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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed external alteration including introduction of a new accessible ramp and steps to the main entrance, new external light and alteration of the existing paths.



Holy Cross Church – North Bersted,
Chichester Road,
Bognor Regis,
West Sussex,
PO21 5AU

for

PCC of Holy Cross Church, North Bersted

Project No: 516

April 2022

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I. Introduction

- I.1. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to inform an application for Full Planning Consent and submitted to Arun District Council by the PCC of Holy Cross Church for the proposed external and internal alterations to Holy Cross Church, North Bersted.
- I.2. Holy Cross Church is situated within the village of North Bersted and was constructed in 1894. Originally just the Nave section of the church was built with later additions such as the Chancel and Sanctuary added in 1974. Other additions to the site include the Church Hall, a single storey timber building which sits parallel to the church.



The site location of Holy Cross Church

- I.3. Holy Cross Church is located in West Sussex and falls within the Bersted Parish boundary and outside of the North Bersted conservation area boundary. Situated on the junction between Chichester Road (B2259) and North Bersted Street the church benefits from a central location within the village of North Bersted.
- I.4. The neighbouring property adjacent to the south eastern site boundary (330 Chichester Road) is owned by the church. However, for clarity, the alterations proposed within this application are solely related to the Holy Cross Church building and its site only.

2. Description of the building and its setting

- 2.1. The site is situated along the main road (Chichester Road) into and through the village of North Bersted and therefore is in a central location within a primarily urban residential location. Due to Bersted Parish being generally considered to be part of the northern Bognor Regis area the village has expanded significantly in recent times with much of nearby properties being modern housing stock with a few notable older structures.
- 2.2. Examples of these exceptions are two grade II listed buildings: a public house known as the Royal Oak (list entry: 1027778) and a cobble and brickwork early 19th Century house (list entry: 1027779), both of which are in close proximity to the church with the Royal Oak being a key local landmark.
- 2.3. The main church building, consisting of an entrance porch lobby, the original Nave and modern Chancel additions, is located alongside the south eastern site boundary and set back from main road. Adjacent and parallel to the church is the timber single storey church hall with the vestry

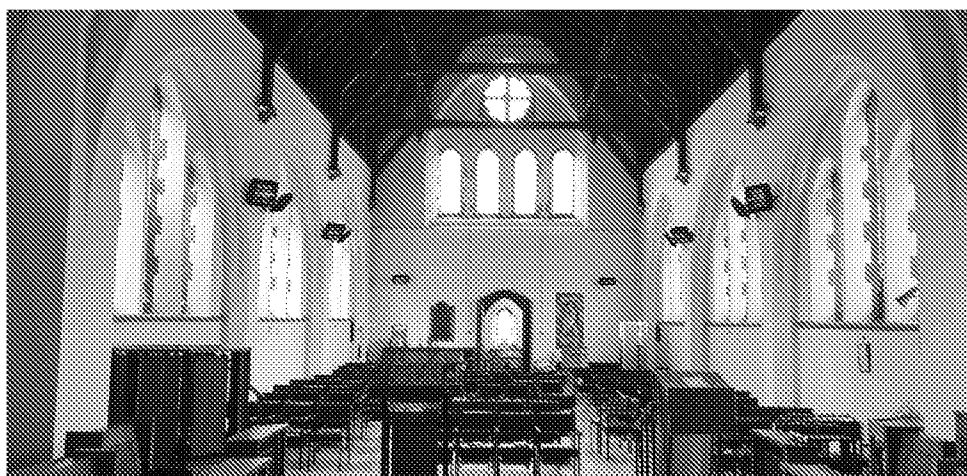
forming a flat roofed 'link' between the two main buildings and of a similar style as the 'modern' church hall. A shared car park serves the church and hall buildings and is located within the western area formed by the building masses and line of mature vegetation along the public facing boundaries.

- 2.4. Whilst the Church and Church Hall site is at the junction between the two main roads through North Bersted, the building masses are set back a significant distance from both North Bersted Street and Chichester Road. Additionally, due to the mature vegetation, raised ground level and position of the car park in the western corner of the site the Church and Hall is typically visually and physically separate from the main public facing boundaries. The exception to this is the car park vehicle access on North Bersted Street and the main pedestrian path access from Chichester Road.



The car park and church hall in relation to the main church building

- 2.5. The church hall features external steps and ramp access into the large hall space and accessible toilet facilities. Additionally, the hall provides storage, office space and a large conservatory to the rear of the hall. With the exception of the vestry 'link', there is no direct public circulation route between the hall and the Nave.
- 2.6. The church consists of two main parts, the nave and the chancel. The nave is formed from the original mission hall building from 1894, a single skin flint fronted building with coloured glass leaded windows. The chancel is formed from the extension, enlarged in 1973 with high level coloured glass windows to the north and south and a blank wall behind the altar on which there is a large metal cross.



The Nave as viewed from the Chancel

- 2.7. A single storey entrance porch / lobby on the south west elevation of the church is the location of the majority of the proposed alterations. The porch is of similar materials and construction as

the main nave structure and features two identical timber external entrance doors set within stone arches. Both openings feature stone stepped thresholds to accommodate the external ground level changes and therefore access and use of the church can be difficult for visitors with limited mobility.

- 2.8. Whilst in the past both doors originally allowed access through the lobby and into the main worship spaces, a more modern intervention introduced a timber stud work partition to form a storage room within the south eastern section of the porch. As a result, the south eastern external door is currently retained but disused with the south west door opening becoming the principal processional entrance into the church. Externally the two doors still bear the same appearance with no visual hierarchy indicated which can cause a degree of confusion for visitors unfamiliar with the site.



The Church Porch and Front Entrance

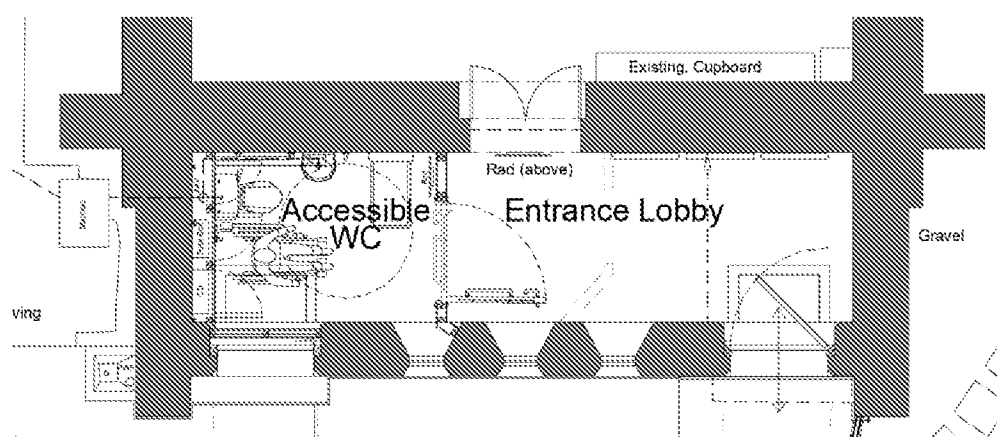
3. Amount/Extent of the development

- 3.1. Our client has identified that there is a need for a permanent accessible route that allows wheelchair bound visitors to be able to access the church. Currently the stone step thresholds of the front entrance doors are uneven and difficult to traverse for those with limited mobility. The current solution uses a temporary timber ramp which is not adequate for use during events involving larger groups. The existing provision is heavy, requires at least two people to safely move and is not weather proof and therefore cannot be used externally for extended periods of time.
- 3.2. To address the need for a more permanent solution the proposal is to revise the external landscaping and access routes into the church. This is to be enabled by the introduction of a new accessible ramp and shallow steps along the front of the porch with a large level landing to form a level threshold with the existing south eastern door opening. The new ramp and revised landscaping allows for a permanent accessible route into the church which alongside a proposed new accessible WC ensures the church is inclusive and welcoming for all visitors.



Proposed ramp and step arrangement to the South West Elevation

- 3.3. An additional concern with the present situation is the access to facilities such as toilets and water whilst using the church is limited and reliant on access through to the adjacent hall space. When the church hall is in use for events and meetings the existing toilets become inaccessible from the main church building as the facilities are accessed via the hall. This has become a common scheduling concern that frequently limits the type and size of events the church can host when the church is in use. Additionally, there is no direct access to the facilities from the Nave and therefore visitors have to leave the church and traverse the car park to use them.
- 3.4. To allow the church greater independence and improve access to facilities this application proposes to introduce an accessible WC with storage and baby changing station within the porch to replace the existing storage room. This allows the church direct access to a purpose-built toilet facility and therefore grants them a more inclusive and flexible use of the church that is less reliant on the adjacent hall.



Proposed plan of revised porch

- 3.5. There is no intention within the proposed to extend the existing building footprint and seeks to only alter the landscaping and internal arrangement alongside select alterations to the exterior.

3.6. In detail, the proposed external works amount to the following:

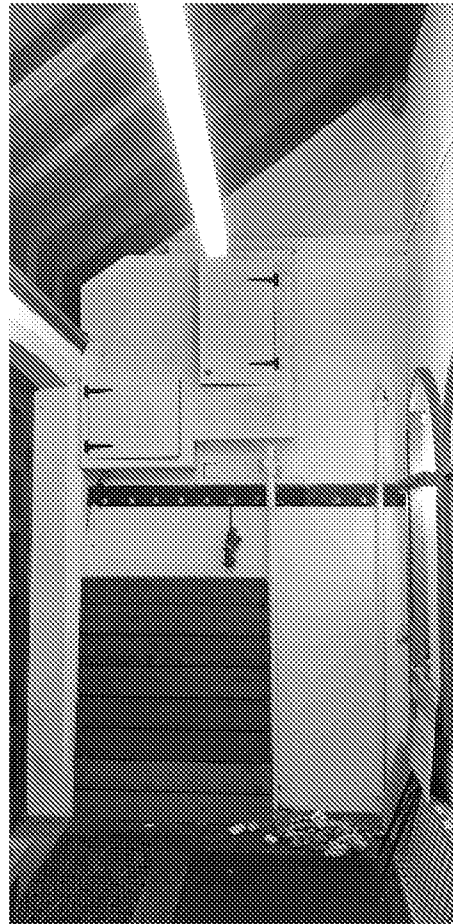
- Introduction of a flint block and brick work accessible ramp along the principal elevation set to rise from the north western side towards to the existing opening on the south east entrance. The proposed ramp therefore allows for a convenient accessible route from the car park up and into the church entrance.
- The additional steps leading from the new landing are positioned to follow the existing path to minimise impact on the existing landscaping.
- As it will be significant visual element, the structure will be finished with flint and flint block with stone upstands to suit the context of the existing church fabric.
- Similarly, blue brick pavers to match the existing paths will used to finish the ramp and step surfaces with any removed from adjusting the paths re-used on the proposed. The handrails for the ramp and steps are to be natural kiln-dried oak rails supported by black painted barley twist square steel uprights set onto the stone upstands. Over time, it is expected that the chosen materials will weather such that the ramp structure will respectfully blend with the existing fabric and landscaping.
- To reduce the impact the proposed will have on the existing fabric, the ramp and landing will carefully bear on to the existing stonework and stone steps with separating layers used to protect the existing from the new material. Both existing threshold stone steps are to be retained with the foot of the ramp avoiding the step whilst the level landing will be carefully set over the stone step to ensure a level threshold.
- As part of the works to introduce an accessible WC within the porch, it is expected that a new drainage and water inflow will be introduced through the north west porch wall. To minimise visual impact the intervention will be at low level with the new connections to the existing systems laid underground.
- 2nr. proprietary discrete tile vent will be introduced at high level near the junction of the roof and the main church wall. The discrete vents will minimise any visual impact and any required replacement tiles are to be of a matching salvaged supply.
- To supplement the existing external light above the existing entrance door a new external down light similar to the existing is proposed to be fixed at eaves level above the new landing and proposed reinstated main entrance. The light will be connected to the existing electrical system and will allow for safer traversal of the steps at night whilst avoiding excess lighting beyond the proposed steps.

3.7. The visual impact of the external alteration is minimised by utilising similar or matching materials present within the context of the site and by following the form of the existing landscaping. Additionally, alterations to the existing church fabric is kept to a minimum and affected fabric is to be protected and retained as much as possible.

3.8. The primary internal alterations relate to the proposed new accessible WC and the removal of the existing storage room and related partition. Alongside the external works the proposed revises the main access route to utilise the currently disused external door in the existing storage room. The existing main entrance door leaf is to be fixed shut with a new insulated stud panel introduced behind.



The existing storage room



The existing entrance lobby

4. Landscaping

- 4.1. The majority of the site is expected to be retained as existing with minimal changes outside of the aforementioned alterations in section 3.
- 4.2. The primary alterations to the hard landscaping are related to the adjustment of the blue brick paver paths providing pedestrian access from Chichester Road. Whilst the majority of the path is to be retained as existing, the split branches of the path leading to the existing door openings are to be adjusted or removed as shown on drawing no.516/PL102. The removed brick pavers are to be re-used as part of the new ramp construction and any additional required pavers are to be of a matching stock.

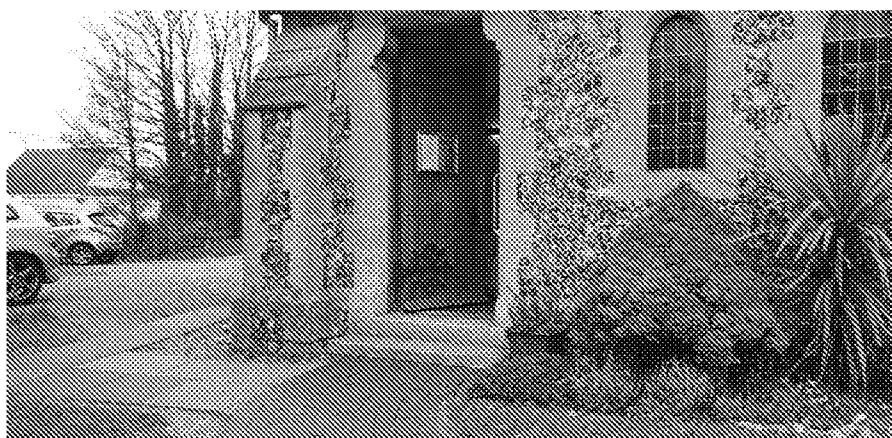


The existing split path and landscaping to the church entrance

- 4.3. The brick paver path is to be minimally extended towards the car park to form a small level landing area to improve access towards the church from the car park. This will require minor reduction to the surrounding vegetation (primarily tall grass) however this reduction will be kept to a minimum.
- 4.4. The introduction of the ramp will result in the reduction of the planting space located between the existing paths and in front of the church entrance(s). This however does increase the visual prominence of the stonework detailing present within the porch wall below the windows.
- 4.5. The new drainage and water supply connections are to be laid under the car park to the contractor's design. Once the pipework has been installed the car park ground is to be made good to match the retained existing surface.

5. Access

- 5.1. The principal entrance is currently the western entrance door on the south west elevation which leads through a small lobby space and into the Nave and Chancel beyond. Entrance into the site is either via the vehicle entrance into the car park on the north western site boundary (from North Bersted Street) or via the pedestrian path on the south western boundary (from Chichester Road).
- 5.2. The proposal does not seek to alter the existing pedestrian or vehicle site entrances. The proposed minor adjustment of the path leading into the car park will not change the existing parking provision.
- 5.3. The proposed seeks to change the primary church entrance from the existing north western door and reinstate the other door to the south east as the primary site entrance. This allows for the proposed ramp to be arranged to better accommodate mobility impaired users accessing the site from the car park.
- 5.4. The proposed creates level thresholds and manageable level changes to allow for permanent accessible circulation from the site entrance through to the entrance lobby, accessible WC and main worship spaces.
- 5.5. The new steps added as part of the new ramp construction are shallow and alongside the large landing space allow for pallbearers to traverse with relative ease compared to the existing stone step thresholds.



The existing principle entrance and car park access



Existing car park with the church hall entrance beyond

6. Assessment of Impacts

- 6.1. On account of the complexity of the individual interventions, the assessment of each element is considered within the above sections.

7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed works are primarily situated around the front entrance and porch spaces of the church and will have no direct impact on the operation of the church hall or the neighbouring properties.
- 7.2. The alterations solely serve to improve accessibility into the church and introduce amenities within to ensure the church can be inclusive and welcoming for those with limited mobility.
- 7.3. The materiality seeks to suit its surrounding context with the anticipation that over time the new material will weather into its setting. Existing brick pavers are to be re-used where possible and the existing church fabric is to be protected and the impact of the alterations is to be minimised.
- 7.4. In summary, the above proposals seek to allow Holy Cross Church to become more independent from their neighbouring church hall whilst significantly improving accessible circulation into the main worship spaces.