



Historic England

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Bath & Wells, Church of England

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Our ref: E00239567

Your ref: 2022-078121

2 October 2024

**Notification under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Orders 2010**

**LOCATION: ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, VICTORIA ST, BURNHAM-ON-SEA, SOMERSET, TA8 1AW**

**PROPOSED WORK:** New WC facilities at the base of the tower (new memorial garden to the east side of the south porch abandoned).

We were notified on 29 August 2024 of the proposed works at the above site.

**Historic England advice**

The significance of St Andrew's Church

St Andrew's Church is a substantial multi-phase building with its origins in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and later alterations in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The building underwent a reordering under the direction of Ewan Christian between 1875-9.

The west end of the church benefits from some features of particular interest in the remains of the Whitehall Altar, commissioned by James II for a chapel in Whitehall Palace, London. These comprise two marble sculptures of angels, which are on plinths, to either side of the tower arch and were moved to St Andrews in 1820. It is thought that the adjacent font was installed slightly later in 1883, but it is not clear whether it has always been in its current position.

The view from the nave towards west end encompasses both these features, which sit alongside the tower arch, traceried window and wall monuments. Their mix of styles and dates meld to create a composition of architectural, artistic and historic significance.

The Church of St Andrew is listed at Grade I which denotes its very high levels of architectural and historic significance. Only 2.5% of listed buildings achieve this highest grade, which denotes the buildings exceptional special interest.



## The impact of the proposals on the Church of St Andrew

The application proposes to remove the existing timber cupboards at the west end of the bell tower and replace them with a larger timber enclosure, to house storage areas, cupboards and an accessible WC. Foul drainage for the WC would be linked to the existing combined drainage within the churchyard.

Historic England have been consulted at a late stage in the timeline of these proposals. We would have welcomed the opportunity to comment on these proposals at an earlier point.

Notwithstanding this we concur with the options appraisal that the proposed location at the west end of the base of the tower is a suitable space for the facilities. We can see that the proposals would provide the parish with the facilities that they desire within an installation of a character and scale that would not unduly detract from the significance of the space.

We appreciate the potential benefits of moving the font but query the significance of the font base that is to be removed as part of the proposals. The significance of the font base is yet understood, and therefore whether its removal could cause harm is not clear.

The insertion of a foul drainage connection to serve the WC will require below ground works within the churchyard. Such below ground works in this location have the potential for uncovering human remains, artefacts or evidence of earlier buildings or structures.

## Historic England's position

Historic England consider that further analysis of the font base is needed to understand its significance. This assessment of significance should subsequently inform options for its relocation that seek to avoid and minimise any harm that is identified.

We encourage an approach to the new installation in the base of the tower that is of a level of craftsmanship and quality befitting a church of this significance. These factors as well as the colouration of the structure should be carefully considered to ensure that the proposals does not detract from the collection of monuments, fixtures and architectural features that make such a strong contribute to the significance of this special building.

The works to facilitate foul drainage have potential archaeological impacts. Therefore, an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will need to be produced by a suitably qualified person to accompany these works. We recommend that you consult with your archaeological advisor on this element of the works.



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## **Recommendation**

We consider that further information is required regarding the significance of the font base that is proposed to be removed in order to understand its significance and assess any harm that could arise from its removal. Should the works to the font be found to result in harm, opportunities to avoid and/or minimise this harm should be sought.

Our recommendations regarding potential archaeological impacts should be addressed.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss these comments. Any unamended application for faculty for this work can be determined without further reference to Historic England, but please consult us again before applying for faculty if there are any material changes to the proposals. This letter is being copied to the Secretary of the DAC.

Yours sincerely

### **Harish Sharma**

Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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Documents received:

All documents were accessed via the online Faculty system.