

## Annex B to: Submission of Casework to the Church Buildings Council (CBC) - Draft Statement of Significance

### Section 1: Brief History and Description of the Church Buildings, Contents, Churchyard and Setting.

The site is thought to have contained an old wayside shrine and that two other churches preceded the present one. In 1386, the Black Death killed three successive vicars which is thought to have led to the decision to rebuild the church. This took place during the period 1400 to 1440 in the Perpendicular style, with some fragments of Norman remains. St Mary's stands on a slight rise at the crossroads of a major and busy road in what was once the old Chard village and within a tranquil "closed" churchyard with a welcoming path running through it. Glimpsed through beautiful Copper Beech trees, visitors are sometimes surprised at the sight of the rather dumpy perpendicular building the exterior of which has buttresses and a parapet with embrasures, pinnacles and a selection of gargoyles. The stonework is of Ham Stone in the finer areas, such as the groins, arches, windows and internal columns, with infill of local lime and chert blocks from Chard's own Snowdon Quarry. The tower which was built a little later than the chancel and the nave, is in three stages with set-back buttresses and of a characteristic Somerset type although somewhat shorter when compared with others in the county. Since 1882, eight bells when rung have sent out a "beautiful noise" on Sundays and other myriad and various occasions. The Tower also houses the church clock with its perhaps unique "Chard Chimes". Some use is made of the adjacent Southend Church of England Educational Trust building known as "@St Mary's Centre" situated in the churchyard. Although not owned by the church, it acts as the Parish Rooms, with a Parish Office, kitchen, toilets, and two good sized rooms for hire by the church (if available), community events and organisations. Also situated proudly in the churchyard is the town's secondary war memorial which started life as an old preaching cross which was restored and modified in 1918. This and all aspects of the church including the 31 chest and table tombs in the churchyard have been beautifully maintained and in recent years we have strived to ensure that the church is in good shape through converting the Fawcus Chapel to a comfortable Prayer Chapel, repairing the roof and upgrading the heating system.

### Section 2: The Significance of the Church (including its Contents and Churchyard) in terms of:

- 1) Its special architectural and historical interest.
- 2) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest.

The North Porch is of interest, being the original main entrance to the church from the town.. It has a blocked window and space for an overhead room. This is thought to have been used for weddings in Tudor times. The South Porch is a much simpler affair but tends to have the advantage of sunlight. The main entrance to the church is now through the West Porch, where the visitor is greeted in the Nave by the elegant ham Stone pillars and arches, six in total, that separate the Nave from the Aisles. Of archaeological interest is the fact that the Southwest arch still shows signs of the original painted decoration. The Nave has uniform perpendicular windows and unusual dormer windows set in a coved ceiling. At the head of the North Aisle stands a Ham Stone Font, made in the style of the 1450 Church. It is octagonal and is carved with Tudor roses. A fine Willis organ circa 1814 is situated in the South Transept. The Church also has an excellent Oak Pulpit circa 1884, situated on a stone stem. Again of significance and or archaeological interest, the Chancel has three recessed seats that would have been used by the clergy and clerk at High Mass, and the remains of an arch that has survived from the old Norman Church. On the left wall there are marks indicating the position of the

“sepulchre”. Also of interest is the Chancel arch which has a small doorway leading to a turret stair that formerly opened onto a rood loft. The Chancel ceiling has bosses decorated with angels or flowers. We are particularly proud of our stained glass windows at St Mary’s. Looking East at the five-light window c.1907 first thing in the morning with the sun lighting it up is a joy to behold.. The two windows in the North Aisle at its East end are particularly fine having unusual female themes, the first three of saints and the other of three Queens. The North and South Transepts are significant in as much as they were once chantry chapels containing altars and statues of saints. The Niches and squints through which one could observe what was going on at the high altar still survive. The North Transept is of particular interest having two piscinas for washing the sacred plate and chalice. Excavation in past years here has found a statue base, thought to be part of the image wedged in the piscine. Many believe that the finest memorial in the church is situated in this Transept. It is known as “The Brewer Memorial” and is made of marble and porphyry. It depicts Will Brewer (died 1618) a physician, his wife Deanes and their eleven children. The North Transept is now modified and known as “The Fawcus Chapel”, dedicated in 1975 as a memorial to Dr Robert Fawcus, a greatly respected and much loved physician, a Freeman of Chard, who founded Toc H and Old peoples Welfare in our town.

Section 2.1: The Significance of the Area affected by the Proposal.