

Heritage and Design & Access Statement for Access improvements and other works

STOCKLAND BRISTOL St Mary Magdalene



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Chantrey Conservation Architects Ltd

Tel: 07856 828406

Email: marcus@ccarch.co.uk

Website: www.ccarch.co.uk

Chantrey Conservation Architects Ltd

Registered Office: St. Omer, The Street, Draycott, Somerset, BS27 3TH.

Registration No: 15229783 Registered in England & Wales.

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Revisions

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The following Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a Planning Application for improved access to the church and other works which, to a very minor extent affect its external appearance.
- 1.2. The project proposes the following:
 - Removal of two steps to the southwest path and the relaying of the existing path.
 - The introduction of handrails to the flight of steps at the east end of the churchyard.
 - The raising of the paving level immediately outside the South Porch to create level access and the introduction of new paving.
 - The introduction of railings and a gate around the former boiler room basement steps.
 - The introduction of handrails to the vestry steps.
 - The construction of a Trench Arch Drainage system in the churchyard in association with the installation of an Accessible WC inside the church.
- 1.3. There is no Change of Use and the church remains a Place of Worship.
- 1.4. The church is Grade II listed but the church and churchyard also benefit from Ecclesiastical Exemption and are therefore covered by Faculty jurisdiction. A separate application will be made to the Diocese for Faculty for the described works.
- 1.5. The church is also in receipt of a significant Development Grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the PCC plans to repair and re-order the church to create a facility for wider community use with the express aim to ensure its long-term sustainability. In parallel, Faculty will be sought for fabric repairs to the church and for re-ordering the interior.
- 1.6. **THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN SUPPORT OF A PLANNING APPLICATION ONLY AND IS NOT A LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION.**

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2 SUMMARY HERITAGE INFORMATION

2.1. Summary Description of the Building

- 2.1.1. Stockland Bristol, formerly Stockland Gaunts, is a village which lies on the Combwich Reach on the north side of the River Parrett where it enters the Bristol Channel. The village was recorded as Stocheland in the Domesday Book. In the 13th century, the manor of Stockland was held by Maurice de Gaunt and following his death in 1230, it was left to St Mark's Hospital in Bristol. In 1541, the manor became under the ownership of the Bristol Corporation who held it until 1839 when it was bought by the Daniel family. The estate was broken up and sold off in 1954.
- 2.1.2. The church of St Mary Magdalene was rebuilt in 1865 on the site of a previous church. The church is located in the centre of the village and it is not within a Conservation Area.



Above: Buckler watercolour of the previous church on the site in 1843.

- 2.1.3. The listing description of the church is as follows:

ST24SW STOCKLAND BRISTOL CP

STOCKLAND BRISTOL VILLAGE

3/83 Church of St Mary Magdalene

GV II

Parish church. 1865 from documents; on the site of an earlier parish church; for Daniel family of Stockland Manor (qv); by Arthur of Plymouth. Coursed and squared blue lias rubble, Bath Stone dressings, tile roofs with bracketted eaves, copings with cruciform finials. Decorated

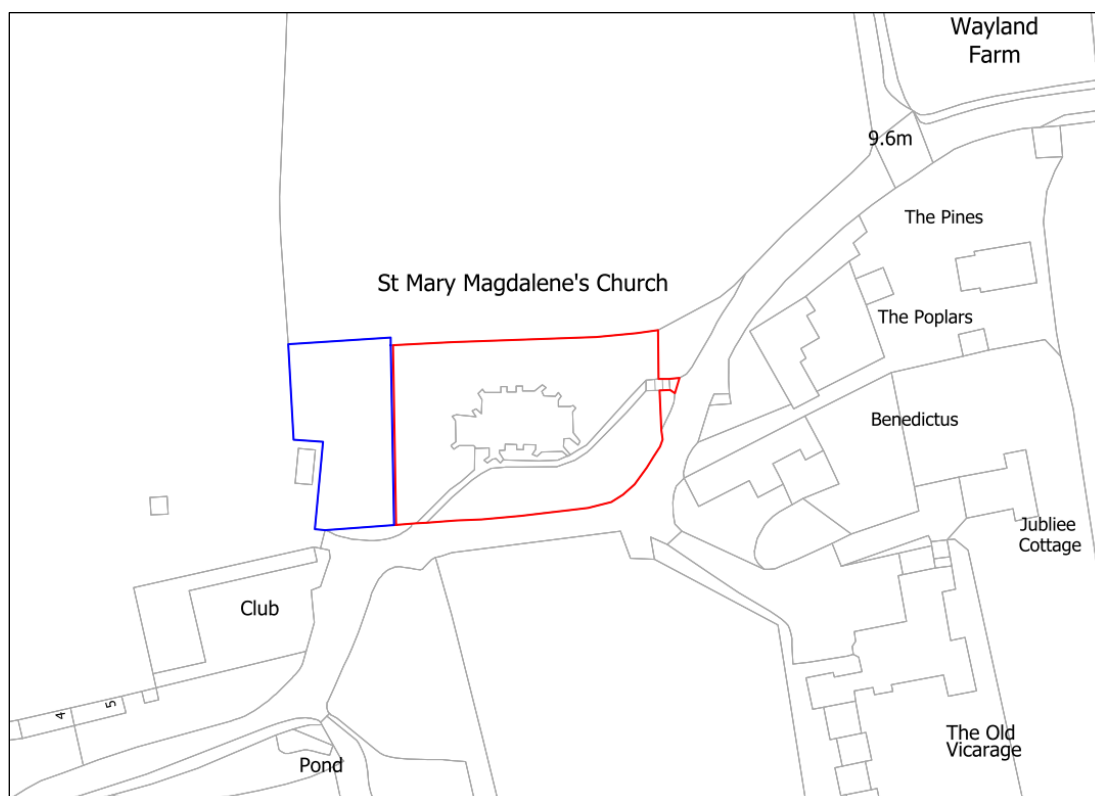
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style with much buttressing; nave with a north aisle and South porch, West tower, chancel with a heated north vestry and a South chapel. Three stage tower, diagonal buttresses to first and second stages, parapet pierced with quatrefoils, stair turret, 2-light bell chamber openings with louvres 3-light West window, West door, carved heads stops. Three bay nave, 2-light windows; single bay chancel, 2-light window and a lancet, 3-light West window; 3-light South window to short South chapel. Plain interior, plastered walls, tile floors wagon roofs to nave and chancel, that to nave unceiled; scissor braced roof to north aisle. Arcade on octagonal piers. Both the octagonal font and the chancel screen are C15, reused from the earlier church; the latter restored and installed by F Bligh Bond c1920 as a memorial to the fallen of the Great War. Remainder of fittings of 1865; notable the stone pulpit with 10 detached Purbeck shafts, similarly the reredos. Much C19 stained glass, that to chancel by Clayton and Bell. Two resited C17 tablets to South chapel, 2 C19 tablets. Bells of 1865. Well balanced and precise copy of a Decorated building. Thomas Daniel was the rector. (Pevsner, Buildings of England South and West Somerset, 1958).

Listing NGR: ST2401343620

2.1.4.



Above: Plan of part of the village showing the churchyard outlined in red. Adjacent, the Spinney is also owned by the PCC and shown outlined in blue.

2.1.5. The church is currently in very poor condition and on the Historic England 'at risk' register.

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2.1.6.



Above: The church viewed from the road.



Above: The church viewed from close to the eastern gate.

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3 THE EXISTING SITE

- 3.1. The church is located on the northern side of the bend in the minor road which runs through the village.
- 3.2. The churchyard is raised above road level and surrounded by stone walls on all sides. There are existing stepped entrances into the churchyard in the southwest corner and on the east side each with modern steel gates. The paths that run through the churchyard are concrete. There is a step up into the south porch and a short flight of steps up to the vestry door.
- 3.3. The church is built of coursed blue lias stone with Bath Stone dressings under a roof of plain clay tiles. The interior of the church comprises a chancel, nave, north aisle, south chapel (organ chamber), south porch, vestry and west tower. Inside, the font and the chancel screen are survivors from the earlier church.
- 3.4. The church is open daily to the public but the facilities are currently lacking with no WC and no kitchenette. The current access arrangements are unacceptable and urgently need to be upgraded.

4 POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 4.1. In preparing this application, due consideration has also been given to the following National and Local Policies and advice documents:
 - National Planning Policy Framework (2019).
 - Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011 to 2032 (Adopted Feb 2019)
 - Somerset Council Plan 2023 to 2027.
- 4.2. Somerset Council's vision is to be build '*a fairer, greener, resilient, more flourishing Somerset that cares for the most vulnerable and listens to you*'.
- 4.3. Policy D26 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan states:

Development proposals should avoid harm to, sustain and, where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting, in a manner consistent with their historical significance.

Development proposals affecting heritage assets or their settings will be expected to exhibit appropriately sympathetic design in term of siting, mass, scale and use of materials.

The Council will encourage schemes that promote the management, interpretation and improved public access to heritage assets, or promote local skills and crafts relevant to the historic environment.

Great weight will be given to the conservation of Sedgemoor's designated heritage assets. Where applicable development will be supported where it proposes: The repair and conservation of designated heritage assets, including the regeneration of heritage at risk....

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5 ACCESS

- 5.1. The churchyard is accessed either through the gates in the southwest corner of the churchyard where there are two steps or via the gated entrance in the eastern boundary where there are ten steps. There is currently no form of accessible entrance to the churchyard.



Above: Photo showing the southwest churchyard entrance.



Above: Photo showing the steps in the eastern boundary of the churchyard.

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- 5.2. The two entrances are connected by a sectional concrete path with a larger area of concrete paving immediately outside the South Porch. There is a single shallow step up into the South Porch. Once inside the porch, there is level access to the nave, north aisle and the base of the tower. The west door access is used only on occasions.



Above: The single step up into the South Porch which is the primary day-to-day entrance into the church.

6 THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

Southwest churchyard entrance and remodelled path

- 6.1. The proposal here is to lower the ground and remodel the path up to the South Porch. The churchyard walls will be locally rebuilt and the gates overhauled and reset at a lower level. The concrete path will be lifted and relaid at a gradient significantly less than 1in20. At the wall line, a band of new pennant stone will be laid and a drainage channel with soakaway installed. Cross refer to Drg Nos: 0281 – 014 & 022.

6.2.



The existing entrance in the southwest corner of the churchyard.

6.3.



Above: The existing concrete paths is laid with slabs which will be lifted and relaid.

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The eastern entrance with new handrails

- 6.4. To the steps at the east end of the churchyard, new painted galvanised steel handrails are proposed to both sides of the lower flight of steps and a new handrail on the southern side only of the short upper flight. The handrail is simply and traditionally detailed. Cross refer to Drg Nos: 0281 – 014 & 022.

6.5.



The existing gates in the eastern boundary.

6.6.



There is no handrail to assist with access up the steps.

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South Porch entrance

- 6.7. Immediately in front of the south porch, the existing concrete paving will be lifted, ground levels raised by approximately 100mm and new sandblasted Forest of Dean pennant paving laid. The new raised level will allow level access into the church. The boot scrapers will be reset. Adjacent grassed areas will be regraded. A new lantern to replace the existing bulkhead will be installed above the door with the light linked to a PIR to reduce its use. Cross refer to Drg No: 0281 – 014.

6.8.



Above: The South Porch with its existing step which limits access.

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Vestry door

- 6.9. The vestry door will become a dedicated alternative means of escape out of the church as well as being an alternative entrance. The stone walls and steps, which are in very poor condition, will be rebuilt and a new painted galvanised steel handrail will be installed on the south side of the steps. A new lantern needs to be installed above the door to assist with safe escape from the building and this will be linked to a PIR sensor. Cross refer to Drg No: 0281 – 021.

6.10.



Above: The existing steps up to the vestry.

6.11.



Above: The wall above the vestry door and the existing overgrown concrete path.

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Basement stair railings and gate

- 6.12. The exiting stair well down to the redundant boiler room is currently protected with a timber post and rail fence with chicken wire netting. The surrounding wall is capped with stone copings but these are dislodged. A new painted galvanised steel railing is proposed including a new lockable gate. The design comprises simple vertical railings are shown on the elevation drawings. These are sympathetic in design and capped with small finials similar to those found on the east churchyard entrance gates. Cross refer to Drg No: 0281 – 021.

6.13.



Above: The existing post and rail fencing with chicken wire.

6.14.



Above: Photos of the existing boiler room stair and fencing.

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Trench Arch Installation

- 6.15. As part of the re-ordering project for the interior of the church, the north aisle will be re-ordered and screened off from the nave with a new fully accessible WC constructed in the western half of the existing vestry. There is no mains drainage in the village and with limited opportunity for a Sewage Treatment Plant within the churchyard, a Trench Arch drainage system is proposed. The Trench Arch will run in an east-west direction parallel to the north aisle. Once installed and the ground reinstated, there will be no visual change in appearance.
- 6.16. A Licence will be applied for separately but a pre-application enquiry to the Environment Agency in September 2024 confirmed that a bespoke environmental permit to authorise the groundwater activity will be required. The pre-application checked for the presence of designated sites (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, etc.) in proximity to the proposed discharge and this search identified that at this stage, the screening checks were clear of any sensitive sites. Percolation tests have now also been undertaken and these confirm the ground conditions to be appropriate. Cross refer to Drg No: 0281 – 014.

6.17.



Above: The proposed location of the Trench Arch drainage system.

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7 SUMMARY

- 7.1. The proposed changes will cause negligible harm to the existing church or the setting of the church or adjacent listed buildings.
- 7.2. The new proposals are sensitively executed to make the building more accessible whilst also preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the area. This is in line with Policy D26 of the adopted Sedgemoor Local Plan.