west end of the Nave and the variety of uses to which the rear area might be put – especially if the font is to be "centralised". It would also leave the banks of pews unequal across the Nave. (See photographs above).

The PCC feels that this would have a negative effect upon the success of the project.

e. Providing a new entrance, servery and WC in an extension on the northwest corner of the Nave

Having considered the options available, the PCC is of the opinion that the solution that most easily allows the needs identified to be met is: -

i) The construction of an extension on the north-west corner of the Nave to accommodate a WC, servery, and lobby with a new entrance from the west

ii) the creation of a level entrance (by raising the level of the floor of the Nave)

iii) Storage facility for additional chairs

as to do so preserves the internal space of the Nave, leaves intact the medieval fabric of the west and south walls (the east wall is also of that date) and maximises the benefits of the new heating system, WC and servery.

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