

JANE JONES – WARNER ASSOCIATES

HERITAGE 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

May 2022

I. Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared to inform an application for Full Planning Consent as 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.
- 1.2. 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

- 1.3. 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.

2. Description of the building and its setting

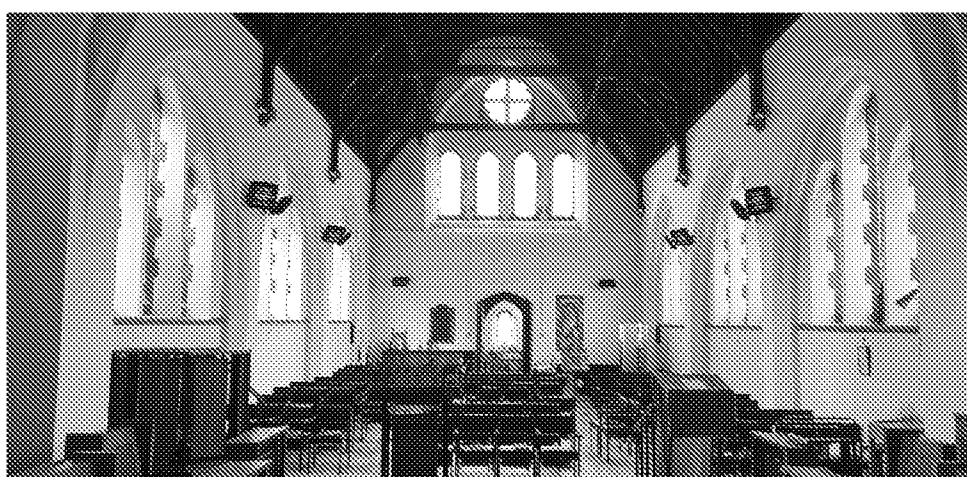
- 2.1. The site is situated along the main road (Chichester Road) which runs through the village of North Bersted and therefore is in a central location within a primarily urban residential location. Due to Bersted Parish being generally considered to be part of the northern Bognor Regis area the village 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 reasonable 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. The church is still in use as an anglican place of worship and with its central location within the Bersted area it now serves a diverse and expanding church community.
- 2.5. 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

- 2.6. 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.
- 2.7. 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

- 2.8. 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.



Location of The Royal Oak listed building

3. History and Development

North Bersted

- 3.1. North Bersted was a small village with its origins dating back to the 7th Century. In more recent times the area has become more urban in character due to the continued population growth of Bognor Regis leading to further residential development in the surrounding settlements.
- 3.2. The neighbouring village of South Bersted, has progressively merged with Bognor Regis due to the town's expansion. Similarly, North Bersted is presently considered an urban district of Bognor Regis and commonly referred to simply as 'Bersted'.
- 3.3. Whilst much of the historic character of modern Bersted has been diluted through continued development of the district, parts of the original village of North Bersted are within a conservation area and feature several listed 17th Century flint and brick thatched houses. For clarity, the site of the Holy Cross Church lies outside of this conservation area and is located to the south west of the historic settlement area.
- 3.4. The Royal Oak is situated at the historic crossroads between the main road to Chichester and the road through North Bersted towards the hamlet of Shripney. It is presumed that the public house was built a distance away from the main village so as to conveniently serve travellers along Chichester Road.
- 3.5. At the time of The Royal Oaks construction in the 17th Century, the site of the later Holy Cross Church was the location of a blacksmith's cottage, again benefitting from the well-established crossroads. Historically, the surrounding areas were primarily open fields which are now the location of modern housing and urban development.



Map from 1813 of North Bersted and the neighboring settlements with the Royal Oak's approximate location marked in red.

(https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/first_edition/lm_9)

373 & 375 Chichester Road – Listed Semi-detached Dwellings

- 3.6. Towards the south and further down Chichester Road there is a 19th Century semi-detached house featuring flint facing and brickwork walls with a slate pitched roof situated amongst several more recent dwellings.
- 3.7. The listed building entry (Ref: 1027779) describes the house as: "Early C19. 2 storeys. Cobbles with brick reinforcement and modillion eaves cornice. 2 windows to each house, the outer ones, over the doors, blind. All openings camber-headed the windows sashes with glazing bars. 2-span slate roof. Sides and rear rendered."
- 3.8. Its location in relation to the church is visually separated due to the existing road and tall hedgerow on the southern boundary of the church and the neighbouring property. Views from the church main entrance to the 19th Century dwellings are significantly obscured due to the existing boundary vegetation.
- 3.9. Due to the distance and visual separation it is considered the proposed works as described within the Design and Access Statement will not impact the setting of this listed building.

The Royal Oak Public House

- 3.10. The Royal Oak is a still operating pub with title records dating back to the 17th Century. Being located directly west of the Holy Cross Church, the church and hall are considered to be part of the setting of the listed building. Situated on the junction between Chichester road and North Bersted Street, the building is a prominent local historic landmark within North Bersted.



Photograph of The Royal Oak

(<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/retro/about-bersted-well-known-when-bognor-was-just-a-babe-853299>)

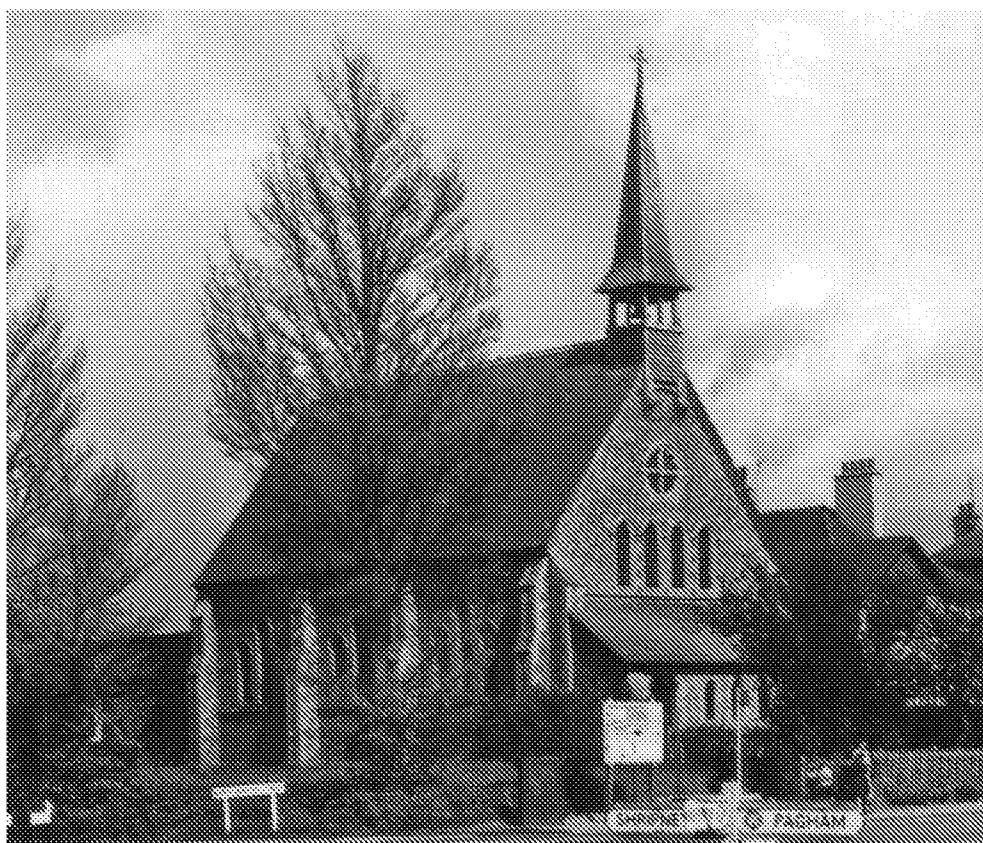
- 3.11. The listed building entry (Ref: 1027778) describes the public house as: "An irregular brick building, probably of C17, with later extensions. 2 storeys under steep hipped roof with old tiles. Left section of street frontage: 2 casement windows, with door between lower ones, which have cambered heads. Central ridge- chimney. Right section, one window (blind above) and doorway. East side: camber-headed window above, with old metal-framed casement; 2 windows below (right-hand sash with glazing bars) flanking doorway. Wall of brick, random rubble and cobble encircling yard and outbuildings at rear."
- 3.12. The building has been subject to several alterations and extensions, most notably re-painting the brick walls of the existing main building in 1984 and therefore significantly altering its external appearance and earning the local nickname 'Pink Pub'. Despite the alterations the pub still retains several historic features such as the external rubble and brickwork boundary walls and brickwork fireplaces.



Street view of present day The Royal Oak in relation to the Holy Cross Church site (behind mature vegetation)

Holy Cross Church

- 3.13. Originally a simple mission hall that was built in on the site of a former blacksmiths thatched Cross Cottage in 1894, the church has expanded multiple times to accommodate the growing local population of North Bersted and the wider Bognor Regis area.



*Holy Cross Church prior to the removal of the original spire
(<https://wilfrid.com/servepreview.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOLYCROSS1.jpg>)*

- 3.14. The Chancel was built in 1930, with further expansion in 1973. The original spire was removed in 1976 due safety concerns.

- 3.15. Built in the 1970's and extended / refurbished in 2004 and 2008, the church hall is a much later 'modern' addition to the site featuring painted timber weatherboard cladding.



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

- 3.16. The section of the church ground closest to the The Royal Oak is currently in use as a car park and is surrounded with thick vegetation. The ground level within the site is notably higher than the ground level of the adjacent highways and the The Royal Oak site itself.
- 3.17. The mature trees alongside the raised boundary act as a visual barrier between the church and the wider area whilst the car park forms an additional separating 'buffer' that physically distances the church building from the adjacent highways.
- 3.18. Alongside the external expansion of the building, the interior of the church porch, nave and chancel has been subject to select refurbishment and minor alterations leading to a modern internal fitting including modern electrical and lighting.
- 3.19. The church is not a listed building, however the principal elevation features original stone detailing and windows and therefore lends a degree of local historic character to its setting.
- 3.20. Work of repair or alteration that is not subject to the town and country planning act does still fall under faculty jurisdiction.

4. Assessment of Impacts

- 4.1. As described within the Design and Access Statement, the proposal is primarily to introduce a new ramp and steps to the allow for improved accessibility through the main entrance. The location of the main works as detail within the proposed plans are situated towards the eastern boundary and away from the Royal Oak pub.
- 4.2. Materials chosen (primarily flint with natural coping stones) shall reflect the materiality of the existing stone and flint facing of the church porch. It is expected that the structure will weather into its surroundings and therefore minimise the proposals overall visual impact.
- 4.3. The scale of the proposal is comparatively minor and does not increase the existing building footprint. The form of the existing hard landscaping has been used to inform the design of the steps reduce the impact of the works on the surrounding landscape.
- 4.4. The west boundary features dense, mature vegetation on a raised ground level from the highway and the neighbouring listed building. With the exception of the existing car park vehicle entrance, the western boundary visually and physically separates the church from the highway and neighbouring listed buildings in the form of The Royal Oak and 19th Century Dwellings.

- 4.5. There are no works proposed that would alter the appearance of the existing west and south boundaries and therefore the existing ground and vegetation provides a natural barrier that reduces the direct visual impact of the proposed from outside of the site.
- 4.6. Improved access will help ensure the churches sustainability as a public / amenity building and potentially lead to an increase of visitors which would mean that more may experience the local heritage in the area, namely The Royal Oak.



Holy Cross Church pedestrian entrance in relation to the Royal Oak

5. Summary and Conclusion

- 5.1. In summary, on account of the proposals scale and location, the proposed interventions will not impact the site or setting of the adjacent listed buildings. The design and extent of the works proposed seek to minimise the overall visual impact whilst care is taken to protect the existing fabric.