



All Saints Church, Weston Bath

Design and Access Statement
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bhb
architects

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3. Landscape Design & Access Statement
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8. Ecological Assessment and further survey
9. Archaeological letter, Desk Based Assessment and Report following dig.
10. Condition survey and appraisal of churchyard memorials to be relocated
11. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
12. Diocese of Bath & Wells DAC response to All Saints Pre-Faculty Inquiry No 2, dated February 2018
13. Historic England response to All Saints Pre-Planning Inquiry No 2, dated February 2018

1.1 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement is the primary document attached to the Planning Application in respect of the All Saints Church Project. It follows on from three Pre-Application enquiries submitted by the clients over the past 7 years. The Statement has been jointly prepared by the client and the architects, Brownhill Hayward Brown Ltd. The structure of the document follows the guidance and template for Design and Access Statements recommended by the Council for Architecture and the Built Environment.

The application relates to the proposals for:

(a) An extension to the Grade II listed church, in order to provide: a new fully accessible dedicated primary entrance, foyer/gathering area, kitchen, WC's and flexible meeting rooms. The need for these facilities is fully set out in the Statement of Need and the Access & Accessibility Audit Report.

(b) Landscaping changes to the site in which the church is situated, in order to improve access and accessibility and as a result of the extension.

The project also involves a major refurbishment of the church interior, where B&NES is not the planning authority; however reference is made in this statement and supporting documents to the interior and proposed changes because the preferred design solution to (a) and (b) above is, in large part, a response to the constraints and shortcomings of the existing church building.

This Design & Access document needs to be read in conjunction with the drawings and reports listed in the contents page. Together these constitute all the information provided for the Planning Application.

1.2 Vision and Aims Underpinning the Scheme

All Saints Church in the village of Weston is a thriving Anglican Church with an adult membership of over 300. Corporately and through its individual members, two thirds of whom live in Weston, it is a significant force for good in the community, not least through its community-based youth work, its strong links with the church primary school (which has over 600 pupils), its links with the other schools in the area, its management of the former Weston Children's Centre and a number of other formal and informal initiatives and activities.

Having undertaken a highly successful refurbishment of the listed former school (now the All Saints Centre) and more recently having taken over at the request of the Council, the former Weston Children's Centre, the Church has committed itself to ensuring that its medieval/nineteenth century church and surrounding churchyard are fully accessible and have the facilities that will mean it can play an even more beneficial role in the community.

So, in addition to its regular use for Sunday services and other church events,

the intention is that the church should become a modern, well-equipped and inspirational venue for small and large groups, for concerts, exhibitions, festivals and for community and local schools' events. When the work is complete, it will be used by hundreds of people every week and will grow as a focal point in the locality. Also central to the vision is that the aesthetic, historical and social significance of the building and its campus should be enhanced, not diminished through a scheme that is sensitive and respectful of what exists at present.

Three key concepts have been kept at the forefront of the design process:

- **Accessible** - removing physical barriers as well as the mental barriers which discourage people from crossing the doorway of the church
- **Available** - the church will be open many more hours than the present (on average) 10 hours per week
- **Flexible** - capable of being used for varied activities throughout the week - an ancient parish church and a community hub

The Team behind the scheme is very conscious that this scheme is the most significant development since the newly built 1832 church was expanded sixty years later in 1892. It has therefore approached the project with great sensitivity; much research and consultation; and a willingness to review and amend the design as the process evolved. This is demonstrated in this Design & Access Statement as well as in the accompanying documentation.



SECTION 2: DESIGN PROCESS

2.1: Assessment Of Context

2.1.1 Site Location And Description

All Saints Weston is the parish church for the village of Weston. The 'church campus' comprises:

- The nineteenth century church (with medieval tower) – extended in 1892
- The largely eighteenth century Rectory and garden
- The nineteenth century Church Centre (formerly the All Saints Primary School) – but completely refurbished in 2000
- The churchyard (now closed for burials but open for interment of ashes)
- The Church car park

In addition, the campus includes two other privately-owned houses and part of the Cotswold Way goes through the grounds.

The site is an elevated one and sits between residential housing on three sides and Weston High St with its shops and cafés on the other side. It is situated in the Bath City-wide Conservation Area, which is coterminous with the City of Bath World Heritage Site inscribed by UNESCO in 1987. According to the Bath & North East Somerset conservation area appraisal, the churchyard trees are a "major landscape feature" while the church tower is a "prominent land- mark"; both features thus contribute to the Conservation Area.

Numerous images of the site are shown in this DAS and the other documentation supplied. See especially the Historic photos and the Landscape and Visual Impact Statement.



2.1.2 Description Of All Saints Church

(See below for drawings showing the historical evolution of the present building)

The present All Saints Church is probably the third church to stand on the site. Nothing remains of the first one, which more than likely was demolished in the fifteenth century when a new one built. That second church, apart from the tower, was demolished in 1830 and a much larger one was built, designed by the architect John Pinch, who also designed St Saviour's in Larkhall and St Mary Bathwick. The new church for Weston was simple in design and consisted of the area occupied by today's nave (the main congregational seating), a 'thin' chancel and the gallery. Not everyone regarded it as an attractive design. Some forty years later (in 1876), All Saints Weston was extensively described in 'The Church Rambler' (which consisted of extensive descriptions of all the churches in the Bath Area). The author said of the church that *'it was built at a time when the art of church building was lost'*. Another nineteenth century publication referred to it as *'very ugly, although the churchyard contains many interesting monuments'*.

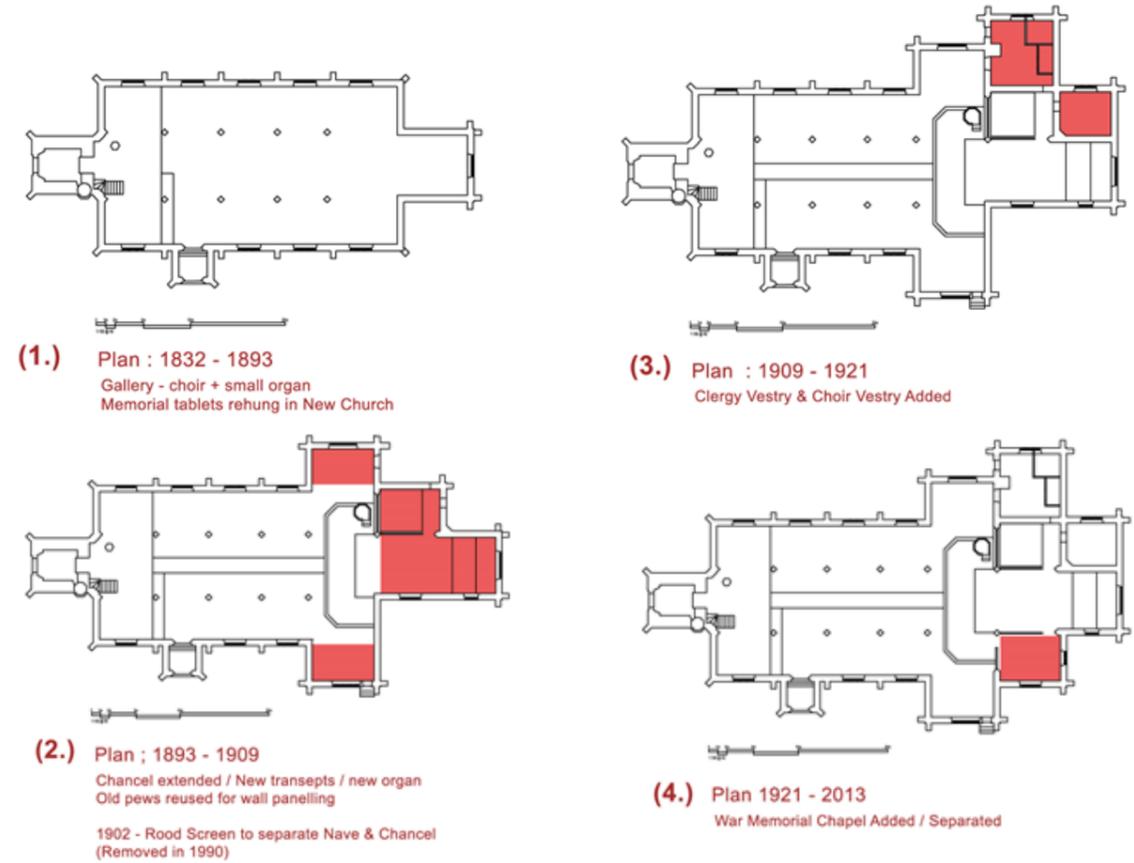
There were no major changes until 1892 when the Rev Edward Hardcastle set about a major enlargement of the church, almost doubling the interior space. This expansion consisted of: a lengthening of the chancel, the addition of north and south transepts, new pews, organ, font, pulpit and various other internal features.

In the twentieth century, a choir vestry and a vicar's vestry were added in 1911. A war memorial chapel was created internally in 1921. Towards the end of the century some minor internal changes were made none of which were structural). These included: the removal of some pews and a chancel screen (which proved controversial); the installation of two WC's (in the choir vestry); and other minor adaptations.

Although the structure of the building is in good condition, the mechanical and electrical services have reached or are nearing their end life. Internally the building retains most of the features (both positive and negative) that were valued by nineteenth century architects and clergy, as appropriate for a parish church.

The church now consists of: the west tower, a five-bay aisled nave with south porch and west gallery, two transepts and a two-bay chancel, with vestries off the latter. Externally the three phases of building are visible and clearly demarcated: mediaeval tower; Georgian nave, aisles and south porch in perpendicular Gothic; and late Victorian chancel and transepts also in perpendicular Gothic.

Overall the church is deemed to be of moderate-high significance in respect of its aesthetic qualities as well as its historical and communal value. (see Statement of Significance)



2.1.3. All Saints Churchyard and Surroundings

The churchyard is large and according to the tree survey undertaken by Nicholas Pearson Partnership in 2015, has 'two clear phases of planting':

- a. Prior to 1886, the churchyard was planted with a distinctive collection of: Lawson's cypress (and cultivars), Western red cedar, Italian cypress, and Irish yews in pairs along paths. Based on dates of introduction, this could not predate 1855, and was probably 1870-1880. An axial cross walk was added by 1888 and led to blocking of one path (where a headstone now exists between a pair of yews).
- b. Circa 1893, when the church was extended, the axial cross walk and blocked path were omitted; three fine cedars were added to the east end of the church."

In 'The Church Rambler' (1876), Lewis describes the churchyard at Weston as 'a favourite resting place amongst the ladies and gentlemen of the last century' and 'a most fashionable burying-place ... nowhere else, except within the walls of the Abbey, do we get such a flood of information as to the class of people who frequented Bath and died in Bath when its Assembly Rooms were the head-quarters of Fashion.'

The churchyard is therefore large with around 500 monuments and memorials, many of which pre-date the Georgian church. It was closed in 1876 and its maintenance passed to the then Bath City Council in 1951. Transcripts of all the inscriptions on the memorials exist. Egan (1819) observes: 'the numerous monuments in its Burying-Ground are highly attractive and interesting, the principal part of which are enclosed in iron rails; most of the inscriptions are cut upon a black ground, with the letters gilt, and the ornaments are of gold.' Sadly, most of the iron rails and gilt lettering and ornaments have all gone. Sixteen monuments are listed individually, all at Grade II apart from three which are at Grade II*.

The churchyard, with its 57 trees is an important open space serving as a buffer between newer development on its north side and the historic core of Weston on the south. Views into the churchyard are attractive and views out southwards over Crown Hill and Crown Road as well as to the listed terraced properties in Church Road are pleasant.

The churchyard therefore is deemed to be of high significance on evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value. (see Statement of Significance)

To the north east of the site is the church car park, occupying land, which was formerly part of the Rectory garden. The Grade II listed Rectory leads off the Churchyard together with two other houses (one being the original Rectory). The churchyard ground falls away steeply down to the High St and also to the mid-nineteenth century school; this is also a listed building, which now functions as the Church Centre hosting a large number of church and community activities.

A number of pathways run through the site as well as a road providing vehicle access to the Rectory, two houses and the church. The Church Centre has a steeply raked garden area and an attached large allotment. Although the churchyard is closed for burials, there are two areas set aside for the interment of ashes: one (by the south nave) is now closed and one overlooking the Church Centre is still in use.

2.1.4 The Community of Weston

Weston is a village on the edge of Bath consisting of 7,000 inhabitants. The church sits at the centre of the area, which has four schools, the Royal United Hospital, two other functioning churches, a number of care homes, a branch library and other social and recreational amenities. During the course of a day, many people use the pathways through the churchyard en route to the shops and businesses in the High St, the various activities in the Church Centre or to the Church itself. In addition, thousands of walkers walk through the site because the Cotswold Way runs through it. Although Weston is a thriving and generally prosperous area, in recent years the High St has suffered from shop closures and a generally tired feel.

Vehicle and pedestrian access to the church and site is problematic. There is a steep fall from the car park and Lynfield Park leading down to the High St via Church St. Likewise the road (and steps) leading to the Church and Rectory is steep and narrow and has a very difficult access from Weston Park. Church Road which follows the south side of the church, is very narrow. (See separate Access and Accessibility document for full details).



2.2: Involvement and Engagement

2.2.1 Introduction

Work first started on developing proposals for the Church and site in 2013 and arose out of a process whereby the church community set out its future strategic priorities. The Church agreed that there was a pressing need to address the perceived shortcomings of the Church (building) and to make it fit for purpose in the twenty first century. 'Re-imagining our Buildings' was the title given to this priority. Since then the process to create a brief and work towards a design solution has been an iterative process involving a great many stakeholders, including:

- The church community
- The local community
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells
- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Historic England
- Professional consultants including two architectural practices and one landscaping architectural practice; ecologists; arboriculturalist; monuments specialist; archaeologist; heritage consultant; accessibility consultant

The process has been led by a Client-Team comprising a number of representatives of the Church. Some members of the Client Team have professional expertise such as architecture, quantity surveying, disability issues and accessibility. The next three sections expand on the process of involving those listed above.

2.2.2 Involvement Of Local Church Community

Since 2013, there have been four formal consultations with the church community. Each consultation consisted of:

- An exhibition and supporting material
- A presentation of ideas at a public meeting
- Response forms
- Publication of the results of the consultation

The first consultation in 2013 started with a blank sheet and was aimed at drawing out the congregation's initial thoughts on the role the church and its building(s) should play in the twenty first century. A clear majority expressed an appetite for major change so as to secure the long-term sustainability of the church, rather than opting for a patch and mend approach.

The second consultation was in 2015. A firm of architects had been appointed; a number of churches in and out of Bath had been visited to see what other churches were doing (eg St Swithin's Bath, St Michael's Bath, Bath Abbey and St Luke's Bath.) Options were drawn up. This phase of the project development also included the first Pre-Planning Inquiry (15/04662/PREAPP). The consultation and Pre-Planning Inquiry also included consulting on a proposal to build a new Rectory in the car park.

The third consultation was in February 2016. By then, new architects, Brownhill Hayward Brown had been appointed. Working on the outcomes of the Client Team's deliberations and the congregational responses, and the responses of B&NES planning officers (led by the Senior Conservation Officer) to the original concept scheme, revised ideas and possibilities were presented. Accompanying ideas for the building was a set of ideas for landscaping the surroundings, prepared by LT Studio Landscape.

The fourth consultation was in February 2018. In December 2017, the results of the ongoing work since February 2016 were brought together in the form of a second Pre-Planning Inquiry (17/06019/PA04). The scheme as set out in the Pre-Planning Inquiry was presented to the church community in February 2018.

In October 2018 the latest version of the scheme was shown to the congregation but this time there was no formal feedback (although there was for the local community – see next section). This incorporated a number of changes from the December 2017 scheme: the changes were most marked in respect of the landscaping of site and surroundings (particularly taking into account the Pre-Planning Inquiry response received from the Senior Conservation Officer).

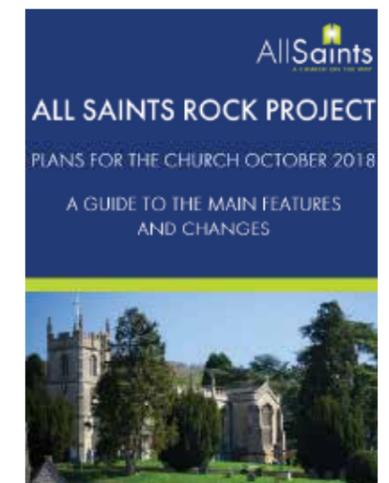
As stated above, all four consultations have invited responses to what has been presented. Hundreds of response forms have been completed on paper and on line plus many thousands of words submitted. The Client Team carefully recorded and analysed all of the comments received and has responded to all of the issues raised and produced detailed a report on each consultation. Most importantly the comments have been used as a basis for informing and refining both the brief and the design solutions.

In all of the consultations, there has always been a substantial majority in favour of the aims of the project and the design solutions proposed. The degree of support has also grown over the course of the evolution of project. This is particularly true of the proposals for the extension.

The booklets summarizing the outcome of the consultations with the church community have not been included in the supporting documentation but are available upon request.



Model for Consultation Feb 2018



Guide from October 2018

2.2.3 Involvement of Local Community

Two thirds of the All Saints congregation live in Weston and so 'wear two hats' ie as local residents and as church members. Therefore it is reasonable to see the consultations with church members referred to in the previous section, as part of consulting local residents and the wider community. That said, there has been consultation with those who are not members of the congregation. This is set out below;

In October 2018, the latest set of plans was made available over a period of several days in the Church and Church Centre for local people to study them. The exhibition was publicized locally and letters were delivered to 130 houses whose properties overlook or who are close to the site. Consultants and members of the Client Team were on hand in church to answer questions. Response forms were available.

Around 70 people visited the exhibition and 22 response forms were received. Nearly all of those who visited were supportive of what they saw and heard; only two response forms recorded any concerns. The document summarizing the outcome of the consultation with the local community has not been included in the supporting documentation but is available upon request.

'The two former ward councillors and the two current ward councillors for Weston have all been approached and met with. All are supportive of the project in relation to the increased public benefit that will flow from it. Informal consultations have also been held with the headteacher of Weston All Saints Primary School, members of the Weston Local History Society and The Weston Gardening Club. See section 4.2 Public Benefit, for comments received.

2.2.4 Involvement of Statutory Bodies

As stated previously, three pre-planning applications have been submitted to B&NES in relation to the ongoing development of this project (ref:19/00550/PA04) (ref: 15/04622/PREAPP) and (ref: 17/06019/PA04). At the same time the DAC of the Bath & Wells Diocese has also been consulted and responses received from them. At the time of the last Pre-Planning Inquiry February 2018), Historic England was also consulted and a written response was received. (See letter in supporting documentation). In November 2018, the Bath Preservation Society was sent the plans; a site visit was made and a written response received.

Generally speaking, the comments received from the Diocese have been (a) much less detailed and (b) more positive. The three responses received from B&NES have been exceptionally detailed and until recently, generally critical of the proposals.. We believe this is because the Diocesan authorities, whilst mindful of the heritage, are also primarily concerned with sustaining and enhancing the mission and purpose of the church. The response of B&NES has been to give much more weight to the

heritage than to the wider community benefits and aspects. In order to progress the scheme the architects and Client Team have accepted the majority of the comments of the B&NES authorities and tried, wherever possible, to comply, without losing or compromising on the vision and statement of needs, which is driving this project.

2.3: Evaluation of the Brief, the Site and its Constraints

2.3.1 Additional Facilities Requiring Additional Space

Early on in the development of the brief and the scheme, it became apparent to the Team that a number of additional facilities were required in order to fulfil the underpinning vision. These included:

- A large foyer or gathering/leaving area acting as a halfway house between the external environment and the main body of the church
- Additional WC's, sufficient for gatherings of up to 600 people.
- Kitchen facilities in order to provide a community café, refreshments before and after events and to support functions requiring more elaborate catering
- An additional meeting room which can serve as a crèche room during services and other events but be available for break-out functions and as a regular meeting room for church and local groups (especially when no space is available in the Church Centre)
- A clergy office
- Plant room and additional storage

2.3.2 Location of Extension

Various options were explored to enable these facilities to be incorporated within the existing footprint of the church; however, these all proved unsatisfactory. Even if all of the items listed in 2.3.1 could be incorporated, it would be at the cost of reducing the overall capacity of the church and by compromising the integrity and quality of the interior space, particularly the nave area. Therefore, it was decided early on that it was necessary to extend the building; this has proved the most challenging aspect of the project to date.

As regards the location of any extension to the church, it was clear that the choices were constrained. The most significant aspect and elevation of the church, visually speaking, is the south side, where the current main entrance is situated. It was clear that visually this would be entirely the wrong side for any development; it was and is also the wrong side in terms of accessibility being on the far side of the church from the car park and disabled parking bays.

The West end of the church has the medieval tower. No new extension could be accommodated there because of the problems of the space immediately in front of the Tower and because the narrowness of the Tower, its use as the bell-ringing chamber and its different level from the main floor of the church, preclude any development there.

This left only the north and east elevations of the church as potential locations for an expansion. The East End interior includes the Chancel and Sanctuary, so would not be suitable as forming part of the new main entrance. Building in that location would mean the loss of more trees (than the proposed scheme) and it is altogether more impractical. That left only the north side as being the side with the least (although not insignificant) problems.

These considerations demonstrate that from an early stage the client has made assessments regarding the impact on the Landscape and Visual Receptors.

2.3.3 Landscaping

As regards the development of landscape proposals, the intent has been to greatly improve access to and from the church and around the site as well as the connection between the residential area and the High St. The Landscaping Design and Access Statement as well as the Access and Accessibility Report give details of the steep gradients throughout the site.

In addition there has been a desire to make the most of what is acknowledged to be an attractive green space of high significance. Many walkers pass through the site and local people value the site as a special amenity.



Proposed Site Plan showing location of extension

2.3.4 Ecology

A full Ecological Assessment has been carried out by Ethos Environmental Planning. Please see the comprehensive Ecological Assessment, which describes the site as it is now and which also includes recommendations for mitigation during construction works and after alterations to the site have been carried out. The B&NES response to the most recent Pre-Application Inquiry asked for further ecological survey work to be carried out, most particularly a detailed survey of the blue atlas cedar in relation to its perceived 'status' as a bat roost. The additional survey work is contained in an Addendum to the main Ecology Report. The comments below are taken directly from the main report.

Habitat: The majority of habitat on Site comprised poor semi-improved grassland with scattered trees. The areas of grassland were considered to have low conservation value and be important only at a local level. The mature scattered trees were considered to have moderate-high conservation value, with the trees with bat roost potential being higher conservation value than the remaining trees. Potentially, the removal of [some of] these trees will have a positive effect on ground flora species diversity within the church yard, as removing them will decrease the amount of shading, allowing species less suited to shaded environments to grow. This will also make the area more suitable for species such as reptiles, which rely on open unshaded areas to bask. The adjacent strip of semi-natural broadleaf woodland within the rectory garden was considered the most valuable habitat adjacent to the Site.

Bats: The ecological walkover survey identified the semi-improved grassland within the church grounds to have moderate value for foraging bats, and the adjacent woodland strip would also provide suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The static detector located on top of the northern parapet recorded low numbers of common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, serotine, noctule and whiskered bat within the vicinity of the church building. The majority of trees within the church yard had limited features for roosting bats (negligible to low potential), with the exception of the mature blue atlas cedar which was considered to have moderate potential for roosting bats). A small number of bats were observed emerging/entering the blue atlas cedar tree during the emergence surveys; a maximum of two common pipistrelles and one soprano pipistrelle. Therefore, this tree is considered to be a low conservation value roost and will require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England prior to [any] removal. An ecological walkover survey identified the church building to have high potential for roosting bats, with access points into the building located above the crypt and into the bell tower.

The internal building inspection identified droppings typical of lesser horseshoe within the crypt and bell tower, as well as scattered droppings typical of serotine bat and a species of pipistrelle within the bell tower. The dusk emergence survey confirmed the emergence of a single common pipistrelle from the crypt. The static detector within the crypt recorded a single common pipistrelle and 55 lesser horseshoe bat calls. The static detector within the bell tower did not record any bat calls. The current development proposals are unlikely to impact bats roosting within the building as no works are planned to the roof, bell tower or crypt. However, precautions during construction should be put into place to avoid



1. Serotine bat
2. Pipistrelle Bat
3. Badger

temporarily disturbing bats (e.g. task lighting).

Badger: The walkover survey identified signs of badger presence within the Site and immediately adjacent within the woodland. There were two mammal paths under the fence-line separating the churchyard from the rectory woodland strip and a single badger hair was found attached to the fence where it crossed the northeast path.

Birds: The church building and trees throughout the Site were considered to provide some suitable nesting habitat for several common bird species.

NERC Section 41 Species: No evidence of hedgehog or other NERC Section 41 species was found during the survey; however the habitat on Site was considered suitable to support the species and so it is considered likely for them to be present.

As noted earlier, further ecological survey work was carried out in the form of an aerial inspection of the blue atlas cedar. Contrary to expectation and earlier assumptions (in main report), the cedar was found NOT to be a bat roost. The ecologist reported:

Following the tree roost inspection, it was assessed that the feature provided negligible potential for roosting bats. Additionally, no other PRF's were identified on T13. In light of the further survey, it is considered that T13 does not support a bat roost. The pipistrelle bats are considered to have been foraging over the top of the canopy, and when flying through to forage beneath the upper canopy, it could look from the ground that they had emerged. Due to lack of features both in the location the bats were first 'seen' and from visual inspection of the rest the canopy limbs during the tree climb, the PRF has been downgraded to not suitable for roosting bats, with negligible potential. The tree is now therefore assessed to not be a bat roost and can be felled without the requirement of a Natural England EPS licence. Precautionary working for tree works to T13 will be recommended.

Summary of ecological findings;

Surveys included a Phase 1 Habitat survey and assessment for protected species as well as targeted surveys for bats in the form of external / internal building inspections, three emergence/ re-entry surveys and static detector surveys; an aerial tree roost inspection was also undertaken;

The surveys identified an active badger sett adjacent to the site within the rectory garden;

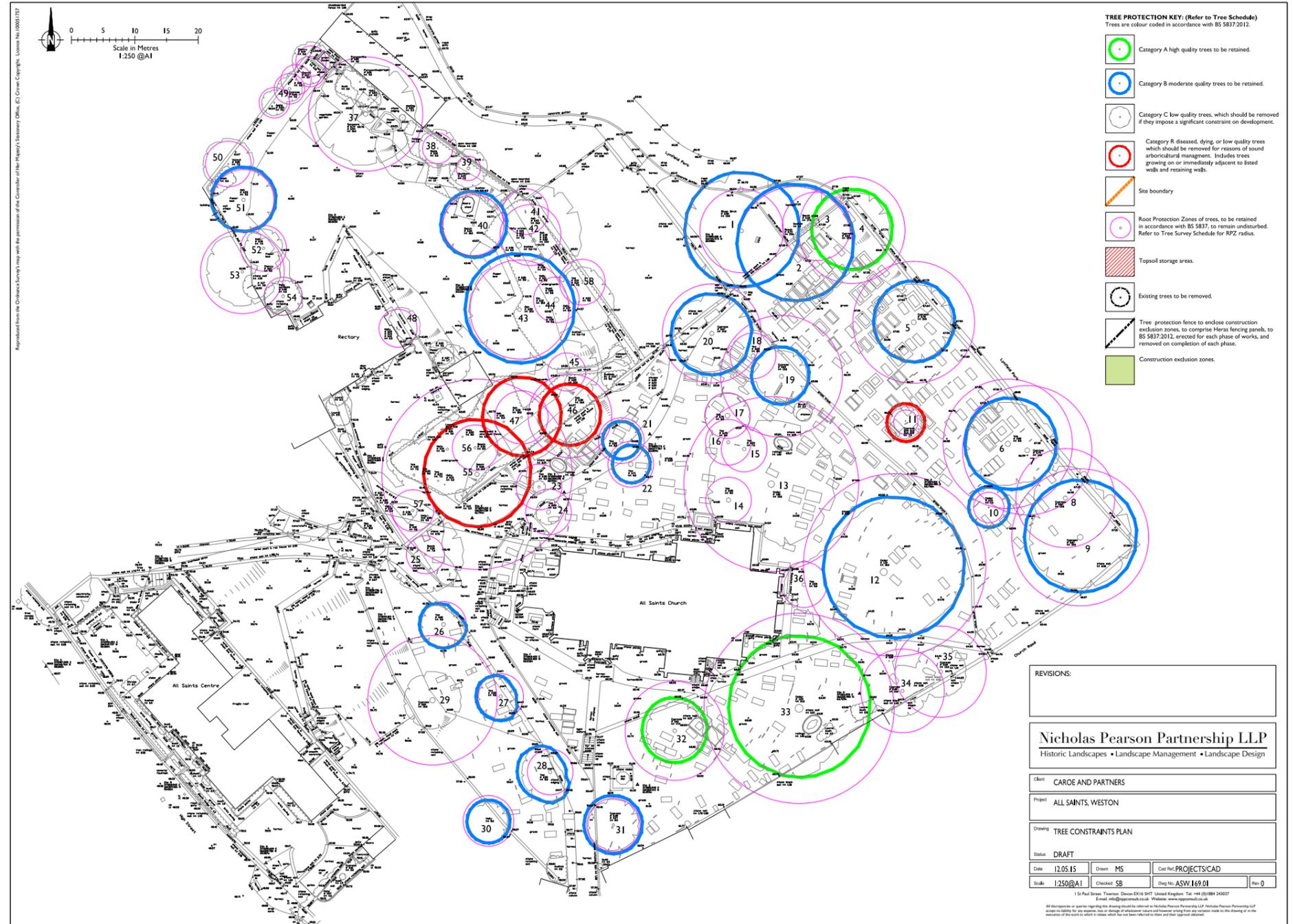
The internal building inspection identified lesser horseshoe bat droppings within the crypt and bell tower and serotine and pipistrelle bat droppings within the bell tower;

The emergence/ re-entry surveys identified a low number of bats roosting within the crypt. The tree climbing roost inspection identified that the PRF provided negligible potential for bats and no other potential roosting features were recorded within the canopy area of T13.

2.3.5 Arboriculture

A comprehensive assessment of all the trees on site was first carried out in 2015 and then updated in 2018 by Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP. Please refer to their full report as well as the landscape proposals by LT Studio in their design and access statement pg.10. In addition to reporting on the condition of the current trees, NPP has made recommendations for future good management of the trees on site. There are 57 trees on the site of which:

- 3 are deemed to be of high quality
- 19 are deemed to be of moderate quality
- 33 are deemed to be of low quality
- 2 are deemed as needing to be removed



2.3.6 Archaeology

A desk based assessment of the archaeology of the site and the surrounding area was carried out in September 2015.'

The DBA revealed that the Project Site is located in an area of medium-high archaeological potential. Remnants of a Roman road have been located close to the High Street and in fields to the north of All Saints Church, along with pottery scatters believed to date from the Romano-British period. Furthermore, the current Church is located in the vicinity of an earlier church building dating to the 14th - 15th century, highlighting the potential for associated activity within the immediate area.

The B&NES response to the most recent Pre-Application Inquiry insisted on further archaeological survey work in the form of a trial dig in the location of the proposed extension. This was undertaken by Context One Heritage and Archaeology Services. The trial dig was submitted to Somerset Heritage Services prior to being undertaken. The report of the excavation is also included with the planning application documentation.

The summary section of the report states:

'Three, c. 2m long x 1m wide trenches were excavated between the extant grave markers to ascertain the depth, sequence and character of any burials or human remains that might be present.

The only definitive evidence for burials was in Tr3 where the eastern end of a 17th/18th century stone tomb, and a possible Victorian earth-cut grave was encountered. A stone capping covering a brick-lined void with sloping brick sides in Tr2 suggest two brick vaults constructed side by side, with the capping merely covering the void between the two. The brickwork could be as early as the late 18th century although a Victorian date is perhaps more likely.

There was surprisingly no evidence for intercutting graves or historic episodes of disturbance save for the very few instances of disarticulated bone encountered. This has to be a testament to a tradition of organisation within the churchyard and a less crowded burial space than expected. A clay/mortar layer was observed in all three trenches. This is likely to be related to the construction debris/landscaping resulting from the adjacent late 19th/early 20th century extensions to the church.'



View of Southeast church yard

All Saints Church, upper Weston, Bath.



Photo of Church and Rectory

2.4: Evolution Of Design

The scheme has evolved significantly over the past seven years as will be shown. For the purposes of this application, the evolution of the scheme as regards the interior of the church is not covered.

2.4.1 Initial Concept – 2014/15

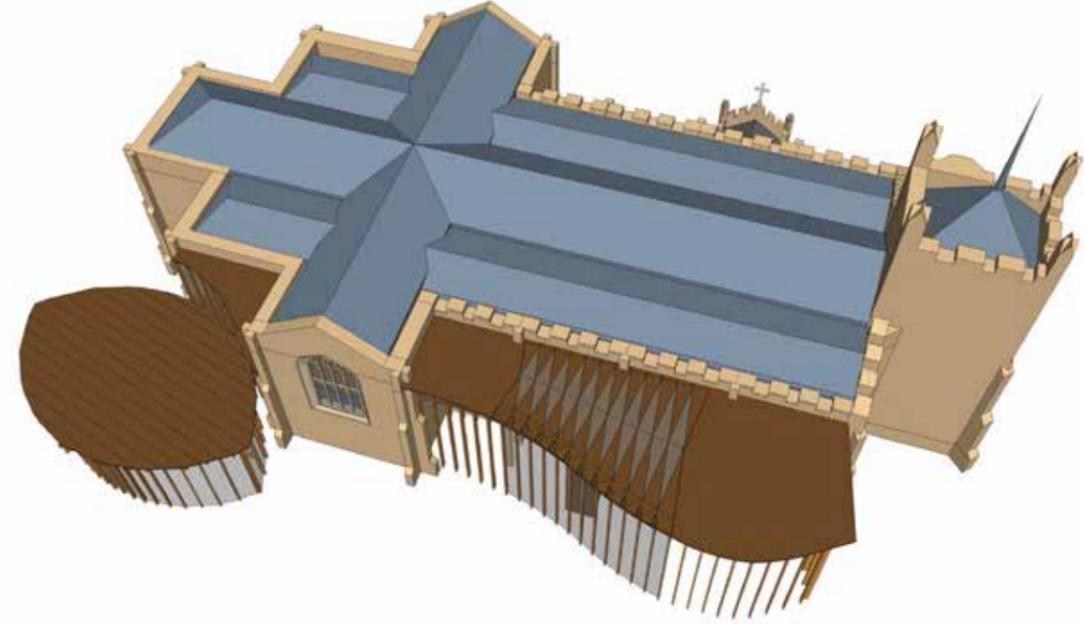
Initially, the first concept for the extension was for a pair of double-height extensions running the length of the north side of the church from the Tower and incorporating the north transept. This was presented in the first Pre-Planning Inquiry. The consultation with the church community produced a generally favourable response but a significant proportion had reservations both about the volume and the form of the concept drawings. To the Client Team, this Assertive Contrast concept was seen as imaginative and striking, (cf the parallel with the extension to the Holbourne Museum). However, the response of the Senior Conservation Officer for B&NES was highly critical of the proposal: *'I am very concerned that the overall scale and design of the extensions proposed will dominate All Saints. This impact would be apparent from a number of viewpoints. The sinuous form and use of glazing indicate a lack of empathy with the character of the church. In my view taking these things together the scheme would harm the character and significance of the listed church and a formal planning application along these lines would be recommended for refusal...A more modest extension which adopts some of the characteristics of the existing church to develop a more contextual design may be acceptable. This approach could still incorporate contemporary elements. I agree that the more visually secluded north side of the church provides greater scope for alteration than the south side.'* Upon reflection, the Client Team dispensed with this option as being inefficient in its use of space, creating other problems and almost certainly to be rejected by the Council.

2.4.2 Second Stage - 2015

The Client Team then spent time reviewing options for internal reconfigurations of the existing church interior as well as investigating options for changing the spaces in the Church Centre to address some of the needs. However neither of these options proved satisfactory eg additional WC's in another building 100 yards away down a steep hill is not a solution. One of the members of the Client Team is a professional architect and he developed a number of sketches in this process of review and development. It became even clearer that some kind of extension or narthex on the northeast corner of the church was the optimum solution.

2.4.3: Third Stage – 2016/17

New architects (Brownhill Hayward and Brown) were appointed as project architects. As well as reviewing the use of space in the existing church, the Client Team and architects have worked hard at designing an extension which would sit 'into and alongside' the northeast elevation of the church – the visually less prominent side of the church. Both two storey and single storey options have been appraised. Two storey extensions have been rejected as likely to be too challenging to the existing form of the church; instead a more modest design has been developed which references some of the features of the present building whilst adding some contrasting more contemporary features. The detailed evolution of the scheme is set out during 2016-17 below:



Initial concept 2014/2015

November 2016 – In the bid process BHB explored a number of options including glass entrance over the North Transept and two-storey extension building. After visiting the site again it was decided that the North Transept has one of the more detailed stained glass windows and it would not be appropriate to introduce a glazed entrance to this area.

January 2017- Two storey option for extension with perforated metal box for first floor, allowing light to cast shadows into the space during the day and to glow externally at night time. Ground floor concept developed by taking the rhythm of the existing church buttresses and window mullions and translating them in a more contemporary form.

February 2017- Two storey extension plans developed and roof forms explored with 4 different options.

March 2017- Single storey option explored, Brief refined to allow this to work, three plan options reviewed with agreement on angled wall to draw people into the entrance and office to be located at entrance side to provide supervision and meeting room to open to peace garden area. Kitchen shown as cupboard into central circulation space and two small meeting rooms.

April 2017- Brief refined to include one meeting room not two which would double as a vestry, Kitchen to be in a room which could open to the central circulation / gathering space. Office to show 4 desks and all rooms to be flexible. Storage areas included to central zone. WC areas to be unisex, BHB to progress other layout options to include the flower arrangers and cleaners as one area. Buggy store to be in central space.

June 2017 - Single storey option plans and elevations refined flat roof to pitched roof options explored, layouts provided for WC arrangement and site sections developed.

July 2017- Four options for the revised Entrance were presented, introducing more glass and opening up the entrance elevation. The various options were discussed and it was agreed for BHB to draw up a combination of option 1 & 2 . Glazing to the entrance elevation is to mimic the roof pitch allowing the view of the detailed internal ceiling beyond. BHB are to incorporate a solid element to the office space so that desks and office clutter are not the first thing that people view when they arrive. Review of the extension plan and how the space opens up to be more flexible has resulted in the proposal that the glass end to the large meeting room is to be extended and the doors into the meeting room to be able to open fully. This allows all rooms in the extension to open up with the kitchen at the heart of the space. A full immersion font to be located in the extension with a roof light above. New double doors also introduced adjacent to Tower on north side so as to improve access.

The building scheme as developed by July 2017 together with a detailed landscaping scheme was submitted for a second Pre-Planning Application January/February 2018. The plans shown and the accompanying documentation were much more substantial than the first Pre-Planning Inquiry. Included with the documentation was a very comprehensive and professional Statement of Significance (also included with this Inquiry). As well as the plans for the building a detailed landscaping plan was also submitted.

These plans and drawings were also presented to the congregation, which once again registered its support for all three elements. The response of the Senior Conservation Officer (and other officers) to this Scheme was more positive but still with some major reservations (detailed below). The conclusions and recommendations at the end of the response were:

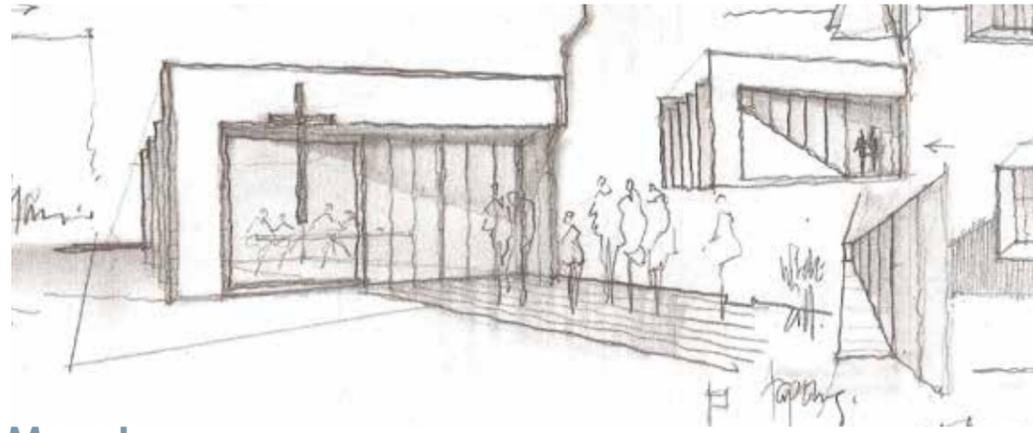
- a. Reconsider the degree and intensity of change proposed to the churchyard in the form of hard surfacing, features and footpath surface treatments with a view to developing a scheme which responds to and reflects the special character and significance of the churchyard.
- b. Any access and safety issues need to be addressed with greater sensitivity for the character of All Saints. A detailed access audit could help in identifying and prioritizing the issues, as it may not be possible to solve all the problems.
- c. Look again at the junction between the car park and churchyard and consider how this could be adapted to create a sense of arrival within harming the significance of the church
- d. Consider whether the accommodation could be scaled back or provided elsewhere in the church to enable the size of the extension to be reduced
- e. Develop and refine the design to show the detailed relationships with the existing church.
- f. Prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to inform the design process
- g. Prepare an updated Ecological survey and bat survey to inform the design process

See next section for the detailed comments provided by the Senior Conservation Officer and the Team's response to those comments.

Pictorial summary of design process - two storey extension



Pictorial summary of design process - single storey extension



March



April



June



July



February



December

All Saints Church, Weston Bath

2.4.4 Fourth Stage - 2018

The Client Team and Architects then reviewed the 30+ pages of comments from the congregation and the recommendations and specific points made by the Senior Conservation Officer. The Client Team again asked basic questions (eg Do we need an extension? What are the minimum requirements?), but very many points of detail were also reviewed. As a result of this process, very substantial changes have been made to the landscaping proposals with more modest changes and refinements made to the interior layout of church and extension as well as the form and appearance of the extension. The Client Team and Architects believe they have complied with all the Senior Conservation Officer's recommendations set out in para.12. Her specific concerns and objections are listed below, together with any consequent changes to the design.

The proposal to replace the window next to the tower with double doors ...could not be supported.'

This proposal, which was designed to improve accessibility for those with impaired mobility, has been removed from the current scheme.



Window with doors and level access

'The overall scale of the extension has been reduced (from the 2015 proposals) which is very positive. Nevertheless there is still some concern that the size of the proposed extension may still appear as a disproportionately large addition given the balanced architectural composition and character of the existing church. It is recommended that further thought be given to how the accommodation could be configured to reduce the footprint. Aspirations for the extension need to be carefully balanced against that fact that the church interior is also proposed for a major reordering to create more flexible spaces.'

Further thought was given to the suggestion that new facilities could be incorporated within the existing footprint of the church but the Client Team is unable to comply with it ie to reduce the footprint for reasons outlined previously in this statement and expanded on further in the Statement of Need and the Access and Accessibility Report.

'The well designed vicars and choir vestries which make a positive contribution to the architectural composition will be largely subsumed within the new extension. The current architectural resolution of the junction between the vestries and the chancel produces a very pleasing view of the church, which would be lost through the new development. These changes would cause a degree of harm to the church that would require a very compelling justification.'

As described earlier, the location of the proposed extension is the least prominent location; it will not be visible from 180 degrees of the site circumference. It is situated in an area where the views of the church and in particular the junction between vestries and chancel are least visible and also are practically obscured at present by trees. By opting for a single storey extension, which will be 1 metre below the floor height of the site to the north and east of the church, the extension will be even less visible and the windows of the chancel, apse and transepts will still be very visible. See 'Before and After' photos in the Landscape and Visual Impact section (3.6). However in response to the comment, the design of the extension now retains elements of the original choir vestry at the junctions with the existing church including the gargoyle and window to the vestry. There will also be a view of the existing window above the organ through a roof light internally which was hidden by the choir vestries.

'The extension would also entail moving the separately listed Dr Oliver chest tomb as well as thirteen other headstones which would harm the romantic qualities of the churchyard recognised in the statement of significance. The Dr Oliver tomb in particular has a special relationship with the church and its relocation would harm both the significance of All Saints and the memorial.'

The current grade II listed Dr Oliver tomb has suffered from neglect over the years; the railings have been removed and the stonework is in poor condition; its significance lies in its historical connections, not in the architectural quality of the monument. As the tomb predates both the 1832 rebuild and the 1891 extension, it is possible that the monument has been moved once. Even if has not been moved, it cannot have been as close to the original church building as it is now; the transept and choir vestry have encroached greatly on the space around the tomb. The current proposals are to relocate the tomb 3.5m West and 2m south of the existing location because the existing location makes level access to the proposed extension and existing church unachievable. Without this access route, much of the accessibility rationale underpinning the scheme is null and void. The justification for its removal by a small distance is the greatly increased public benefit because of improved accessibility of the church. In addition this monument will now be much more visible to the public because of its proximity to the main entrance and pathway; currently no one knows it is there! The tomb will also be sensitively repaired and its position highlighted in any efforts to celebrate the historic connections inside and outside of the church. Finally the new position of the tomb will be immediately adjacent to the Dr Oliver wall memorial table in the interior of the church. It should also be noted that the line of the proposed new pathway has been revised so as to avoid moving two other listed memorials. (See later comments with respect of the relocation of other memorials and monuments).

'Overall the proposed landscaping scheme is far too intensive and urban in character and would as a result cause considerable harm to the setting and significance of both the church and churchyard as well as the wider conservation area. This part of the scheme could not be supported in present form. In response to this objection, the landscaping scheme has been very considerably scaled down. Hard landscaping has been greatly reduced and the pathways around the church have been limited to the existing pathways (apart from one new one to the main entrance). Pathways will now be resurfaced (not resin bound as originally proposed) to retain the character of the churchyard. The previous proposals to incorporate tombstones in the pathways have also been removed. The current entrance steps to the tower are to remain as existing and there are no longer proposals to change the entrance steps. The disabled parking has been revised to reduce the removal of the green buffer to the rectory entrance. The external lighting scheme has been significantly reduced to take on board the comments raised and proposals include low-level bollards to reduce their impact on the ecology.

'There is no objection to the principle of providing an outside congregation space. However the extent of hard surfaced space proposed would erode the verdant character of the churchyard which would in turn harm the character and setting of the listed church. Introducing a non local surfacing material in the form of york stone would amplify the harm caused by the extent of the hard surfaced area.' The outside congregation area has been reduced to one quarter of what was originally proposed and is limited to the area directly in front of the new extension entrance with a direct connection to disabled parking bays. The paving to the outside congregation area has been changed to local pennant stone.

'Whilst a water feature and formal seating might form part of an urban public realm space their introduction into the church yard will look incongruous and again will further add to the harm caused by the piazza concept approach to the design.' The water feature has been removed from the proposals as well as the external seating which framed the water feature on two sides. The only external seating area now proposed is benching around the interment area to provide a suitable area for reflection.

'The landscaping work would impact on eighty five gravestones which would harm the romantic quality of the churchyard recognised in the Statement of Significance.' The landscaping and extension will now impact on 40 gravestones out of the 500+ gravestones/memorials in the churchyard,

'The grassed area to the south west of the church is identified for a consecrated interment garden. When viewed from the street below this feature appears almost as a promontory looking over the village and it forms an important view contributing to the character of the conservation area. The area is also important in more distant views of the church. The Landscape Officers states that " ... the trees and green quality of this part of the setting of the church are particularly important in providing an uncluttered and timeless setting to the church." There is concern that introducing a formal pathway, seating and new planting would diminish the qualities of this area in way which harms both the setting of the church in short and longer distance views as well as the character of the conservation area.'

The Senior Conservation Officer and Landscape Officer had not appreciated that this is already a designated area for the interment of ashes, with space for 200 'plots' (of which 40 have been taken). The proposals are to identify it more formally and to provide a discreet bench, framed by four new trees, for people to sit and remember their loved ones. The 'formal' access pathway would only be roughly 3 metres long. There are no proposals to include a barrier to the vertical drop to the church garden centre in these proposals. One yew tree (T14) would be removed to make way for the pathway. The historical photographic record shows that the view of the church and the tree-scape on the southern side have changed significantly over the years.



Dr. Oliver Tomb

'Both the Council's Landscape Officer and Trees Officer draw attention to the unjustified loss of trees, such as the three Irish Yews below the southern footpath, which would harm the acknowledged high significance of the cemetery. Any new planting would need to use species in positions, which reinforce and protect the green character of the churchyard. Concern was raised by the Council's Trees Officer that in the current scheme some tree planting would conflict with the proposed lighting. The proposed landscaping scheme has been revised to reduce the number of trees being removed. Nine trees are now proposed for removal, of which five are classified as Category C trees and one is Category R. There will be 15 replacement trees (6 yews; 5 limes; 1 cedar; 1 cypress). Two of the three Irish yews on the Southern boundary are now to be retained; the middle is scheduled for removal to create better access to the Remembrance Garden (see above). The extent of lighting has been much reduced.

'The hard landscaping materials indicates a coloured tarmac finish and concrete block paving to the parking bays in the car park. There is concern that this choice of surfacing materials would not reflect the area and protect the setting and character of the All Saints [Church].' This has been revised to retain the black tarmac surface finish with white lines in keeping with the existing area.

'The size and design of the currently proposed pavilion to mark the entrance to the cemetery would harm the character and setting of All Saints Church and could not be supported. Currently a substantial stone wall marks the boundary of the car park and the churchyard. This wall is an attractive feature, which contributes to the character and significance of the church. Its complete demolition and replacement with a fence could not be supported.' The proposal to build a new timber pavilion (a contemporary lych-gate) has been dropped and there will be no new building at the entrance to the churchyard. As regards the full height boundary wall between the churchyard and car park, the current proposal is to reduce this 6-metre stretch of wall to the height of the stone boundary wall around the car park thus providing homogeneity to the wall and allowing better views of the church and churchyard from the car park and from Lynfield Park.

In addition to giving serious consideration to the B&NRES Planning Officers, the Client Team and architects have also worked closely with their Heritage Consultants (Artemis) so as to lessen the impact on the heritage of the building and the landscape. Artemis comments and judgements are set out towards the end of the next section 3.5.

2.4.5 Fifth and Final Stage

Final revisions have been made to the proposals following consideration of the B&NES response to the third Pre-Application Inquiry (April 2019). A separate document lists in detail how exactly the client has complied with the requirements and recommendations set out in that response, some of which related to additional survey work or information work. The changes to the design proposals as a result of the B&NES response are set out below. They are entirely concerned with the landscaping proposals.

The proposal to lower the section of the car park wall that is adjacent to the churchyard has been removed from the scheme.

A new lighting scheme has been developed in consultation with the ecologist. The scheme will see the removal of 13 existing 'floodlighting' units attached to the church, one illuminated bollard, 9 in-ground uplighters and two defunct heritage lighting columns. They will be replaced by 6 heritage column lights with downward facing illumination and 3 lights mounted on the church, also with downward facing illumination. Full details of the scheme including images of the proposed lighting fittings, lux levels and areas of darkness are contained in the separate report.

In the Garden of Remembrance area, the proposal to remove an Irish yew (T27) has been omitted; the approach pathway has been adjusted; the proposal to plant four lime trees to frame the area has been omitted and the semi-circular bench has been reshaped.

The proposal to introduce CCTV has been omitted from the scheme.

The stainless steel removable bollard proposed for the entrance between car park and churchyard has been replaced with a cast iron heritage design. Furthermore, an additional removable bollard will be placed at the junction of the new pathway to the new main entrance and the pathway leading down from the car park. This is so as to ensure that no unauthorised vehicular use takes place.

The proposal to introduce steps on one side of the steep pathway from the Church Centre to the Church has been omitted from the scheme.

Conclusion to Evolution of Design Section

This section has set out clearly and in detail how the scheme has evolved over the past 7 years, not least in response to the comments of the B&NES Planning Officers and Artemis Heritage Services. See sketches and drawings that follow on from this section

SECTION THREE: THE FINAL DESIGN

3.1 Use of Church, Extension and Churchyard

The churchyard and immediate surroundings have the following current usage:

- The scores/hundreds of local people each day who use the network of paths on the site to access and return from the High St or other parts of Weston
- Those who visit the site each day to walk their dogs, enjoy the green space or lay flowers at the two sites where ashes have been interred
- The many thousands each year who walk the Cotswold Way and who walk through the site
- The 15,000+ people who currently arrive at the site (by car and on foot) and enter the church each year for a service or other event

The church itself has the following current usage:

- 200 services per year
- 20 funerals and weddings per year
- Meetings of local community groups
- School services and events
- Concerts
- Special events eg Remembrance Sunday; WinterWestFest

The vision of the church congregation is that the building (which is mainly used only on Sundays) should become even more useful to and appreciated by the local community and others from further afield. Use therefore will increase. The intention is that:

- The church would be open each day for visitors and those seeking private prayer and refecton
- There would be a community café operating at various times during the week
- The church would host more events of a religious, cultural and social nature



In order for this usage to happen, the building and surroundings needs the following facilities and spaces:

- A flexible worship/event space that could accommodate up to 600 people but also has more intimate spaces for accommodating 10 -30 people for a smaller service and a small chapel within the church for private prayer
- A kitchen capable of serving drinks before and after events and for supporting a community cafe
- WC's
- A clergy office
- A gathering/foyer space for people to meet in, before and after services and events
- A room that can be used as a crèche/toddler group during services and other events but which is also available for meetings and events during the week; the space should be sufficient for 40 people seated
- Plant facilities, including space for cleaning and maintenance and flower arranging
- Storage
- Good quality pedestrian path//ways around the Site
- Car-parking for as many cars as possible, including dedicated spaces for disabled parking

3.2 Scale and Amount of Extension

The proposed extension is a single storey extension retaining part of the original vestry including the external East Elevation. Most of the two existing vestries will be demolished and their floor area incorporated within the extension. The extension will increase the total floor area of the building by roughly 22% compared with the existing floor area. The total floor area of the extension (which incorporates the existing vestries) will roughly equal 25% of the combined floor area of church and extension.

The proposed single-storey extension is therefore subservient in scale to the existing historic church – both in height and floor area. Furthermore it is set within the slope of the existing churchyard, with the bottom 1m of height being hidden from view. From the northeast and east aspects of the site, the extension will also be partially obscured by the evergreen trees. See photomontages of views of extension and church in Landscape and Visual Impact Section (3.6)

The connections to the existing church are via a flat roof with roof lights that provide views of the existing building. The kitchen and meeting rooms are housed within a pitched roof section. The angle and scale of the pitched roof takes reference from the existing Transepts.

3.3 Layout of Church and Extension

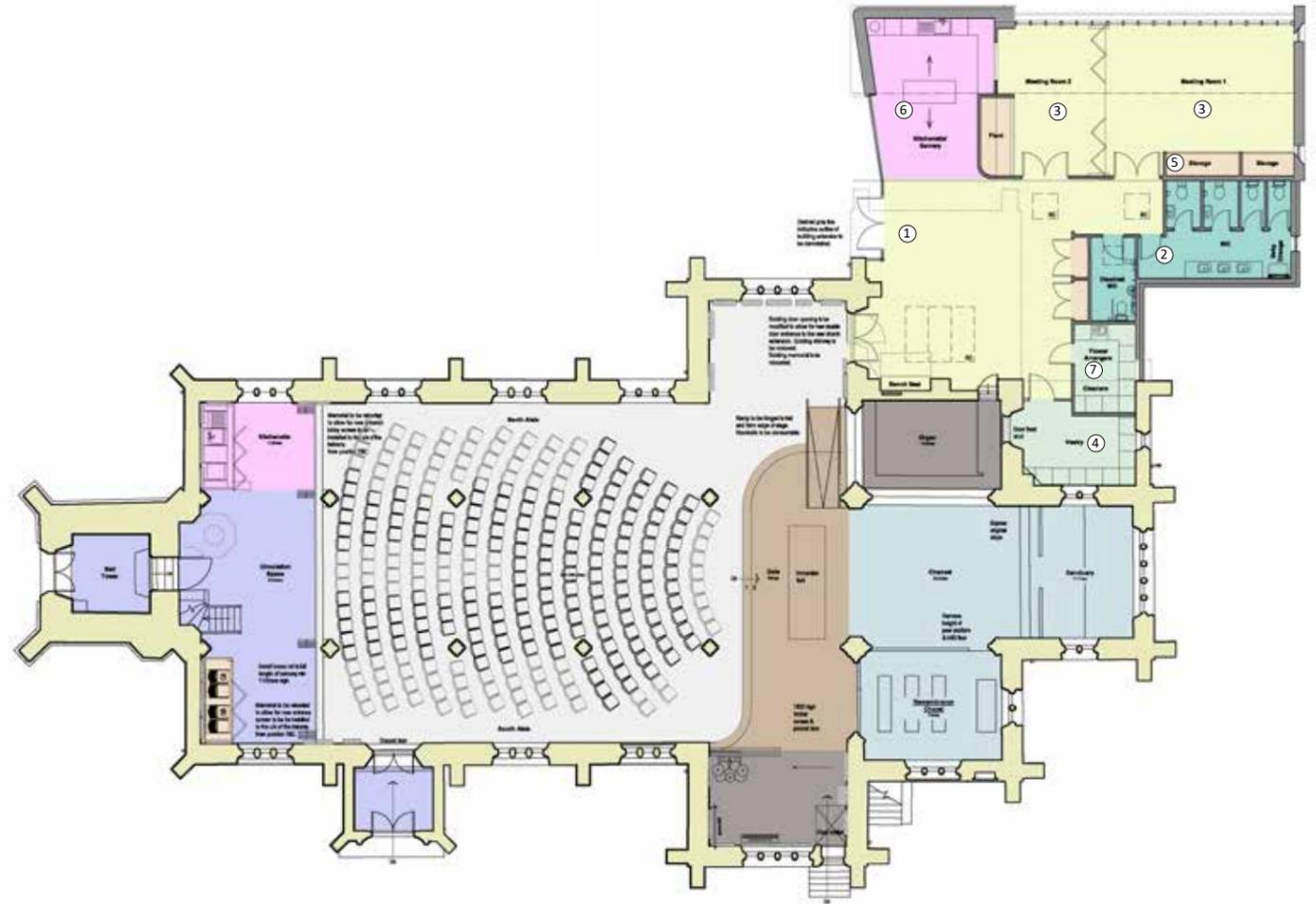
The layout of the church and extension are shown in the plan below; all of the extension is accommodated on the ground floor.

The church includes:

- Nave (primary seating area)
- Chancel and Sanctuary (primary 'performance' area)
- Organ Chamber
- Memorial Chapel
- Music Store
- Balcony for supplementary seating
- Area under balcony which includes refreshment bar and reception desk
- Tower
- South porch (current main entrance)

The extension includes:

- Entrance and gathering space open to the kitchen and servery area
- A large meeting room that can be subdivided into two meeting rooms.
- 5 no. WC's including a disabled WC and baby change area
- Flower arrangers room and cleaners store.
- Vestry accommodation
- Access door to the main body of the church.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

- 1- Entrance
- 2- WC's
- 3- Meeting Room
- 4- Vestry
- 5- Storage
- 6- Kitchen
- 7- Cleaners / Flower arrangers

3.4 Appearance of Extension

The main changes to the appearance of the building have been limited to the extension to the northeast of the existing church. This means that the changes will be barely visible from the south and west sides. Please refer to the landscape and visual impact views.

The appearance of the proposals takes reference from the existing building. Local Bath stone is proposed for the masonry with two finishes to provide a variation to the elevation: smooth finished bath stone to the areas that abut the existing church with panels of inset rough hewn stone breaking up the gable ends of the extension. Glazing is proposed to open up the elevations with stone mullions that reference the existing church mullions to the north elevation in both materiality and rhythm of spacing. Terne-coated steel is proposed for the roof finish, which is in keeping with the existing lead roof.



Stone Mullions



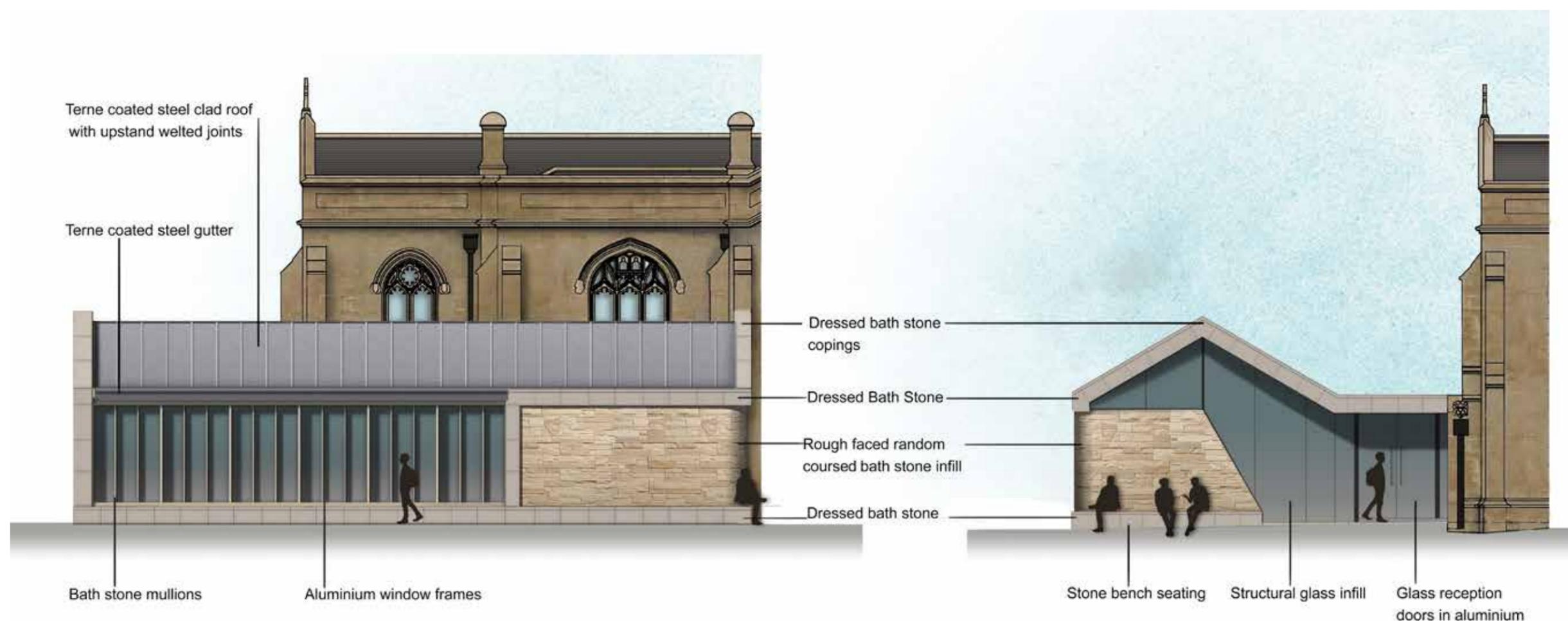
Smooth Bath stone



Rough Hewn Bath stone



Terne coated steel



Proposed Elevation materials



Proposed North Elevation



Proposed East Elevation



Proposed West Elevation

3.5 Churchyard and Surroundings

As explained in the sections detailing the evolution of the scheme in the light of consultations, the proposals for the landscape are now much reduced compared with those presented in the second Pre-Application Inquiry. In brief the changes to the landscape consist of the following:

The removal of 8 trees with replacement planting of the same species

The relocation of 31 - 40 gravestones and memorials, including the Dr Oliver tomb

The resurfacing of the main pathway leading down from the church car park

The creation of a new pathway leading to the new main entrance and the grassing over of the existing pathway

The extension of the car park

The removal of nearly all the existing lighting in the churchyard and their replacement with fewer but aesthetically and ecologically improving lighting units

A small access path to the internment of ashes area and the provision of some seating

Removal of unsightly gates between car park and churchyard

Introduction of two removable heritage-style bollards to prevent unauthorised vehicular usage

For more detail, please see supporting documentation ie Landscape DAS, Tree Plans, Memorial Plans, Lighting Plan.



3.6 Assessment of the Impact of the Proposed Scheme on the Heritage

Artemis Heritage Services are the Heritage Consultants who produced the comprehensive Statement of Significance and subsequently the Heritage Impact Assessment (See full document). Their considered conclusion is set out below:

'In comparison with the starting point when Artemis Heritage was first engaged in 2016, the proposals have been refined and improved extensively to address feedback from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for Bath & Wells and the Senior Conservation Officer of Bath & North East Somerset unitary authority and to meet needs without causing substantial harm to a heritage asset listed Grade II and of moderate-high significance.

The proposed extension can be described as a deferential contrast. It is neither a scholarly addition at the conservative end of a scale assessing impact, nor is it an assertive contrast at the opposite, radical end of the spectrum. While it has references that make it complementary, it is clearly deferential in that it is modern yet displays sympathies with the building to which it is to be attached, e.g. the pitch of the roofs over the extension and the proposed materials.

The impact of the extension will be experienced most on the north and east elevations of the heritage asset. On the south elevation (the show front) and the west front, approached from the heart of the village/suburb, there is little or no impact. Some individual elements within the proposed scheme have a high impact on the setting of the heritage asset and on listed heritage assets in the vicinity of the north and east sides of the church. Overall the proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the church/heritage asset.

The impact of the proposed changes on the three strands of the project can be summarised as follows:

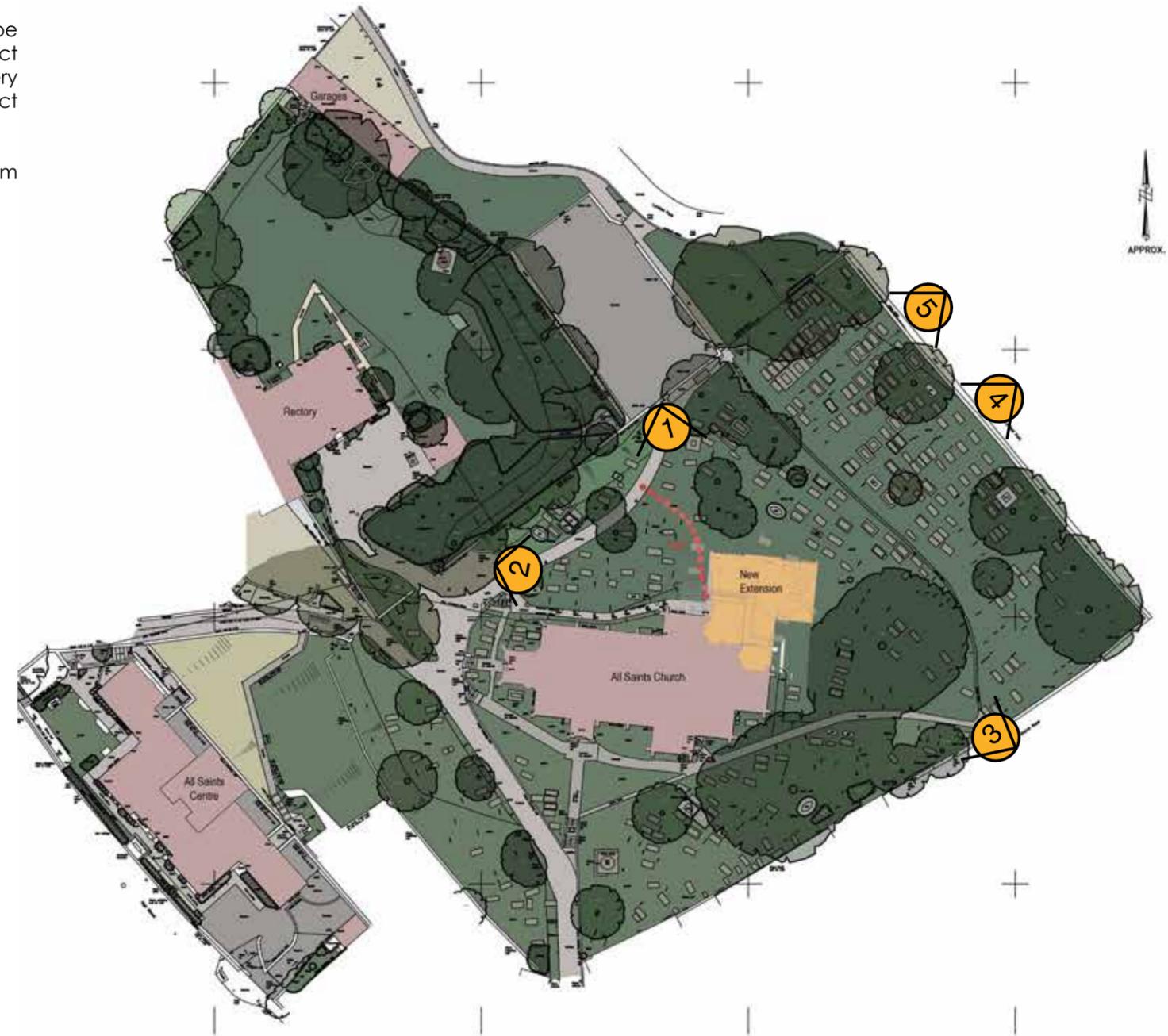
- Section A (Interior): Overall the impact is moderate-negligible on a building of moderate-high significance and will therefore lead to less than substantial harm with the exception of removing the pews which will alter the interior.*
- Section B (Extension): Overall the impact of the proposed extension on the north and east elevations of a building of moderate-high significance is high-moderate (therefore less than substantial harm).*
- Section C (Landscape): Overall the impact is high-moderate on a churchyard of high significance and therefore leads to less than substantial harm on the setting of the church.'*

3.7 Landscape and Visual Impact of the Proposals

The applicant has prepared a separate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the scheme and this is included in the accompanying documentation. Because of the proliferation of trees on the site and the density of housing surrounding the site, views of the church and site are extremely restricted. Indeed it is possible to live in Weston and barely be aware of the presence of the church.

This means, therefore, that the overall impact of the proposed changes will be negligible or non-existent outside of the main site (visual receptors). The impact on landscape and visual receptors is greater on site but even here there is no 'very large' impact and for a significant proportion of the site ie the south side, the impact is negligible.

The following sequence of 'Before and After' photos show views of the church from the north side before and after the addition of the extension.



Key Plan



Existing View 1



Proposed View 1



Existing View 2



Proposed View 2



Existing View 3



Proposed View 3



Existing View 4



Proposed View 4



Existing View 5



Proposed View 5

3.8 Conclusion

Given that the site is of historical, ecological, social and spiritual significance and is the oldest continuous building and institution in the whole of Weston and Newbridge, the current leadership and congregation of All Saints Church is committed to maintaining and enhancing the church's presence and contribution to the community. However the buildings themselves (with the exception of the All Saints Centre) are in need of modernisation and adaptation to twenty first century aspirations and lifestyles.

The proposed changes to the church and campus are driven by a set of values and long-term aims. At the heart of this is a commitment to put the church, even more than it is now, at the heart of the community, enabling the parish to make a deep and significant contribution to the social, material and spiritual welfare of the community.

One of the ways to achieve this is by upgrading and future-proofing the churchyard and the church buildings. In particular, the aim is to improve: (a) accessibility and availability (b) Flexibility and adaptability (c) Heritage and Interpretation.

The proposed alterations would secure the future of the church building so that it and its surroundings can continue to be enjoyed and valued by future generation. Furthermore these changes will help to secure the presence of a thriving congregation which will be a catalyst for the broader good of the community.

SECTION FOUR: ACCESS AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

4.1 Access

Please refer to the full access audit statement provided with this application.

One of the key functions of the extension is to provide improved access for all and appropriate facilities for people with mobility issues. This includes **(a) movement around the site, (b) access to the church and (c) circulation within the church (and extension).**

The current position is that acceptable for all three of the access issues listed above. In summary:

a. **Pathways:** There are currently four pathways around the sloping (and at times steep) site. None of those pathways is DDA compliant. Between them the paths have the following characteristics"

- Uneven surfaces
- Pathways widths which are narrower than recommended DDA widths
- Gradients which are steeper than recommended DDA gradients

There is poor signage around the site and lighting is inadequate.

b. **Entrances:** There are currently four doors into the church. It would be almost impossible to make two of them suitable for wheelchairs and for those with impaired mobility because of the steps involved, the location of those doors and the narrowness of the doors. The current main entrance is on the south side of the church; it is currently 50-60 metres from the three disabled parking spaces and over 100 metres from the car park; there are five steps from the pathway into the church and ramping the access would be difficult and detrimental to the views of the south side of the church. The fourth entrance is into the choir vestry and there is reasonable gradient from the disabled parking bays to it; wheelchairs can access this door, although the width of the door is below that recommended. However, this is very much a second-class entrance.

c. **Circulation within the church:** Circulation around the church is restricted because of the fixed pew seating and the varying levels within the building.

Any substantial work to the church and site must address these issues. The solutions include:

- a. Improving the surface quality of the paths
- b. Widening where possible the widths of the paths
- c. Improving (if possible) the gradients or incorporating aids such as rails where this proves impractical
- d. Creating (if possible) a single DDA compliant entrance which is common to all, rather than two 'sheep and goats' entrances which is the situation at present

- e. Levelling the floor as much as possible within the church and creating access ramps where there needs to be a change of level
- f. Ensuring that external and internal signage is of a high quality
- g. Ensuring that account is taken of those with hearing and sight impairments as regards the activities and services that take place within the church.

The design solution presented in Section Three and in the Landscape Design and Access Statement sets out how the access issues have been resolved as far as possible.

4.2 Public Benefit

Introduction

1. The National Planning Policy Framework contains a section titled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. This section includes these statements:

1. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

2. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

2. It is the strong conviction of the applicant that the proposed internal changes (which are outside the scope of this planning application) as well as the external ones will be a major contribution to:

- a) sustaining and enhancing the significance of All Saints Church Weston and increasing the number of uses consistent with its conservation
- b) sustaining the wider community of Weston
- c) adding to the local character and distinctiveness of Weston

3. Furthermore, the applicant believes that taken as a whole, the proposals help to secure the optimum and maximum viable use of the important heritage of the church and its immediate environment.

4. Although the internal changes are outside the scope of this planning application, it is essential for both planning authorities to understand that there is a crucial dependency between the internal proposals and the external proposals. Other parts of the Design and Access Statement as well as the separate report on Access and Accessibility make it clear as to why the enhanced facilities cannot be contained within the existing building.

Rationale

5. The vast majority of people in England would see the existence of the thousands of historic parish churches as a contribution to the common good. At the

same time, a large number of people recognise the challenge of sustaining these churches which are expensive to maintain. Sadly, it is likely that many will close over the next 25 years. A very local example of such a closure was the only other Grade 2 listed place of worship in Weston - The Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel. This closed because the congregation had declined and no other suitable community use could be found for it; after closure it was converted into residential accommodation and is therefore no longer open to the general public.

6. One response to the challenge of maintaining a church building is to increase the diversity of uses of the building so that the numbers using the building increases. Increasing the diversity of usage and frequency of usage requires changes in the building itself as well as a change in the culture of those responsible for the church. Sir Simon Jenkins, author of 'England's 1000 Best Churches writes' :

The number of beautiful but deserted churches in England is turning from an Anglican anguish into a national scandal. There are 16,000 Church of England churches in England alone. A quarter of them have fewer than 16 worshippers at even intermittent services. For all the efforts of dedicated wardens, most are locked and inaccessible. What is to be done with them? Church buildings should revert to what they were when built – places of congregation, comfort and local enterprise. Even if chancels remain in religious use, naves, aisles, towers and churchyards should be adapted for other purposes, with some regulatory latitude. This might embrace not just local shops, but creches, libraries, day centres for the elderly, places to collect a pension, pick up a parcel, connect to wifi, meet a friend or have a drink.

7. This is part of the background to the vision underpinning the All Saints proposals. Whilst it is true there is no immediate threat to the viability of All Saints as a church community and therefore of its building, it is not unreasonable to suggest that without a major investment of money in improving the physical quality of All Saints church, the congregation will become smaller as people move towards better equipped, more flexible and more comfortable church buildings elsewhere. If that were to happen, the heritage asset which is All Saints would be much more vulnerable and the benefit to the community would be much diminished.

8. However, the effect of all the changes when implemented will mean that All Saints Church becomes:

- More accessible
- More flexible
- More comfortable
- More attractive

9. Because of those positive changes, the church will be more casual visitors will visit the church and the church will be in greater demand by other groups in the locality and further afield. The diversity of usage will include:

- Musical and dramatic productions of various kinds;
- café;
- conference facilities;
- exhibition space;
- large social functions.

¹ The Guardian 30 April 2018

In addition, much more will be made of the aesthetic, historical and religious significance of the building, including some of the stories of the people who are named in one way or another in the building and the church yard.

10. The following is a conservative estimate of future usage:

- A: 400 adults, young adults and children representing the core membership, each attending a church service at least twice per month (Estimated Annual Footfall: 21,000)
- B: 1,000 adults/young adults each attending an occasional church service at All Saints once or twice a year (Estimated Annual Footfall: 1,500)
- C: 600 children from Weston All Saints Primary plus accompanying staff who use the church for services and events several times a year (Estimated Annual Footfall: 2,000)
- D: 1,500 (mainly local) adults and young people attending one or more non-religious events per year in the church (Estimated Annual Footfall: 4,500)
- E: 3,000 adults walking the Cotswold Way calling into the church for a drink, to use the WC's or to visit the church – assumes 10 people per day over 300 days (Estimated Annual Footfall: 3,000)
- F: 300 (local adults) making use of the drop-in café 10 times over the course of a year (Estimated Annual Footfall: 3,000)

Total Number of Individuals Benefitting from transformed building in first year of operation after completion = 6,300

Total Footfall/Attendance in transformed building in first year of operation after completion = 33,500

11. All Saints is the largest and oldest public space in Weston. Given the pressures on community buildings eg the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel and the Weston Children's Centre which was threatened with closure by the Council until All Saints stepped in to rescue it, it is vital that these historic community assets are retained and adapted for current and future generations. A closed church or a dilapidated church may linger on as a heritage asset for some years to come but it will definitely have no community benefit whatsoever. A reinvigorated, accessible, flexible, comfortable All Saints will bring increasing community benefit.



The Executive Headteacher of All Saints School, Dr Anne Bull has written to the applicant in support of the proposals. In her letter of support, she says:

'WASPS is now a community of over 600 pupils and more than 100 staff. We frequently use the church for special services and celebrations. Our lines of pupils walking to and from the church are familiar sights in Weston. Although we are able to squeeze in most of our pupils, it is a very tight fit and space is limited for parents or others to take part in services and celebrations. The removal of the pews will mean that seating all our pupils will be an easier task and free up space for more adults to attend.

At present there are only two WC's in the church which is insufficient for the number of children we bring to church, so we are pleased to see the proposed increase in WC's. The enhanced facilities in the church and the additional accommodation proposed will also make it possible for us to host some of the productions and concerts for which WASPS has an enviable reputation. Our school hall is significantly smaller than the church and the combination of the performance area plus comfortable seating for the audience plus the facilities for refreshments and comfort will add greatly to the enjoyment of these occasions and will enable more people to attend.

The church is also a valuable learning resource for our pupils in terms of RE, local history and the arts. The church's plans to increase the overall accessibility of the church and to do more interpretation of its heritage is very much to be welcomed.

The Weston Local History Society has written to All Saints with the following comments.

It remains a privilege for the 75 members of our Weston Local History Society to be able to continue to use the beautiful but revered surroundings of Weston All Saints Church for our monthly meetings. The improvements planned within the Rock Project will greatly aid our members, particularly those who are elderly or disabled, in accessing the Church and the facilities within the building.

The changes to the lighting and heating (eco-friendly), more comfortable seating, better toilets and improved kitchen facilities, will greatly enhance the experience for members and visitors at our meetings. Further planned changes to the Church acoustics and audio-visual systems will be applauded by our speakers and members alike.

The provision of a "level flooring" throughout the Church will eliminate the minor falls that have occurred. Likewise, the proposed "level" entrance from the car park area will greatly aid some of our elderly and disabled members.

The splendid proposals for this project will undoubtedly enhance the experience for members and visitors at our meetings such that we should expect even greater attendances, and probably a larger membership, as a result.

The Committee of the Weston Local History Society wishes to express its wholehearted support for the ROCK (All Saints) Project.