

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SHED IN THE CHURCHYARD OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL, FORE STREET, BEER, DEVON, EX12 3JB

National Grid Reference: SY 22951 89368

Prepared by Chris Pickles 30 June 2021

SUMMARY

A proposal to construct a shed in the churchyard of the Church of St Michael in the village of Beer, Devon, has met with the approval and support of the Parochial Church Council of the parish of Beer and the approval and support of the Diocesan Advisory Committee of the Diocese of Exeter. Final approval has now been requested from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Exeter.

The shed will be a conventional timber framed and clad building with a shallow, pitched apex roof. The design is a large version of traditional garden shed type building, as is commonly found in the village.

To mitigate its visibility, the shed will be sited some 4m behind the line of the church frontage to reduce the overall impact of the structure. The shed would be located on an area of unused land on the southern side of the Church that is separated from the Church by an existing wide footpath. The ridge height of less than 4m above the church footpath is lower than the lowest guttering on the church.

The shed will not be visible from the public road.

The proposal involves no physical impact on the Church building itself and only very limited groundworks to achieve a level site on the gently sloping grassed area.

SCOPE

This statement has been prepared to assess the impact of proposals for the building of a shed in the churchyard of the Church of St Michael in Beer, Devon, listed grade II, and upon Beer Conservation Area.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL, LISTED GRADE II

STATUTORY DESIGNATION OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL - HISTORIC ENGLAND RECORD

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1306427

Date first listed: 19-Oct-1984

Parish church. 1877 by Hayward of Exeter. Coursed stone with freestone dressings and slate roofs. Large church in Early English/Decorated style. Nave with four-light Decorated west window. Multifoil round clerestory windows. Low north and south aisles with Decorated three-light windows. Chancel with Decorated five-light east window. North and south transepts. Tower at north-west corner in four stages, top stage with twin lancet bell openings with colonettes, embattled parapet and polygonal corner turret. Originally had a large stone spire with lucarnes. Vestibule across west end with three bay Early English arcade. Interior: Four bay north and south arcade with marble piers and foliated capitals. Chancel arch has marble shafts. Nave roof with arched braces to collars and wind braces. Contemporary furnishings including choir stalls and stone pulpit and font.

Listing NGR: SY2295189368

SETTING

The Church of St Michael is located on the east side of Fore Street, the main road through the village of Beer, Devon. The church's site is raised above the height of the road by some 2 metres and the church is set back from the edge of the road by some 9 metres.

In the churchyard on the north side of the Church is a wooden shed. The churchyard is bounded on the north side by a stone wall that is 2m and higher rising up the hillside. To the north of the churchyard is Church Hill, a steep, narrow and unfrequented roadway, and on the north side of this is the village hall (Mariners' Hall).

On its east side the churchyard rises very steeply behind the Church towards the garden of a large private residence (St Michael's Mount, unlisted).

The churchyard is bounded on its south side by a building that is used as a restaurant (The Smugglers Kitchen, unlisted), which has no windows or openings giving onto the churchyard.

To the west side of the church and churchyard is Fore Street, the main street through Beer village.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The spire of the Church was removed in 1963.

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL UPON THE CHURCH

The proposed shed would have no impact on the Church building itself. Tucked along the south side of the church in an area of the churchyard that is well concealed and hardly used, it is not felt that the shed will affect the setting of the listed church. The shed would not be visible from the road. It is not felt that the proposal would cause any harm to the heritage significance of the parish Church of St Michael, listed grade II.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEER CONSERVATION AREA

Beer has its historic core designated as a conservation area. The conservation area accords roughly with the area of the village that had been developed by the late 19th century. The Church of St Michael is a key feature of the Conservation Area and is a general focal point for the village both visually and for the village activities that are held in the church which extend beyond church services to include school services and Christmas fairs and even events for Beer Regatta if the weather is bad. The church is an important feature in the village and conservation area. The site for the proposed Beer Men's Shed is by contrast an under-utilised space that cannot be seen from Fore Street and is even well concealed from the raised entrance forecourt of the church. Siting the shed on the south side of the church, in a location where it is invisible from Fore Street and most other places, will make it virtually invisible overall, yet at the heart of the village. It is considered that the shed will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

Beer village is small and the properties in the centre of the village are located tightly together. There is no space at all in the village for any additional community facilities. The churchyard to the south of the Church is currently only accessed by members of the congregation who have mobility difficulties and need step-free access to the Church via its rear door, and by undertakers using the rear door of the church during funerals.

The proposed site for the shed would make use of land within the churchyard that is currently derelict and unused for any purpose. The Church currently has to bear the cost of regularly clearing weeds and other vegetation from the site.

The proposed shed will make better use of the location. It will provide an additional and much-needed facility that will be of assistance to the local community.

Most importantly, the provision of the shed will allow double the number of men in the village to receive support from the Beer Men's Shed. The demand from more men to join the Association is proven by the waiting list which we will be pleased to provide to the Council as evidence for the demand for the facility. Men's mental health is recognised as an area that is under-supported; this project goes some way to providing the support that is greatly needed in the Beer area.

There are strong public benefits offered by the Beer Men's Shed proposal that outweigh any harm that others may consider could be caused by the proposal.