



Historic England

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Our ref: P01584949 &
P01584999

5 December 2024

Dear Ms Black

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HALL CHURCH LANE CHILCOMPTON
RADSTOCK SOMERSET BA3 4HP**

Application No. 2024/0993/FUL & 2024/1584/FUL

Thank you for your letter of 13 November 2024 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Significance of the Church of St John the Baptist and the contribution of its setting

The Church of St John the Baptist retains 15th century origins but underwent several programmes of rebuilding during the 19th century, including works to the nave and aisle by Jesse Ganes and works to the chancel by the architect F. Bligh Bond. Due to its more than special architectural and historic the church has been listed at grade II*.

It is located as part of a smaller hamlet associated with the Manor and supporting farm. The church sits within an establish churchyard with a couple of listed monuments. It is enclosed with a defining boundary wall and sizable gates located to the north-east corner. Due to the migration of the village to the south, the church and its churchyard are now viewed against a rural backdrop. This rural setting contributes to the significance of the church as derived from its setting.

A modern hall has been added to the south elevation of the church. It is set behind the church from principal views points, remaining visually subservient and also helps to maintain the continuation of the churchyard in those publicly accessible views from the north, east and west.



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Impact of the proposed works

This letter responds to two applications. The first relates to the introduction of new slates to the modern hall and also a new car-parking areas to the churchyard, south-east of the church to improve access to the site for all (LPA ref 2024/0993/FUL). The second relates to the installation of installation of two outside heat exchangers (LPA ref 2024/1584/FUL)

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In respect of the slates, it is proposed to replace modern cement slates with a clay proprietary system. The impact of the change of material will be neutral and therefore, we do not wish to comment on this aspect of the works in detail.

The proposed new carpark will consist of a new vehicular entrance and a large area of new hardstanding, which will form a significant intervention into the churchyard.

The application says that there are limited monuments, but it would be beneficial to understand where and what those are. The absence of monuments also does not mean that there will be an absence of buried remains. Therefore, it would be beneficial to understand what information to date the applicants has in respect of potential below ground impacts through a desk-based assessment (NPPF, Para 200). This will help to give early consideration to any suitable mitigation measures, and where necessary potential impacts designed out in order to avoid additional cost and complexity.

Notwithstanding the need for this further information, the introduction of hard standing, and ultimately cars into this space, would feel incongruous within the churchyard and be prominent in views of the church due to its location. It would erode the sense of peace that is retains through the green quality of the church yard and the wider rural character.

The scale and size of the opening would significantly erode the boundary, the age of which is not fully understood. It would also introduce a challenging feature to the current principal entrance and alter the sense of hierarchy currently appreciated within the approach to the churchyard.

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We would like to draw your attention to the relevant webpages on Installing Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings - [Installing Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/installing-heat-pumps-in-historic-buildings/) <<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/installing-heat-pumps-in-historic-buildings/>>.

Although the locations identified are relatively discrete, consideration should be given



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as to whether there is an opportunity to screen the units to minimise their visual impact especially in respect of the unit proposed for the main church. Consideration should also be given to how the internal system will be accessed from the external heat pump. Details should be provided but this may fall under the faculty process.

Historic England's Position

In respect of the first application (LPA ref 2024/0993/FUL), we understand the importance of providing suitable access for all to the church and we acknowledge that the church has concerns about the current gradient at the entrance. This was discussed under a previous faculty application that considered changes to the boundary wall to the north, which included addressing the gradient in this location. It is not clear from the application what the outcome of the discussion was.

Historic England has concerns regarding the current approach to providing level access and its impact on the potential significant historic fabric but also the erosion of the green setting to the church.

In our view, consideration should be given to the alternative options in order to find the solution that best responds to the significance of the church and its below ground impact, while improving access into the site. This could include the addressing the existing gradient of the path to improve accessibility. It could also include consideration of a new pedestrian access from the east to provide level access from the car to the east which we understand is used by the church. Overall, this would minimise the impact of the works, avoiding much of the identified harm.

In respect of application 2024/1584/FUL, we would encourage the points raised above to be addressed.

Consequently, we are not convinced that an alternative less harmful solution cannot be identified, and we would encourage the church to explore alternative options in order to reduce the overall impacts of the proposed scheme (NPPF, Para 201 and 206). In the consideration of any application, the council should ensure the give the greatest of weight to the conservation of the heritage asset, the more important the asset the greater the weight should be (NPPF, Para 205).

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds.

These concerns relate to the carparking and vehicular access, which will introduce a conspicuous modern development into the churchyard boundary, eroding the rural quality of the church's landscape setting (LPA ref 2024/0993/FUL). Also as part of these works, consideration needs to be given to the potential impact on buried





remains. Therefore, opportunities need to be taken to avoid and minimise the identified harm in order to justify the proposed intervention.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 200, 201, 205 and 206 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

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Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc. Rebecca Bowran, Somerset Council



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