

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE & NEED
for**

**RE-ORDERING
at
ST. BENEDICT'S CHURCH,
GLASTONBURY**

MAY 2012

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE & NEED
for
RE-ORDERING**

**at
ST. BENEDICT'S CHURCH
GLASTONBURY**

APPLICANTS:

The Parochial Church Council
St. Benedict's Church
Glastonbury
Somerset

CONTACT:

Mr I Affleck-Edwards
38 Hood Close
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 8ES

AGENT:

Chedburn Dudley
Limpley Mill
Limpley Stoke
BATH - BA1 7DE

SITE:

St. Benedict's Church
Benedict Street,
Glastonbury

PROJECT:

Re-ordering project, to provide new floor finish above new underfloor heating system, with new disabled access at west end. Alteration to pews to suit. Alteration to Sanctuary step and altar rails, with new glass screen to south chapel and to include repositioning of Font.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The project describes the works envisaged by the church members, to provide a warm, comfortable and inviting space that can be used by the community. The reordering of the pews and the provision of a new floor finish over an underfloor heating system is seen as paramount. Disabled access, both into the church and within the chancel, and improved community facilities are also seen as important.

The provision of a screen within the west arch of the south chapel is unlikely to be undertaken immediately, as perhaps are the landscape improvements outside the west door of the tower, since funds may not allow their immediate inclusion in the project, but they both form an important part of the overall scheme and will be progressed as soon as funds allow.

2.0 APPLICATION

This document should be read in conjunction with the drawings provided, together with the photographs and information within this report. (See appendices).

The proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation and negotiations over the past year, (see Section 9.4) during which time the scheme has been refined and informed through further investigation & discussion. Various applications have been made to the DAC, and their comments acted upon, as follows:-

- Delegation visit by DAC members - 28th September 2007
- Application for preliminary Informal Advice – 24th September 2008
- Application for Informal Advice – 15th October 2008
- Delegation visit by DAC members, 5th December 2008.
- Delegation visit by DAC members, 16th December 2008.
- Application for Informal Advice – 9th September 2009.
- Application for Further Informal Advice – 21st October 2009.
- Application for ‘Formal Approval’ (Phase One) – 18th November 2009 - Approved.
- Phase One works initiated – 22nd March 2010
- Phase One works completed - 16th July 2010
- Application for Informal Advice – 17th November 2010.
- Application for Further Informal Advice – 19th January 2011 - proceed to Formal Advice.
- Application for ‘Formal Approval’ (Phase Two), 18th January, 2012.
- Application for further Informal Advice, 22nd February, 2012.
- Application for further Informal Advice, 18th April, 2012.
- Delegation visit by DAC members, 8th May 2012.

For a list and dates of the various consultations, design meetings and response dates, see Section 9.4 below.

3.0 DRAWINGS

The following drawings have been provided as part of earlier consultations with the various Amenity Societies, and formed the major part of a DAC application for full ‘Formal Approval’ in January 2012.

0616/02 Survey Plan	0616/55a Floor structure
0616/50b Ground floor plan - as proposed	0616/56 Arch Screen
0616/48 Alterations to doors	0616/57 Children’s cupboard
0616/49 Demolitions plan	0616/58 Tall cupboard
0616/51b Tower alterations	0616/59 Meter box
0616/52b Tower Joinery	0616/60 Electrics Plan
0616/53a Floor	0616/61 Pew Layout
0616/54a Floor details	0616/62 Electrical Section

Further drawings have been provided as part of extended consultations with the PCC, the DAC and The Victorian Society, while others have been revised, and are included as part of this Report.

0616/50e Ground Floor Masterplan	0616/63a Floor plan with Historical Overlay
0616/51e Tower alterations	0616/64a Proposed Floor Finishes
0616/52e Tower Joinery	0616/65a Proposed Seating Layout – at Rest
0616/54b Floor details	0616/66a Occasional Seating Layout - Events

Certain other drawings referred to as part of the main application for full ‘Formal Approval’ may need to be amended or removed, if the above revised drawings are accepted.

4.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

St Benedict’s Church - known affectionately as ‘St Bens’ - caters for a Church of England congregation, and forms part of a United Benefice with St John’s Church in the High Street and St Mary’s Church at Meare. The group is known as the “Abbey Parishes”. Each church is independent from the each other, with separate Parochial Church Councils (PCC’s), but sharing clergy and resources, and regularly worship together in each other’s parish.

A variety of services are offered, with morning Eucharist celebrated at St Ben’s on each 1st, 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month. A shared non-Eucharistic morning worship takes place on the 2nd Sunday with Glastonbury United Reformed Church, with Morning worship on every 5th Sunday by the United Benefice with St. John’s and St Mary’s, Meare. Further services at the church are Morning Prayer every Tuesday, with Morning Eucharist every Thursday. On average, Sunday morning worship attendance is between 20-25, while weekday attendance is between 7 and 10 people.

The population within the Parish boundary numbers approximately 4,500, while church membership, as recorded on the ‘electoral role’, is only 38. As can be seen by service attendance above, the church is strongly supported by the ‘stalwart few’, but there is a large number living and working within the parish bounds that could find the building of beneficial use, might be called upon to take part and perhaps ‘enrolled’ into the fellowship of the church.

At present, the age profile of members ranges around the 50s, 60s and 70s (roughly equal for each decade, with a few in their 80s), with only a handful in their 30s and 40s. However, the church makes provision for children, by providing a children’s corner (books, toys, etc:) and a number of family-based events are held in the church at specific times (Christmas tree dressing, Easter Egg hunts, etc).

There are future plans to hold many more child-orientated services (such as 'Messy church') once the reordering of the interiors allows.

The church is also used at other times during the week, by local groups requiring space to meet and for local fund-raising events, such as concerts, coffee mornings, etc. However, one of the greatest benefits of the large space on offer is the church's use by the local Primary school use, for school services and as an occasional 'extra' class room. The school has intimated that they could make far more use of the building if it was more flexible and 'comfortable'.

Other activities and events within the church consist of Thursday afternoons, when a group from Wells come to minister to disadvantaged people (known as SLAP - The Street Level Access Programme), A 'Free Christmas Lunch' for those in need and a "Café Church" in the afternoon of the 4th Sunday of the month

It is with much regret that the church cannot be left 'open' during the day as vagrancy, vandalism and security are an ever increasing problem in the town. At present the church is open for visitors for several hours, with a church member in attendance, three days a week (Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays) and, of course, for Sunday worship and other events.

The church is a tourist attraction in its own right. There has been a Church on the site since 1091, and the 'prestigious' tower sets off its island position at the convergence of two streets. The interiors are plain, but open and attractive, with Victorian additions, alterations and extensions. Those on pilgrimage to Glastonbury visit the church mainly for its connections to the Abbey through St. Benignus, as an historical site of pilgrimage and for its archaeological importance (as emphasised in the recent listing update).

Other local tourist attractions, to name but a few, are the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, the craft shop in the recently renovated St Margaret's Chapel, the Somerset Rural Life Museum & 14th-century Tithe barn, the Chalice Well and, of course, the Glastonbury Tor itself.

The church holds funds to cover general maintenance and the Parish Share', together with some smaller sums for specific projects. At present, the church has made no direct applications to grant aiding authorities, who specialise in providing funds for community works, alterations and the provision of facilities for community use, and has not launched a full-scale fund-raising appeal as yet, due to the lengthy process of obtaining approval. Once final approval has been given, fund raising will begin.

The building is generally in good condition and the last quinquennial, dated November 2007 (with a previous inspection in 2002), picked up mainly maintenance items to the outside, such as:-

- Some replacement slates to the chancel roof.
- Some replacement of lead flashings to the Nave roof and those of the north and south aisles.
- Some areas of repointing in the flashing to the south chapel and the north porch, and to certain cills and copings.
- Overhaul and refixing of certain rain water items.

All the above were classed as 'B' & 'C' in urgency. The only items that were sufficiently serious to warrant immediate action and were labelled 'A' in urgency were the unblocking of a couple of gulleys, the removal of debris at the base of the boiler room floor and the testing of the fire extinguishers in the tower and boiler room.

It is understood that all items stated on the quinquennial have been seen to and a re-inspection is due again later this year.

5.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Status:

The Statutory Church Listing is **Grade I** – recently upgraded from **Grade B**.

There are no listed structures or objects within the church yard, and no tomb stones or chest tombs adjacent to the works envisaged.

A separate report was undertaken on both the floor and the pews, where evidence of floor level changes is shown at the column bases and alterations to joinery where pews have been altered, shortened and repaired. This document should be read in conjunction with both these reports.

The Local Planning Authority for the town is Mendip District Council.

5.2 Significance:

St. Benedict's Church was Grade B listed, but has recently been upgraded to Grade I on the English Heritage Website, and is constructed of coursed rubble stone, consisting of Chancel with chapels either side, Nave, north & south aisles, tower, south transept extension and north porch. A more recent extension to the north east corner includes a vestry, kitchen and toilet accommodation.

The church has been extensively researched and previous 'Written Justifications' have documented the findings.

Further information was suggested by the Victorian Society on J D Sedding's involvement at the church and the relevant documents obtained. However, this information merely confirmed what had already been stated – that of extensive works on the tower, rebuilding of the north aisle wall, the renewal of the Nave roof and the demolition of the south Nave wall and introduction of a south aisle – as described in more detail below.

According to 'The Buildings of England' series 1958 - South & West Somerset - by Nikolaus Pevsner, St Benedict's Church, Glastonbury is described as:-

“ST BENEDICT. The church was rebuilt by Abbot Bere c.1520. His initials are over the N porch and on a roof-cornice in the N aisle. W tower with set-back buttresses, tall two-light bell openings with transom and Somerset tracery, a shaft ending in a pinnacle between them, battlements and big square pinnacles accompanied by pinnacles which continue long shafts standing on the buttresses. The interior has the tower arch panelled between thin shafts. Arcade of four bays with the usual piers (four hollows) and four-centred arches. Three-light clerestory. The chancel is earlier, probably late C14, see the chancel arch. The s chapel dates from 1862. - In the N transept wall a big image bracket with foliage. - Font. The usual Perp design. - Plate. Chalice 1734; Flagon and Dish by John Payne 1753; Salver 1774.”

5.3 Historical Analysis:

The church was originally dedicated to St. Benignus, whose name was retained until the middle of the 17th century. The monks of Glastonbury Abbey transferred the remains of the saint to the collection at the Abbey in 1091. However, it is said that the monks confused the hermit Beon, who died at Meare in 470 A.D., with Benignus, an Irish Saint - friend and disciple of St. Patrick, who became his successor - and the dedication was inadvertently made to St. Benignus rather than St. Beon. At the last resting place of the remains, an oration and offering was made, and around 1100 a church was built & consecrated on the site.

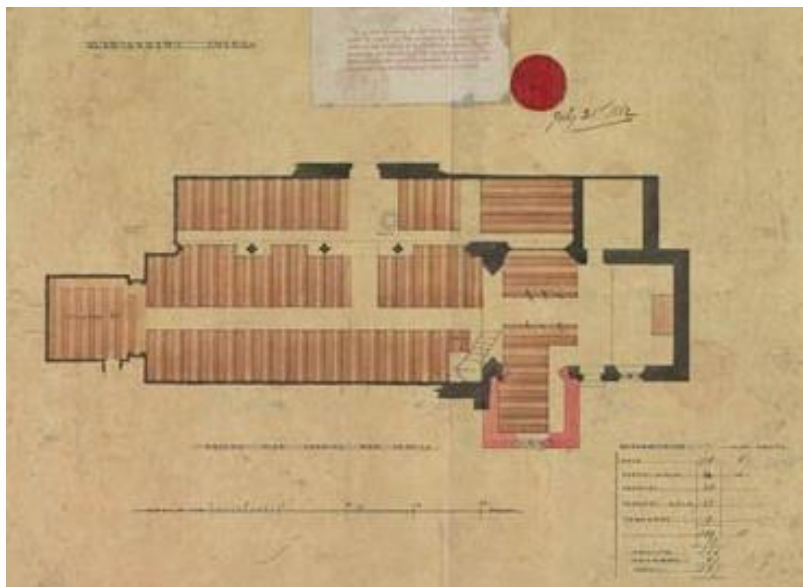
The present church is said to have been built on the same site as the original church around 1520 (although an earlier date of 1473 is also recorded) by Abbot Bere (1493 - 1524), a learned and cultured friend of Erasmus - his monogram, RB, can be seen over the north porch.

The building, set on the south side of Benedict Street, is perpendicular in style with a clerestoried nave and embattled west tower. On the north side of the nave there used to be a chapel, the Sharpham chapel, where Sir Henry Gould, a justice of the peace to the King's Bench in 1699, is buried. However, when the church was restored in 1885, the chapel was incorporated into a new north aisle.

A number of the present stained glass windows are stated to have been installed around 1840, and were a replacement of the original windows in St. Benedict's church. The church guide book and the websites's 'Brief Historic Guide' on the windows also state that around this date ".....the church was re-ordered". However, whether this was a first re-ordering prior to Ferrey's work in 1862 or a reference to the later 1862 reordering can not, as yet, be established.

A period of re-modelling took place in 1862 when the Revd Allnutt added the chapel in the South aisle in memory of his two daughters who died aged 3 days and 14 years; a brass plaque records the sad details. It was later furnished as a lady chapel by Prebendary Townsend and dedicated in 1953.

In 1862, alterations to the church were put into action, to the designs and under the supervision of the Architect, Benjamin Ferrey, Diocesan Architect to the Diocese of Bath and Wells from 1841 until his death in 1880. Within the re-modelling, the oak box pews were replaced with pitch pine and the west gallery was removed. The church was re-paved and the chancel refurnished, with repairs to the roof also taking place. A chapel was added to the south of the Chancel as part of this work (See plan of 1862 alterations, below).



Plan of 1862 alterations (churchplansonline.org)

A mere 20 years later, the decaying roof had caused the external walls to splay outwards and subsidence was discovered in the tower. This called for another plan to be drawn up, by architect J. D. Sedding and by 1884 extensive restoration of the church was underway. John Dando Sedding was a noted Victorian 'church architect' with an interest in the 'crafted Gothic' style, setting up in practice in London in 1876 having started his architectural life with his brother Edmund's practice in Penance, Cornwall.

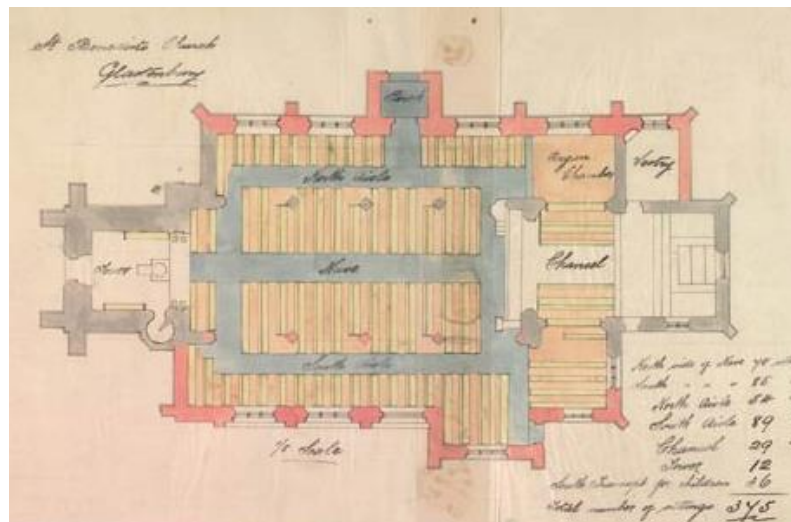
The restoration of 1884 included (as shown in plan below):

- Extensive works on the tower due to subsidence.
- The north wall of the north aisle being re-built due to its worsening condition.

- The renewal of the Nave roof, but with the fine roof corbels retained. (One bears what is known as the Arms of Joseph of Arimathea; the Greek cross with two cruets containing the blood and sweat of Christ, which Joseph is said to have brought with him to Glastonbury. Another shows St. Benignus vested as a Bishop, with a tree in his hand instead of a pastoral staff.)
- The demolition of the south Nave wall and the introduction of a new south aisle with arcade to match that of the north.
- Internal works including new flooring being laid and the introduction of a new heating system, with new boiler room being introduced below the southern transept extension.

There is a record of works being undertaken in 1896, with the construction of the south aisle and south transept attributed to this date. However, as the plan of 1884 shows, this was clearly designed as part of the 1884 works by Sedding, although may not have been undertaken until the later date stated.

Although not actually mentioned, it is assumed that most of the Ferrey pews were discarded – a small number being retained within the new south aisle (where they exist today) – while the south and north aisles were moved further apart to allow for extended pews to encompass the arcade columns. (See drawing 0616/63a, for an historical overlay of both the Ferrey and the Sedding plans over the existing floor plan found today).



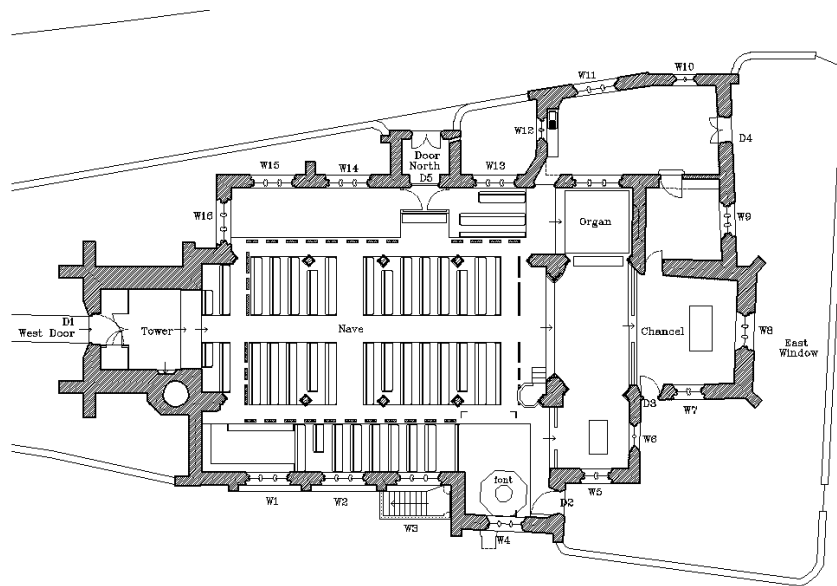
Plan of 1884 alterations (churchplansonline.org)

The last major change, after the two substantial refurbishment plans, was the addition of the main extension to the vestry to the north of the chancel. This was added in 1913 and completes the form of the church as it stands today.

During these early 20th century works, the floor was again changed to incorporate a new ducted heating system, consisting of a circuit of hot water pipes set below metal gratings running across the nave at both the east and west end and up both side aisles. This work thereby removed the 'Sedding' floor layout, bringing the side aisles nearer to the nave columns with the pews were shortened to accommodate the column bases and removal of the pew plinths. A new concrete sub-base was laid through the church with the provision of the herring-bone wood block floor finish that is found today. During the recently completed Phase One works in the 1913 extension, the matching floor finish, which therefore dates the floor to the main church, was removed.

The present organ was incorporated into what was once the Sharpham Chapel in the north aisle in 1873 and rebuilt again in 1927.

The north porch contains an interesting arched altar recess and a small window facing the Abbey Gatehouse, used by lepers to receive the holy sacrament.



As existing survey by Chedburn Design (2006)

5.4 Archaeology:

The recent upgrade of the Listing Record makes mention on the archaeological importance of the setting, site and choice as being the “...resting point of the saint’s (St Benignus) relics...”, noting its position “... exactly 500 feet west of the abbey gatehouse ...” as well as how the church was affected by its position “... beyond the Abbey walls.”

At the recent Delegation Visit Mr Bob Croft, the County Archaeologist, pointed out that the west door and east end of the church, when viewed from the gate into the churchyard off S Benedict Street, lined up perfectly with Glastonbury Tor in the distance - an important reference point (and possible Ley Line) that would have been of great importance in ancient times.

Also of importance are the medieval remains of the Nave walls and the c.1500 roof corbels, retained after the 1885 re-roofing works, together with the west tower.

5.5 Setting:

The legendary town of Glastonbury is both historically and archaeologically important, situated centrally in the eastern half of the county. Legends that endure centre around it being the burial place of King Arthur & Queen Guinevere, of being the final resting place of St Dunstan, as well as that of the Holy Grail – brought from the Holy land by Joseph of Arimathea. There is, of course, no proof of any of these.

It is supposed that it originally started as a small settlement supporting the abbey, founded in the 7th Century which by Domesday times had grown into the wealthiest monastery in England, owning one eighth of the county of Somerset and lands in four other counties. By the time of the dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16thC, when the abbey was closed, and the passing of the Civil War in the 17th century, the town had prospered from both pilgrims and the wool trade, boasting a hospital, four markets and a good number of hostleries & inns.



The church is set to the west of the Abbey ruins, sandwiched between Benedict Street and St Benedict's Close, with a further roadway running across its east boundary. The church within its churchyard is therefore an island surrounded by tarmac and moving traffic - the only available 'dropping-off-point' being at its western entry point, with parking set even further west down Benedict Street.

The closed graveyard, bounded by stone rubble walls on all sides, includes graves that have been grassed over. A strong visual impact is made by the stone path that runs from the west gate up to the west door of the church, while tucked away in the east wall and at the northeast corner of the site, plain gates are linked to the now redundant south door and the 20th C kitchen/vestry extensions by secondary paths. The main entrance to the church is currently via the north porch, accessed directly off the street with no pavement or protection from the passing traffic.

The fine, 3-stage, 15th C embattled tower has a strong visual impact on the western approach to the town and local area.

6.0 MISSION STATEMENT:

The Reverend David McGeogh, in his statement to the DAC Delegation members at the recent visit, described the existing & ongoing 'outreach' already offered by the church to the community. Due to the complexity of the local culture and the very distinctive make-up of the local community, the church of St Benedict's is seen very much as the 'Village church', set slightly apart and to the west of town, while the larger, more prestigious church of St Johns is seen as the 'Central and Civic Church' at the town's centre. The PCC is aware that the needs of the community are an ever-changing 'obligation' and that both churches, St Ben's and St John's, need to adapt to those changes, in order to engage and fulfil their missions – but in very different ways. Whilst St John's fulfils the civic role as 'town church', St Ben's serves the wider (and very diverse) community on the fringe of the town centre.

With regards St Ben's, there is an established relationship with the Church of England Primary School opposite, and an already active support group - The Street Level Access Programme (SLAP) - which offers support to the homeless, as well as a number of local community groups already using the church in a limited way. The 'Vision' for the church is therefore to actively increase these relationships, extending them to a more diverse range of community members



and see the 'Re-ordering Proposals' as being a way of taking that vision forward. A summary of that Mission is noted in the Archdeacons report on the recent DAC Delegation visit (see Appendix 3).

The members of 'St Bens' are a thriving, eclectic worshipping congregation and have for some years been working in line with the Diocese of Bath & Wells Mission strategy set out in 'Changing Lives, Changing Church for Changing Communities'. In its mission, the statements asks two questions:- Firstly, 'What kind of church do we want to be?' and secondly 'How will we shape our ministry and mission to become that church?'.



With regards St Ben's, the church has contrived to serve both its own local community, as well as those that are classed as being 'on the edge' of Society. Whilst this is an issue that relates to many small market towns, the issue is particularly relevant in Glastonbury, where many of the inhabitants and visitors do not fit into what is perceived as the 'norm' and who are used to living outside the 'normal' boundaries of Society; the homeless, travellers, etc:

The PCC feel strongly that in order to pursue their 'mission' within the locality, there is a need for change within the church, not only by its members, but also by the building itself – to allow the 'church' to reach out and draw-in more of the community as a whole. The result of a many years of debate, discussions and soul-searching between members of the church, is that there is an overwhelming desire for the church building to have an even greater role in the community.

For over 900 years this church has been a centre for pilgrimage, prayer and worship. In its early days, it was a centre of mission, the home of a priest who went out into the surrounding community to preach the Gospel. As a Parish Church today, it has a central place in the lives of its members and in the life of the town and surrounding community. It is not a museum, although the building has inherited some wonderful treasures from the past. It is a living centre for work, worship and prayer.

It is the PCC's intention that the church should be open to all, where the visitor should experience a warmth of welcome and a sense of integration and belonging, - whether as a tourist in summer, a participant to an event or a visitor for individual prayer. It is a building that has been loved by generations of men and women, where each age has added to the fabric and ornaments of the building to form its overall character.

7.0 EVIDENCE:

The town of Glastonbury, especially around the area of the Abbey and the Tor, is made up of a diverse community encompassing all age groups, and attracts a varied assortment of tourists and visitors. The church makes daily welcome to all the above, and provides 'outreach' to those on the fringes of the community, including travellers and the homeless, and work enthusiastically with the many faiths and spiritualities that co-exist in and around Glastonbury.

A recent feasibility study undertaken by the church members, made enquiries to local community groups, clubs, etc, within the town. Most indicated that they could make more use of the church if it were made easier to use – finding the existing fixed pews obstructive and the remaining space impractical.

The Primary school already uses the church for occasional collective worship, and have long indicated that they would like to increase relationship with the church by additional use – as an extra classroom, for instance, and for school club events. Requiring a space to be a 'comfortable, safe place of learning', the church as it is at present is insufficient for any such activities. The church already has plans for a Sunday afternoon 'Messy Church' in conjunction with the school, but at present the existing Nave arrangement makes such an event unworkable.

Other more national ‘church’ studies show that there seems to be two distinct trends in church worship: whilst the membership of the more rural church tend to be made up of 60yrs & over and are struggling with declining numbers, some of the more urban churches are in fact growing, due to their increasing community works. Whilst population numbers in towns are rising (due to population increase & additional development) the trend is towards an older resident age group – the young tending to move to the cities, for work, cheaper housing and for a more congenial life style. Here at St Bens, a great effort has already been made to attract, involve and include those of the younger generation in activities related to the church, and it is this work that now needs to be increased & extended. There is an overwhelming feeling - backed by both the members of the church and those from community groups - that the church building is in the best position to offer these additional and up-graded facilities within the community, which in turn would attract a greater use within the building.

The most frequent suggestion coming out of the feasibility study, is to hold more community events and concerts in the church, as part of an increased ‘outreach’ into the parish, together with a desire to make the church more relevant and reach out both to other churches and those in the community.

There is also a feeling that the church building should be seen less as a ‘museum piece’ and more as a ‘community building’, accessible to all, with seating, sound systems, heating and light being flexible for various uses and events. The PCC therefore feels it has a strong mandate from its members to proceed with a significant but well considered reordering of the building, so that it can be of use to the community as a whole, and not just for Sunday morning worship.

Whilst bequests are sometimes made by older church members, such funds are often ‘ear-marked’ for special projects and out-reach ministry & mission. There is always a need for general funds just to cover maintenance and annual quotas - running costs and on-going repair costs in any old building are continuously rising - and it is becoming increasingly difficult to raise additional funds (on top of annual costs) for ‘General Refurb’ projects, such as maintenance, specific repairs, up-graded equipment; those very items that are seen as providing the comfortable and pleasant environment now expected by event’s organisers and sponsors. It is hoped that by opening up the building to a wider community and making it more ‘welcoming’, more money can be generated, whilst the building is kept in use – a view that many share; the building should be ‘earning its keep’ in order to protect its long term survival !

8.0 STATEMENT OF NEED

8.1 Background to the Brief:

In 2006, the PCC began to look into possibilities of upgrading and re-ordering the interiors of the church, with the view of being able to provide a flexible, comfortable and interesting building to attract great community use.

Steps at every entry point hampered disabled and ambulant access into the church and the church therefore saw a need to not only improve disabled access but also provide fully compliant toilet facilities for the church’s use. The existing kitchen facilities were tired and outdated, and the use of collapsible tables for serving food and drink caused problems of access, safety and delivery during and after services. The remaining area of the Edwardian extension forming the Vestry was poorly planned, with access again restricted by steps and narrow doors.

Within the main body of the church, the church saw a need to separate out selected areas for different uses or for use at different times. An area for quiet prayer is required, together with a small room for one-to-one counselling. It was also seen as useful to have a separate area for small meetings, which could be heated separately from the main body of the church, although this requirement has been ‘shelved’ for the time being.

Storage is always in short supply, both for church use and other community users – from stationary, books and information to musical instruments, youth workers equipment and children’s toys – and in

order to offer the building up for other community needs, a number of secure, tidy storage areas was needed.

A Masterplan was agreed, and approvals given, allowing the works to be undertaken in three or four phases. Having received Faculty approval for the first phase in 2008, works to provide two toilets, a new kitchen and a 'fitted' Vestry where started in March 2010 and completed late in July. The works also included improved access into the Nave and the removal of steps into the Vestry and out into the Chancel.

9.0 THE BRIEF:

9.1 Facilities:

With no separate community hall in this area of Glastonbury, St Ben's is the largest public building serving the community and is therefore required for a large variety of events, concerts and meetings. With the facilities provided as Phase One of the reordering, the building now has the capability to meet modern expectations and comfort levels required of a modern church and social venue.

There is an ever-growing need for a dedicated meeting space, both during and outside 'Services' - a space separated from the main body of the church that can be heated separately, can be sound-proofed and be made secure. Part of the church's mission is to welcome young families into the church, and their aim is to provide a Sunday 'Messy Church' - a project that has been extremely well supported by the local Primary school - by being able to offer an open area for activities, play and 'messy' occupations, making the provision of a separate space for 'quiet prayer' even more important. Furthermore, with the increasing requirement for 'counselling', a room that offers privacy and safety is also beneficial, but one that still appears part of the church.

9.2 Space:

However, the inflexibility of the seating and the lack of a decent heating & lighting system drastically impacts on the current & potential use of the building and the comfort & convenience of the congregation and visitors alike. The removal of a certain number of pews and the adaptation of the remaining pews to allow for flexibility of position is seen as an important 'draw' to the overall use of the building.

There is a general feeling that the Font should be brought further into the 'body of the church', from its existing position tucked back against the south wall of the transept. It appears to have been moved several times, as the Ferrey plans shows the Font by the north door (1862), while the Sedding plan shows it set centrally in the tower at the west end (1884). By bringing the font forward of its existing position, more standing space is created behind, allowing the priest and baptismal family to face the congregation during the Baptism ceremony.

There is no plan to move the font back to its traditional position beside the main entry point (i.e. back in the Tower) as this would interfere with the proposed new disabled access, as well as block the uninterrupted view from the west door right up to the altar, a visual sight-line that is extended when viewing the church from the gate at the west end of the church yard, through the church up to Glastonbury Tor behind - as pointed out by the county archaeologist, Mr Bob Croft.

9.3 Access:

Lastly, the brief called for a look at problems with access, both into and within the building, and whether the building can be made more 'welcoming' to visitors.

The door from the north porch into the church is protected by an Edwardian inner lobby affair, creating excellent security and draught proofing when closed. However access into the north porch, itself open

to the weather and through an iron gate, is directly off the street, and with no pavement at this point, is lethal to pedestrians both entering and leaving the church. It is therefore the PCC's intention to cease using this entrance and reinstate the west door in the Tower as the main access point.

Here, the door is also of heavy oak construction, further encumbered by a heavy curtain used for draught-proofing, inside a further protective timber screen. However, there is a feeling that it also acts as a 'block' to visitors, who feel that the church is 'shut' or 'should not be entered'. The PCC brief therefore calls for the removal of the inner screen and its replacement by a pair of glazed doors that can act as a draught lobby, while allowing the main timber door to stay open during daylight hours and for services. This would allow visitors to see into the church as they approach via the west path, thereby opening up the church interiors to view, and providing a more 'welcome feel' as they enter.

Access into the recently altered facilities is via a timber ramp, taking up the level difference between the church and the northeast extension, while access into the Vestry via the chancel is down one step.



9.4 Consultations:

Over the past 5 years, there have been extensive consultations with the church, through meetings with the PCC and by 'questions & answer' presentations to the church membership, revising the proposals accordingly to suit their needs and their aspirations.

The proposals for Phases 2 & 3 have been passed to the DAC for extensive consultation, and their advice has been acted upon throughout. Several packages of drawings have been sent out to the Various Amenity Societies over the years and an on-going 'Consultation' has been undertaken with the Victorian Society. As a result, the proposals have been refined and informed through further investigation & discussion, and resulted in the many applications submitted (see section 2.0), as follows:-

- Meeting with Amenity Society Representatives (EH, Vic Soc) 17th December 2008
- Consultation sent to EH, SPAB & Victorian Society - 25th March 2009
- Response to Consultation by EH (Jenny Chesher)- 16th April 2009.
- Response to Consultation by Victorian Society (Heloise Brown) - 28th April 2009
- Meeting with Amenity Society Representatives (EH) 15th May 2009
- Consultation sent to EH, SPAB & Victorian Society - 17th December 2010
- Consultation sent to Mendip DC (David Clark) - 21st December 2010
- Response to Consultation by Victorian Society (Edmund Harris) - 23rd February, 2011.
- Consultation sent to EH, SPAB, CBC & Victorian Society - 8th December 2011
- Consultation sent to Victorian Society (Edmund Harris) - 13th December 2011

- Presentation of Phase Two scheme to PCC, 20th December 2011
- Report on DAC meeting - 18th January 2012
- Design Meeting with DAC Assessor (Alan Thomas) - 2nd February 2012.
- Response to Consultation by Victorian Society (Edmund Harris) - 9th February, 2012.
- Report on DAC meeting - 22nd February 2012
- Design Meeting with DAC Assessor (John Bucknall), 5th March 2012.
- Report on Delegation Visit at DAC meeting - 16th May 2012.

10.0 PROPOSALS

10.1 Phased works:

The project has always been seen as a series of phased works – all of which have been fully supported by the DAC at each review. The works described below are the result of these many consultations, delegation visits & reviews and have been split down into a number of phases – namely:

Phase One

- i) alterations at the east end to upgrade existing facilities & vestry - COMPLETED.

Phase Two

- ii) alterations to the chancel floor to allow for level access into the vestry and to provide a larger seating area east of the Sanctuary step and altar rails.
- iii) provision of a new Nave floor, to include alterations to the pews, to allow for flexibility within the body of the church. Slight alteration to the positioning of the Font will be included.
- iv) improve access at west end, by raising the nave floor level and introducing steps and a ramp at the west door.
- v) improved storage/server capabilities, whilst providing dedicated areas to children's play, music, education, information, etc:

Phase Three

- vi) provision of a glazed screen to the south chapel to provide for quiet prayer and private consultations, and

Phase Four

- vii) improve access at the west door of the Tower, by providing a level 'gathering area' externally and altering the levels of the approach to allow for wheelchair access.

There has been much discussion on whether to move the organ, which at present takes up the whole area of the old Sharpham chapel. Set one-step up from the Nave, this area would form the ideal position for a meeting room. However, without finding a new position for the existing organ, or taking the decision to replace it with a modern alternative, the church has decided against this move at this stage.



10.2 Phase 1.

A first phase of works has already been completed, providing a fully disabled toilet, ambulant toilet and full kitchen facilities to serve the increasing community requirements from the town. Set within the north east extension, a small alteration was undertaken at the western end to provide a wider/more accessible opening to allow for wheelchair and disabled access into the whole extension area.

Alterations to improve the Vestry were also undertaken, and included the removal of the 20th century suspended floor so that level access could be achieved with both the Chancel and the extension to the north. The vestry has been fitted-out with specialist-made hanging cupboards and desk, and adapted to allow for small private meetings for 2 or 3 people.

10.3 Phase 2.

The existing sanctuary step is to be moved eastwards, in line with the original Ferrey designs, so that the seating area within the chancel is increased, to allow the Chancel to act as a more enclosed chapel if required. For small services or more intimate contact, the area could be separately lit and heated from the main body of the church.

By undertaking changes to the floor under the tower, and raising the Nave floor by one step, it is possible to gain wheelchair entry from the outside into the whole of the church body – apart from the sanctuary. It is therefore proposed to raise the Nave floor to what is considered to be the level of the floor before the 1885 works, by the height of the existing chancel step so that the floor can run through. This will then correspond with the alterations undertaken to the chancel floor, so that level access into the vestry can also be achieved.

A new glazed screen and pair of doors set inside the existing west doors will act as both a draught lobby and welcome area to the main church – allowing the heavy timber tower doors to be opened during the day while retaining heat, etc: Included with the new glazed screen at the west door, will be a set of cupboards to either side. Improved access at the west end, both in-side and out, will allow the north door – which at present has an awkward relationship with the main road - to be kept locked.

With the removal of the inner lobby to the north door, the north aisle becomes a large and useful open space. It is envisaged that the existing servery facilities will be repositioned within easy access of the new kitchen, with the addition of a movable servery ‘island’ and semi-fixed tables.

The font, at present positioned in the south transept is ‘lost’, bearing no relationship to the main body of the church or to the traditional position near the entrance. The area surrounding the font is dark, badly lit and uninviting. It is therefore proposed to move the font further to the north, giving additional ‘movement space’ around the back whilst placing the whole structure on a new base set into the new floor to avoid the step. This area has the advantage of a rear access door into the south garden, at present not used.



With increased use of the church by the community, there is a demand for more storage for equipment, belongings and church paraphernalia, so that the main body of the church can maintain the uncluttered look expected of a ‘church at rest’. Further storage is therefore envisaged at the west end of each aisle. Each cupboard would be specialist made to fit back against the blank walls at the west end, and each of a height and width to suit the windows above and to the side. To the north, a children’s corner will be set-up, with additional furniture being placed along the north wall - a

book case, for example – together with other church items, such as the ‘Frontal’s chest’ repositioned from beside the organ.

10.4 Phase 3.

The Lady Chapel on the south side of the Chancel would be screened off from the south aisle, by means of a fully glazed screen, allowing the chapel to become an area for quiet prayer. Whether a further glazed screen within the arched opening into the chancel is necessary is still being debated, and will form a separate application at a later date if this proposal is progressed, but again the chapel could be separately lit and heated, allowing for complete versatility of use.

10.5 Phase 4.

The new entrance to the site is to be via the west gate, which requires general renovation work to its stone pillars and the stone paving bounding the road. At the opposite end of the main path, under the tower, the paths will be raised in a shallow gradient leading to a new area of Lias paving, providing a ‘gathering’ area in front of the west door of the church. This will allow for level access into the church and tie-in with the disabled ramp proposed within the tower space.

The P.C.C. believes that these proposals are a necessary lead-in to renewing ‘church life’.

11.0 DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:

11.1 Design & layout

Much time and effort has gone into the design and layouts proposed, with regular discussions held with both the PCC & the DAC, and an extensive consultation undertaken by the church with both church members and the town residents. Their needs and requirements have been incorporated into the proposals, and their comments noted. Extensive consultations have also been undertaken with members of the DAC and with the Amenity Societies and their comments noted and designs revised accordingly.

The adaptation of a select number of pews, and their ability to be moved to a separate area of the church for certain ‘special’ events, will allow the church to become more flexible in the events and usage it can cater for. By having the ability to occasionally move the central Nave pews to an alternative side aisle position, leaving the Nave clear for social events, such as theatre, concerts, meals, dinners, dance or school use: the range of events capable of using the building now being extended.

The original design of the new floor was described as having a ‘bland, homogenising effect on the interior’ in that it replaced a mixture of wood block, Lias slabs and metal gratings in the aisle arrangement that exists today. Consultations and design meetings have resulted in a similar mixture of materials and finishes, which are conducive with the inclusion of underfloor heating throughout.

11.2 Scale

The provision of a new floor, set at the higher level of the original church floor and in line with that considered being Ferrey’s original layout, will improve the feel of the internal space. At present, the lower floor level gives the impression that the windows are set too high in the walls and an overall feeling of ‘enclosure & confinement’ is given.

The scale of the new fittings proposed, in the form of cupboard joinery, is compatible with other fixtures and fittings in the church, and timber sections and details will echo those already present. The use of a clear glazed screen and door allows visual connection between the areas being separated.

The insertion of a glass screen into the existing arched aisle opening into the south chapel is not seen as intrusive, since the amount of glazing inserted within the fine timber framing will still allow full visibility of the chapel from the south aisle, and visa versa.

11.3 Appearance

Materials chosen are to match those already found within the church. The existing use of oak, whether in the roof structure or the more modern fixtures and fittings, is of good quality and any alternative material or finishes would stand out as being very different. Sadly, the softwood herringbone woodblocks have been sanded down (badly), stained and then varnished, which has done nothing to 'add' to their appearance. One feature that stands out in the church at present, is the standard of carving incorporated in the existing bench ends, and it is imperative that any future fittings should be to the same quality as those existing and undertaken with the same amount of care. It is seen as a distinct 'improvement' to replace the existing 'curtained-off' area at the west door in the tower, with a 'designed' piece of joinery and glass.

11.4 Access & Landscaping

External access into the building will be changed. The current north door entrance will be closed-off to pedestrian use, with the existing metal gates being replaced by a solid oak external door, which will be kept locked.

The west door will be reinstated as the 'Principle Entrance' with improved wheelchair access both inside and out. An area of level paving will be laid externally, providing a 'gathering' area for weddings, funerals, etc: with the three access points being relayed to fall gradually towards the existing paved paths and grass areas. Internally, the two existing steps will be removed, and replaced by a disabled ramp to the north side of the tower floor, and a new arrangement of steps to the central and south side of the space, to allow for access into the tower stairs and Nave. A hand rail will be provided on the north wall to serve the ramp only.

All other access points into the building - to the northeast extension, the chancel and the south transept - will remain unchanged, although the approaching pathways will be reset and rebbed to suit the existing levels.

No other landscaping works are envisaged and no change will be made to the external appearance of the church.

12.0 **IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

Significance:	High –due to the historic and social value in the building's structural fabric and context, although interiors are plain with no 'special' sculptural features. High - due to archaeological & historical importance of the site as a whole and the buried archaeology beneath the building's floor.
Condition:	Good - with lighting and heating systems dated and minimal, but in working order.
Facilities:	Excellent - result of recent Phase 1 upgrade as part of main project.
Effect/impact of proposal:	- Minimal impact on the historic fabric of the church – all items proposed could be removed at a later date, with minimum alteration to the structure. - Minimal structural impact on the floor - existing floor to remain in-situ, allowing archaeology below to be untouched. - High visual impact of the new floor - finishes to be carefully chosen and best quality materials used, to ensure that new floor completed to high standard

- Minimal visual impact on selected areas, and not to the detriment of their significance:-
- The tower - the existing tower arch and its west window will remain visible from the Nave.
- Access alterations - provision of disabled access and repositioning of steps seen as a benefit to the usage of the building.
- The west end – proposed joinery & glass lobby will be an improvement on the existing screened & curtained area around the west door.
- The north door –the existing timber enclosure to be removed, allowing the existing north door and the dressed stone surround to be visible from the Nave interior.
- Repositioning of the Font - to bring the font further into the worship area & create space behind.
- Transept screen - to provide an area of ‘quiet prayer’ allowing main Nave to be used independently.
- Repositioning of the Sanctuary step - to provide level access into the Vestry.

This proposal aims to improve the character of the existing church by formalising and tidying up areas that are inefficiently used and improving the functionality and use of the church as a whole. The main interventions are as follows:

- Introduction of glazed screen within the transept arch. *While there will be little permanent structural/physical impact on the building, there will be a small visual impact on the inside of the church. Its construction and design have been carefully considered so as to appear as minimal as possible so as to not dominate the south aisle.*
- Introduction of a new floor. *The floor will be permanent, giving level access into the chancel and into the facilities provided within the northeast extension. There is a visual impact to the interior appearance of the church, due to the new finishes, but these echo the existing finishes in materials, pattern and design. However, this proposal has the support of the County Archaeologist, as the insertion of a new floor over the existing, allows for the existing archaeology to remain undisturbed below.*
- Introduction of new services. *The raising of the floor level described above allows for the introduction of new underfloor heating throughout the Nave, side aisles, chancel and tower without the need for lifting the existing floor and undertaking extensive archaeology and excavations. The raised floor will also allow for power, sound and AV connections to be made to various locations, using the floor as their base.*
- Introduction of the new glass west door. *The use of glass is seen as less intrusive than a solid ‘draught lobby’ and more welcoming, and will not only help towards heat retention, but also provide a visual aid to encourage visitors to enter the building.*
- Introduction of disabled ramp at west end. *While there will be little permanent structural/physical impact on the building as a whole, there will be a small visual impact within the tower area. Its construction and design have been carefully considered so as to appear as minimal as possible so as to not dominate the west end.*
- Repositioning of the Font. *Whilst the repositioning is seen as a permanent move, it is also seen as a ‘positive move’, bringing the Font further into the body of the church and placing it back within ‘worship’. The existing 1st step up to the font will be retained, but set down within the floor, thus retaining its pattern, while the second step will be replaced with a moveable ‘wooden’ step, which can be stored in the tower when not required.*

- Removal & alteration of Pews. *The removal of a selected number of pews is seen as a forward step towards greater usage, by providing a greater 'gathering' area at the west end and usable space within the side aisles. The remaining pews will be made 'moveable' allowing for greater flexibility of use, being repositioned into the north and south aisles for certain select events and occasions.*

13.0 SUSTAINABILITY:

13.1 Contribution to environmental sustainability:

The provision of a small meeting room (separated from the main church), the closing off of the north porch and the insertion of a 'draught door' to the west end entrance are all seen as improvements to the 'thermal structure', by helping towards more efficient use of space and better 'heat retention'.

The new underfloor heating system is seen as a more environmentally acceptable form of heating and very much better for the fabric of the building than the existing one-day-a-week 'heat-up'.

13.2 Long term environmental strategy:

The new disabled access has been designed to current regulations and existing services have been incorporated as required. All services can be upgraded at a later date, as and when a newer technology can be used.

The new underfloor heating system will be run to provide continuous background heat, making more efficient use of the power than the existing boiler/hot water radiator system. As technology evolves, alternative power mediums can be added to replace the existing gas supply, in the form of ground source or air source heat pumps, exchangers, etc:

13.3 Carbon footprint:

The carbon footprint of the building as a whole will remain unchanged.

13.4 Design, materials, etc:

Any visitor to the church, especially for the first time, will be struck by the coherent design of the church. With the matching Nave columns separating equally sized side aisles to north and south, and the light provided by an equal number of aisle & clerestory windows above, there is a symmetry to the layout which gives a homogenous feel to the interiors of the building.

The majority of the timber joinery in the church is of good quality, and some fixtures are to be retained intact, although perhaps in different positions. New joinery will be made to compliment or match that existing. However, some existing materials, especially with regards to parts of the floor, are showing signs of age and quality, some having been already altered, repaired and patched as required.

The use of good quality materials, and to the correct sections and dimensions, is important to the existing setting, and a match in not only material but quality and colour of new work is important.



14.0 ACCESS

Access into the site is not good, all being via Benedict Street in one way or another and all five door openings into the building entail steps of some form.

The northern site entrance, from the top end of Benedict Street, forms the first visual link for pedestrians and visitors as it continues down from the bottom of Glastonbury High Street. The north gate is set at an angle off the pavement leading into St Benedict's Close, which runs at right angles to Benedict Street and is not wholly visible until the passer-by is almost directly opposite. However, this gives access to the extension only, whose door is kept locked for security reasons.

The existing main door into the church, via the north porch, is directly off the roadway, with no pavement provision in either direction. The north porch has a locked metal screen externally, which is forbidding in appearance. It is therefore proposed to close off this entrance at the road edge, with a new set of solid oak doors replacing the metal screens.

The west gate makes the most sensible access to the site, but is the furthest walk from the town centre. Limited parking is available, drop-off at the gate is possible and the path leading to the west tower door is gradual. It is proposed that the gradient of the path is raised slightly so that a new level standing area is formed adjacent to the tower door giving full disabled access at this point. Slight alterations will be required to the stone flags within the gateway, to allow for wheelchairs.

The tower floor would be re-laid to include a ramp leading from the door up to a new raised floor level in the Nave, with handrail provided to one side only.

15.0 CONCLUSION:

A number of proposals have previously been discussed with the DAC, and worked-up designs to cover all phased works to the building taken through to 'Formal Advice'. Whilst Phase One has been approved and now completed, Phases Two & Three have been delayed due to questions on need, design, and implementation. After 6 years of DAC consultations - including 4 separate 'Delegation Visits, 2 site meetings with amenity society representatives and 2 design meetings with the DAC representatives - numerous meetings and discussion with the church members and extensive correspondence with the Victorian Society, the PCC have revised their requirements and simplified their plans.

A series of options, to encompass these requirements, have been previously discussed with the church, each being designed to meet the future requirements of the church, and to take forward their 'Mission' within the community. These revisions, together with the agreed 'Masterplan', have been discussed at several DAC meetings and again discussed at a recent delegation visit in May this year. The question of the floor and pews being the main 'stumbling block' ! A revised 'final' floor layout and seating plan has now been agreed, taking into account all the advice given in the past and at that visit.

By opening up the building to a variety of uses, and therefore a range of different ages and backgrounds, the building will not only be self-financing, but also the church's mission will be fulfilled. If the building is warm, comfortable and can offer full facilities, it will be used again and again – if not, younger members of the congregation will think again about coming to church and event organisers will look elsewhere for a venue.

16.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Appendix 1:

Images of England listing record, dated 21st June 1950 - Grade B

Appendix 2:

English Heritage Site 'Upgrade', undated but appeared on the EH site on 6th March 2012.

Appendix 3:

DAC Delegation Report, dated 21st May 2012.

Appendix 4:

Church's 'Statement of Need', dated April 2012.

Appendix 5:

Copy of Victorian Society letter, dated 9th February 2012, and
copy of Architect's reply, dated 29th June 2012.

Appendix 6:

Photographs of the interiors.