

CHURCH OF ST MARY BENTWORTH



Proposed Facilities

**Design & Access Statement
including Heritage Statement**

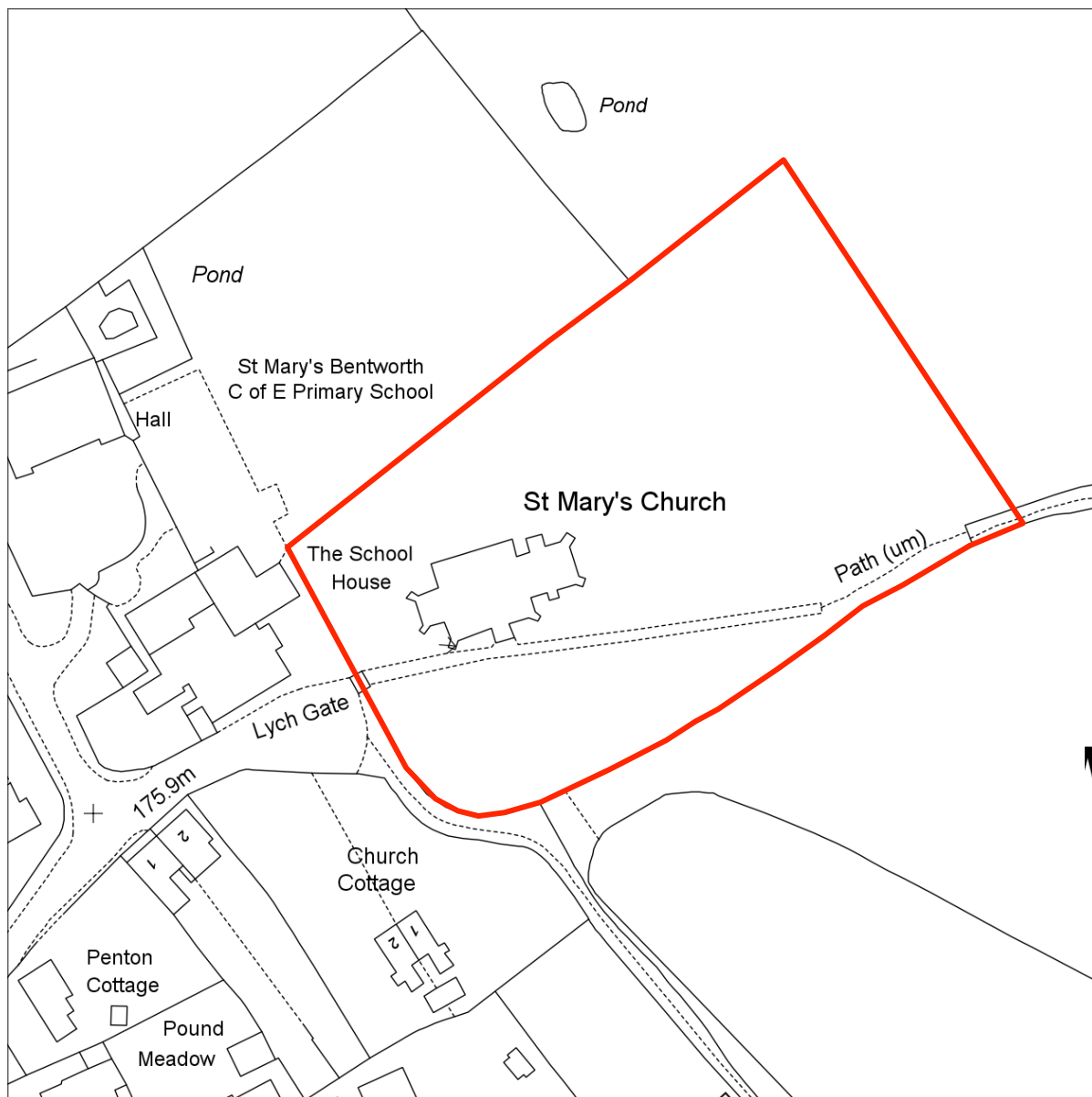
CTA

Carey-Thomas Architecture Ltd
June 2021

Draft Design and Access Statement

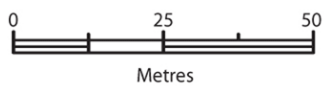
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Bentworth, Alton

Scale 1:1250



LOCATION PLAN

PROPOSED FACILITIES - 218.1

Pre-Application Design and Access Statement - June 2021

1.00 HERITAGE STATEMENT

1.01 The church is listed Grade II*. The listing entry is as follows:

Parish church. Late C12, early and late C13, restoration of 1849 and 1891. Flint walls and tiled roof. Aisleless chancel with small Victorian north vestry, nave with north and south aisles, west tower and south porch. The nave arcade (c1175) has 4 pointed Transitional arches, resting on Norman cylindrical columns with scalloped caps. The C13 chancel has 2 narrow lancets (c1200) on the north side, and 2 wider lancets (c1250) on each side of a priest's door on the south side, the triple lancets of the east window being framed (inside) in a hoodmould with dog-tooth ornament resting on slender jamb shafts with moulded caps; to the south of the east window is a piscina with trefoil head and short jamb-shafts: Perpendicular tower arch. The C13 table-top font has cusped recesses on the sides and the tub support, and 4 separate corner shafts with moulded caps and base; the oak cover is a panelled pyramid with a ball finial, and fascia around the base with raised letters "I am given by Martha Hunt Anna 1605". There are several wall monuments; one of 1606 to Nicholas Holdip, others of the late C18 and early C19, and some in similar traditional style of the early C20. Within the tower are the corner timber supports to the belfry. Externally, the building is Victorian, with plain roofs, flint walls with stone dressings; stepped buttresses, plinth, and in the nave coubled traceried lights. The bold west tower (1891) has diagonal buttresses with an elaborate arrangement of steps (some with gabled ornamentation), and at the top is a timber turret, surmounted by a broach spire.

Listing NGR: SU6681340702

- 1.02 Despite its age, the church's external appearance has been heavily influenced by the Victorian works of 1849, when most of the windows were renewed, and of 1879 when the north aisle was rebuilt. The works of 1879 incorporated the stone surround to a round headed doorway dating from the building's first construction. Internally, this is reflected by a stone surround, slightly wider, and the infill incorporates fragments of Norman enrichments. These probably came from the parts that were taken down at this time. It is not known how much of the original masonry was incorporated in the reconstruction of the aisle. The roofs were re-covered with machine made clay tiles in the 1980s.
- 1.03 The most striking feature internally is the late Norman nave arcades. These have thick round columns with multi-scalloped capitals. The arches which they support are 'transitional' in being slightly pointed, as is the chancel arch. It is these that have warranted the building's classification as Grade II*. Otherwise, most internal details and fittings are Victorian.
- 1.04 The Chancel appears to be of slightly later date than the nave. It has an Early English flavour, the quality of which may be due to the ownership of the manor and advowson of the Bishop of Rouen, who visited Bentworth in 1248. The large stone reredos of 1868 seeks to reflect this style.
- 1.05 Pevsner, in the latest edition of 'The Buildings of England', notes that the belfry, spire, and tower buttresses are the work of Aston Webb, who later became famous through his work at the

Victoria and Albert Museum, the Admiralty Arch and Buckingham Palace. There have been weathering problems to the belfry, which shows signs of remedial work from the 1980s. Further repair works are currently in progress.

1.06 The visitor's first impressions of the interior are of its dignity and calmness, the Norman columns and arches being the principal architectural elements. Despite the loftiness of the Nave, these maintain a more human scale. The Nave itself is rather dark due to its height and the absence of a west window, and relies on daylight from the Aisles. A partitioned area at the west end of the north aisle adds to the gloominess of this part of the church.

1.07 The church is centrally located within the linear village, although not visible from the main thoroughfares of Village Street and Holt End Lane. The extended churchyard backs onto fields. The village school is adjacent, and beyond that the Village Hall.

2.00 BACKGROUND TO THIS PROPOSAL

2.01 In recent years the village school has increased its capacity. As a result, the Village Hall is now used almost exclusively by the school, which does not have its own dedicated facility. As a result, the Hall is all but unavailable for public events.

2.02 This state of affairs has coincided with a dwindling congregation and with a far-reaching parish reorganisation, so that Bentworth and several neighbouring parishes have been combined with the Parish of the Resurrection in Alton. The effect of this is that services in Bentworth have been restricted to one per month, due to be increased to two from September. Typical congregation numbers are about 25.

2.03 The PCC have come to the conclusion that in order to keep the church in use, as well as to overcome the lack of available communal meeting facilities, it will be necessary to widen the range of events that the church will be capable of hosting. The church could then once again (as in medieval times) serve as the community hub of the village. As a minimum, the following are considered to be essential in achieving this aim:

- A toilet designed to full disabled standards.
- A kitchen for the storage of crockery and preparation of beverages and snacks.
- A servery for serving of refreshments.
- A more suitable location for cleaning equipment etc.
- A cleared space capable of accommodating a variety of layouts and types of event, unobstructed by pews.

3.00 EXISTING LAYOUT; OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.01 In common with many churches in the locality, the interior is closely packed with pews. The South Aisle was cleared of pews some years ago: the font is located here and there is a subsidiary altar at the west end of this. At the west end of the North Aisle there is a partitioned space used for storage of cleaning and flower arranging equipment. The Nave and Aisles are otherwise tightly packed with pews, the aim apparently being to fit in as many people as possible. At the west end of the Nave some of the pews measure less than 700mm from pew to pew.

3.02 Other spaces include the Ringing Chamber, situated under the tower with access from behind the organ, and the Vestry which is accessed from the north side of the Chancel.

The range of options considered for accommodating the new facilities included the following:

1. Within the building.
2. Partly within the building, partly within a new structure
3. Wholly within a new structure.

- 3.03 Option 1 - within the building.
This would entail more partitioning within the North Aisle, as there are no other suitable spaces. It would be visually disruptive, and the PCC (and the wider public) were particularly keen to avoid the risk of smells and other embarrassments associated with these facilities. The partitions would also obscure some of the windows which are needed for daylight into the Nave.
- 2.04 Option 2 - Partly within the building, partly in an extension.
The blocked-in doorway in the North Aisle could provide a means of access into a new structure without compromising any part of the building other than the need to cut through the large diameter cast iron heating pipes that run against the north wall. The historic fragments could easily be re-sited elsewhere. Under this scenario, the partitioned space in the North Aisle would remain, probably as a servery, and storage and WC could be sited in a new structure. Being on the north side of the church this would not be seen readily from most public viewpoints.
- 3.05 Option 3 - Wholly within a new structure.
The blocked-in doorway would be used for access to the new accommodation. The existing partitioned area would be cleared and could provide space for serving food and beverages prepared in the new accommodation. Removal of the partitions would improve daylighting into the Nave. This is the PCC's preferred strategy.
- 4.00 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT OF OPTION 3
- 4.01 For a new structure, two approaches have been considered.
- A Wrapping around part of the North Aisle and in-filling the angle between the North aisle and the north side of the Tower; and
B A free standing structure on the north side of the church.
- 4.02 Option A
A passageway against the Aisle wall would necessarily involve some obscuring to the windows in that part, as would infilling between Aisle and Tower. There would be a quite radical change to the church's west elevation as viewed from the main approach to the building.
- 4.03 Option B
A freestanding structure would leave all of the windows unobstructed; it would be of a smaller gross internal area; and it would have less visual impact from the approach to the building than Option A. It could be designed so as to be expressed as a clearly modern intervention without the risk of being confused with the historic structure; however it would be constrained dimensionally by the presence of a public footpath which runs roughly parallel to the north-west boundary of the churchyard.
- 5.00 THE PROPOSAL
- 5.01 This is based on Option B. A simple structure would be joined to the church by a glazed link that would maintain a clear separation between old and new. The link could also provide a separate means of access to the new structure without the need to pass through the church, as well as a possible means of escape.
- 5.02 The new structure would be made from pre-fabricated structural insulated panels (SIPS) which could be much thinner than conventional masonry and could be set onto a concrete raft requiring very little excavation, thereby minimising the effect of the new work on any archaeological remains. The panel construction would maximise the potential floor area and would minimise the time required on site work. Externally the panels would be clad in pre-patinated zinc with expressed joints, harmonising in colour with the flint and stone of the

church. Windows would be metal framed, coloured dark grey and set flush with the zinc cladding.

5.03 The extension would be served by an existing foul drain connected to the school system, which at present terminates adjacent to the west end of the north aisle.

5.04 The plan has been developed so as to allow approximately 2.6m clearance between the extension and existing head stones north of this: amply sufficient for the public footpath although a slight 'kink' will be required. Actually the County Council footpath plan is rather imprecise, and there is no clear definition on the ground as to the footpath's precise alignment. It remains to be seen whether a footpath diversion will be required.

5.05 Within the church it has been decided to remove the majority of pews west of the entrance door. This would leave a total cleared space measuring about 6 metres from east to west, and 12 metres from north to south. Retaining the pews immediately west of the entrance would maintain the feel of a pewed church while still offering a reasonably generous space for events other than church services. Various options are being considered for stackable chairs or portable pews for this area.

5.06 Other works in conjunction with those described above would include improvements to the heating and lighting systems, provision of a draught lobby at the main entrance, and of a carpet finish within the area to be cleared of pews.

6.00 ACCESS

6.01 The extension will be at the same floor level as the church interior, and has been designed to cater for wheelchair access to both the WC and the kitchen.

6.02 The external door in the linking structure will provide a secondary egress from the building in case of emergency. At present, only the narrow south door in the chancel can provide a secondary means of escape.

7.00 PLANNING STATEMENT

7.01 Sections 15 and 16 of the NPPF deal with the natural and historic environment, and it is acknowledged that the local authority must base any planning decisions upon the stipulations contained therein.

7.02 In Section 15 it is a requirement that 'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment', and that they should minimise impacts on, and provide net gains for biodiversity.
It is contended that in this case there would be a minimal if any impact on the local biodiversity.

7.03 In Section 16 it is stated that where a development would lead to 'substantial harm' to a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused.
It goes on to state that 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
It is contended that in this case, such harm would not result.

7.04 Regard has been paid to the Countryside and Heritage policies in the Local Plan, in particular the following:
C 6 - Planning permission will not be granted for development that would damage or destroy one or more trees.....in a conservation area.....' In this case although it will be necessary to trim

some lower branches, no harm would be caused by this development.

HE 2 - Alterations and extensions to buildings. These must sympathetic to the design, scale and character of the original building.

HE4 - Development in Conservation Areas will only be permitted where it would 'preserve or enhance' the character or appearance of the area'. Particular regard must be paid to scale, design and form.

HE10 - Development involving proposals to extend or alter a listed building.

HE12 - Development affecting the setting of a listed building.

HE 17 - Development adversely affecting important archaeological sites.

HE 19 - Development adversely affecting the character and setting or the historical, ecological and archaeological value of ancient tracks and lanes. In this case a public footpath will be affected to the extent that a minor diversion will be required.

8.00 SUMMARY

8.01 The new facilities would enable the church to function as a focus for village life. At the same time any income generated would help to ensure the upkeep of this historic and well-loved building.

8.02 This proposal would entail the minimum of alteration to the historic structure, and would be 'reversible' in the sense that the old doorway could once again be blocked up and the new structure removed without any further disruption.

8.03 Visually, The new structure would be designed to be recessive as compared with the old, while being clearly of its time. It would not interfere with the principal views of the church.

APPENDIX I - PHOTOGRAPHS (1)



1 General view from the south-west. The entrance pathway shows in the foreground. From this aspect the North Aisle is not visible.



2 West end of the North Aisle. The extension would project into the space on the left of the building. There would be enough clearance for the public footpath to pass alongside.



3 North side of the North Aisle. It is planned to utilise the old doorway for access to the extension.



4 North Aisle viewed from the east. The enclosure in the foreground is above the oil tank



5 General view of north side of the church, viewed from the east: Chancel and Vestry in foreground.

APPENDIX I - PHOTOGRAPHS (2)



1 Interior looking east. The modest scale of the arcade offsets the loftiness of the roof.



2 West end of the Nave. It is planned to install foldable screens at the base of the organ for use in certain types of event.



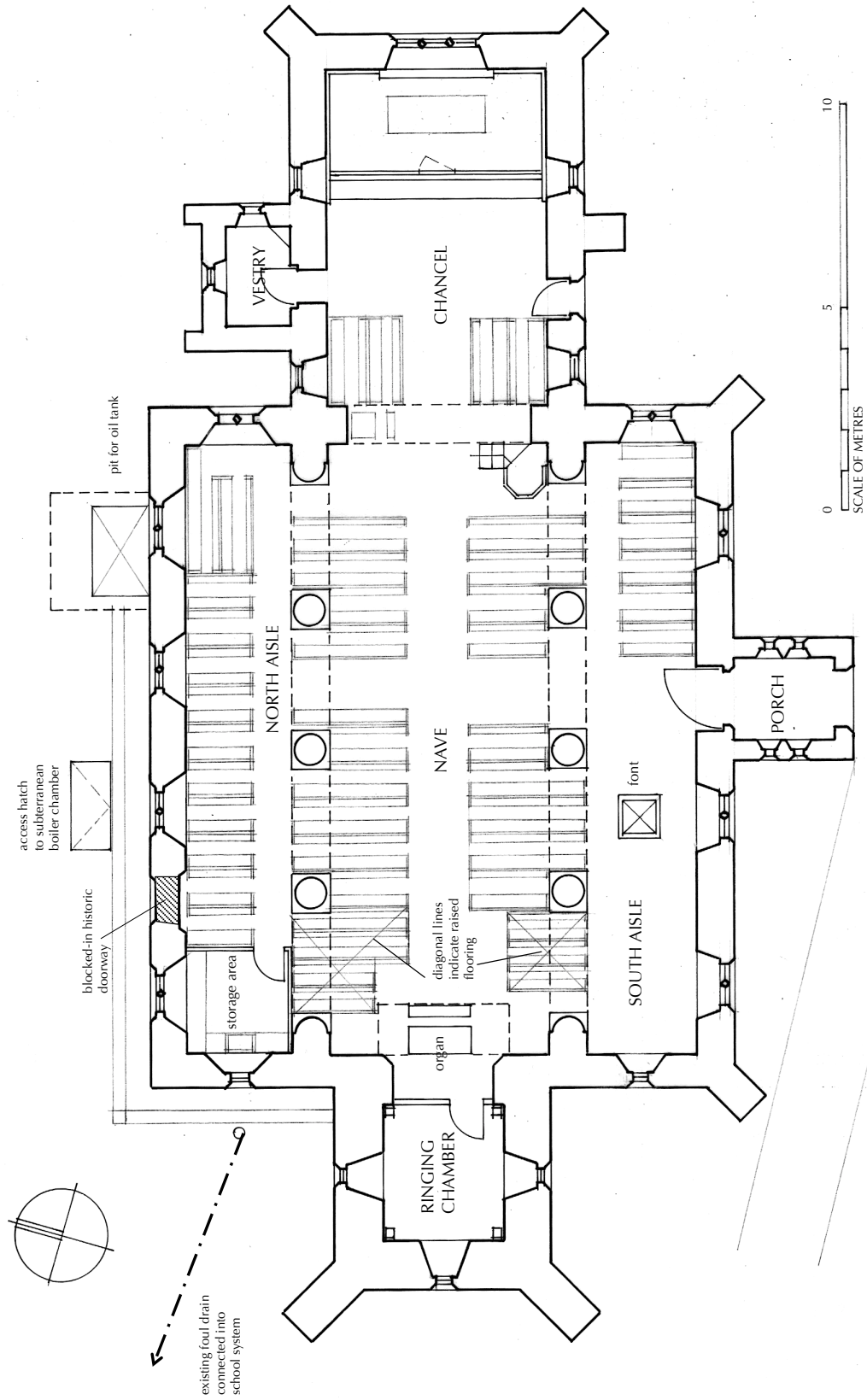
3 Partitioned area at west end of the North Aisle. Its removal would admit more natural light into the Nave.



4 Interior of partitioned area.

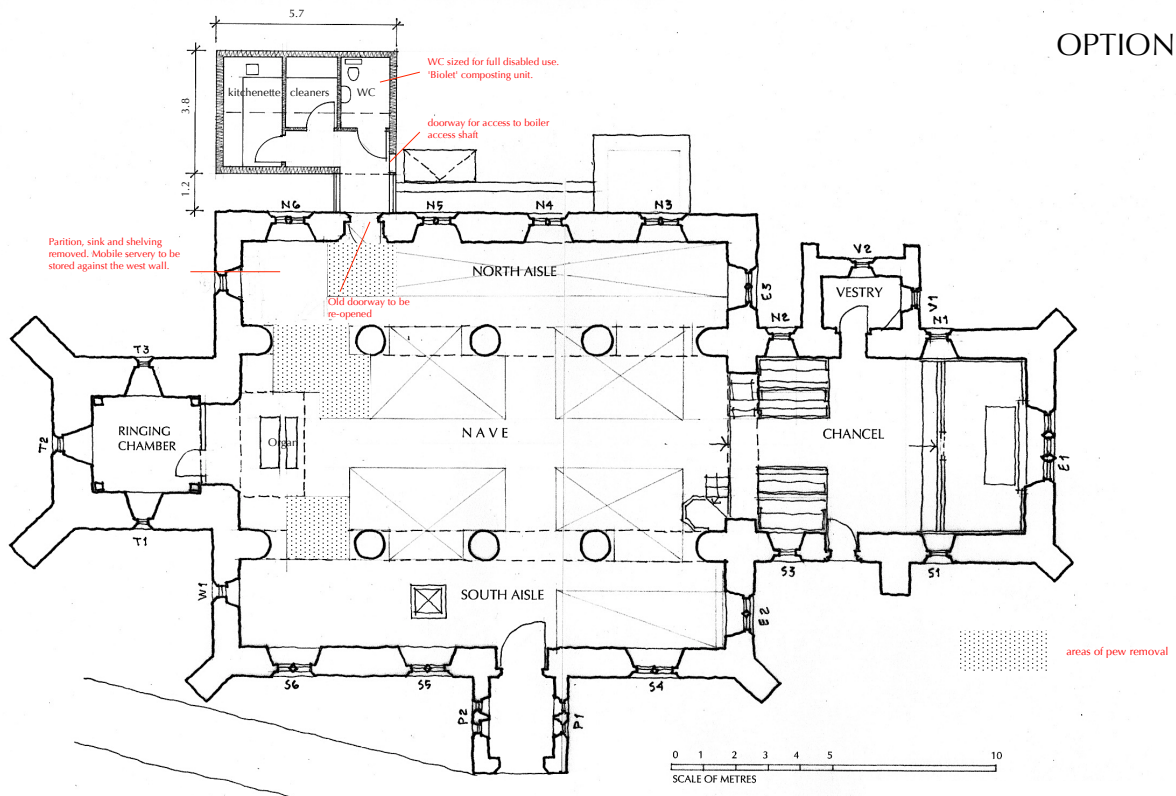


5 Blocked-in doorway in the North Aisle. Fragments of Norman masonry have been embedded in the wall



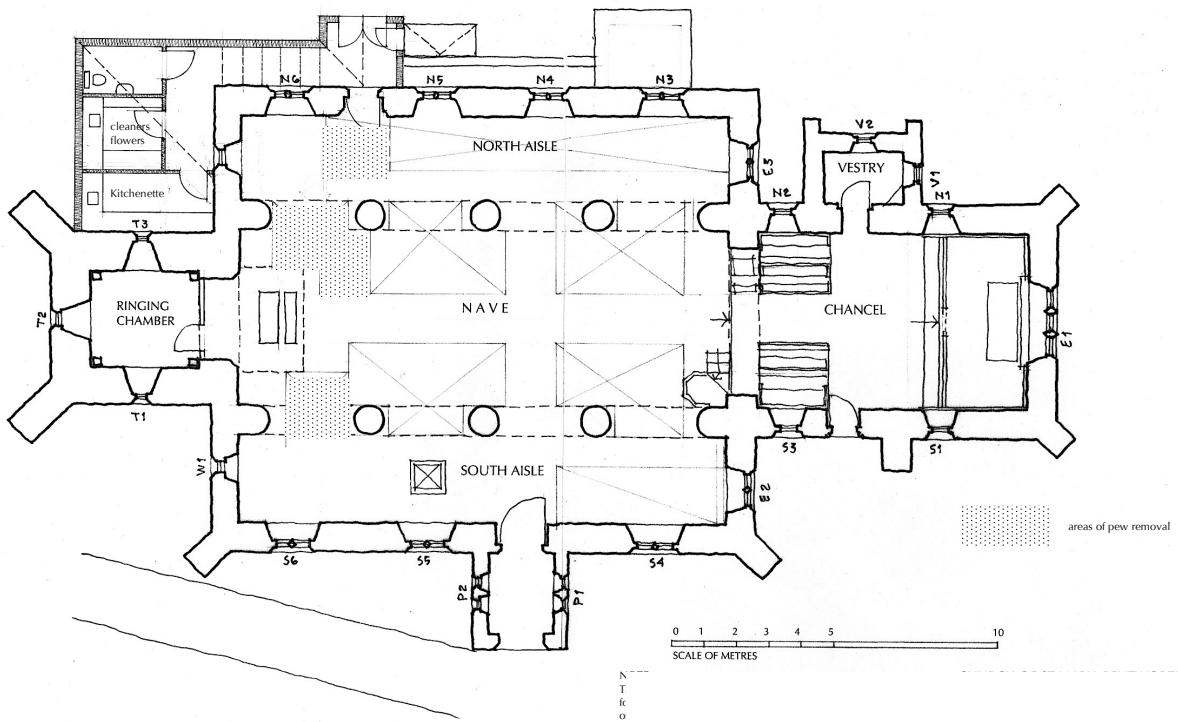
FLOOR PLAN - AS EXISTING

OPTION B

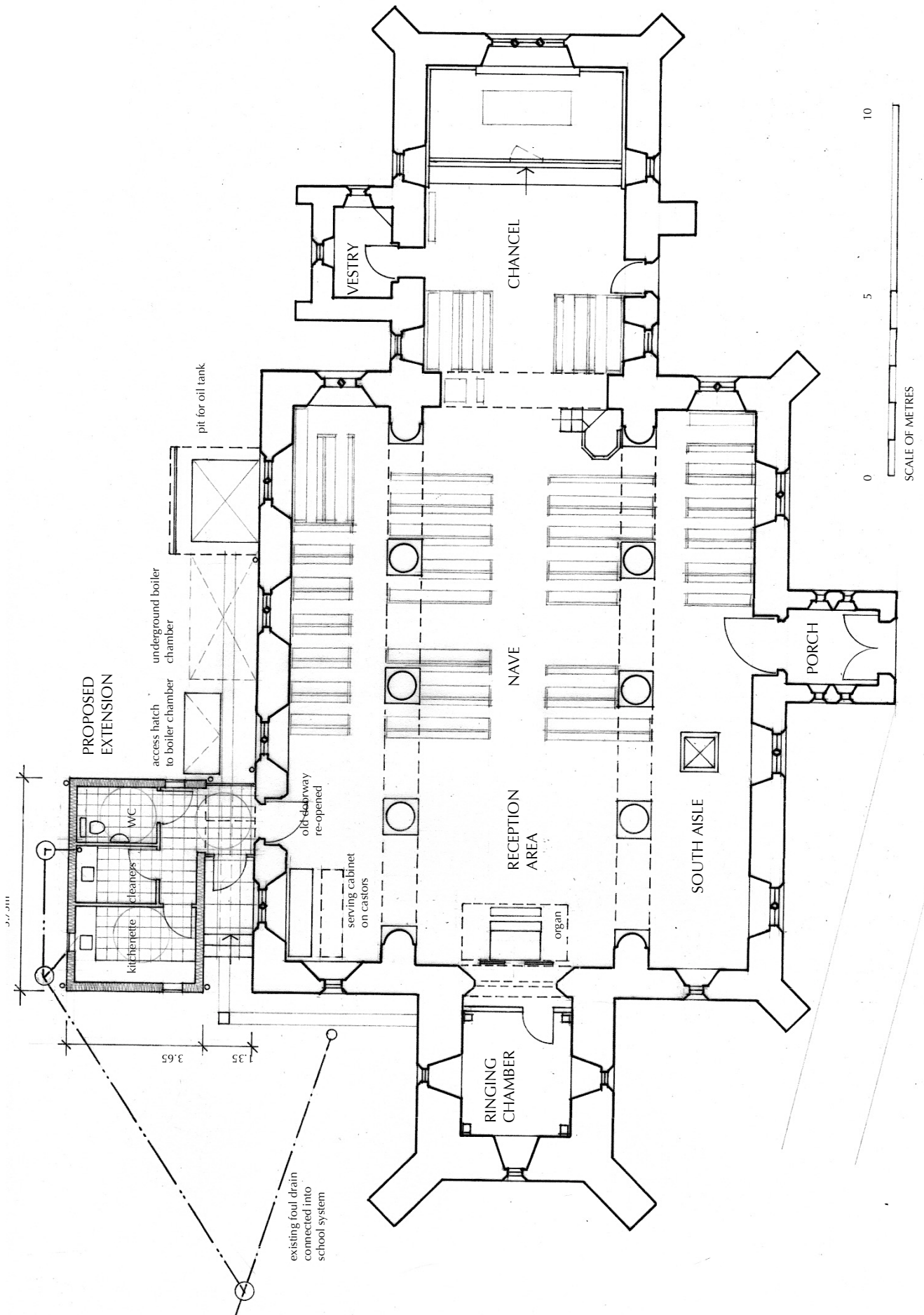


THE PREFERRED OPTION

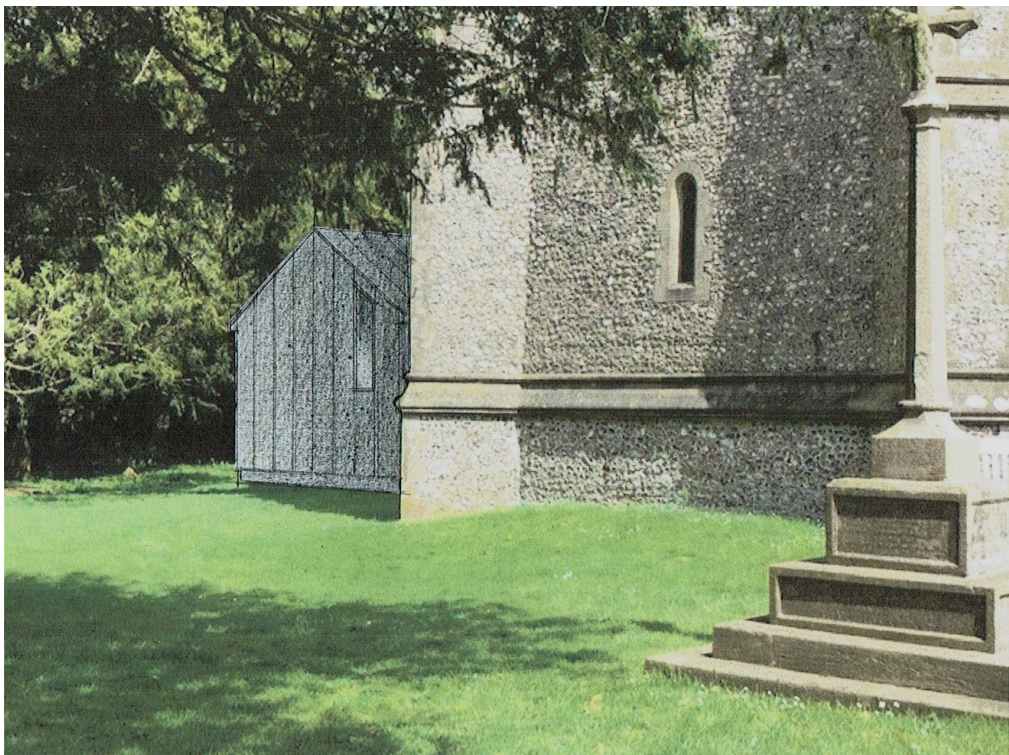
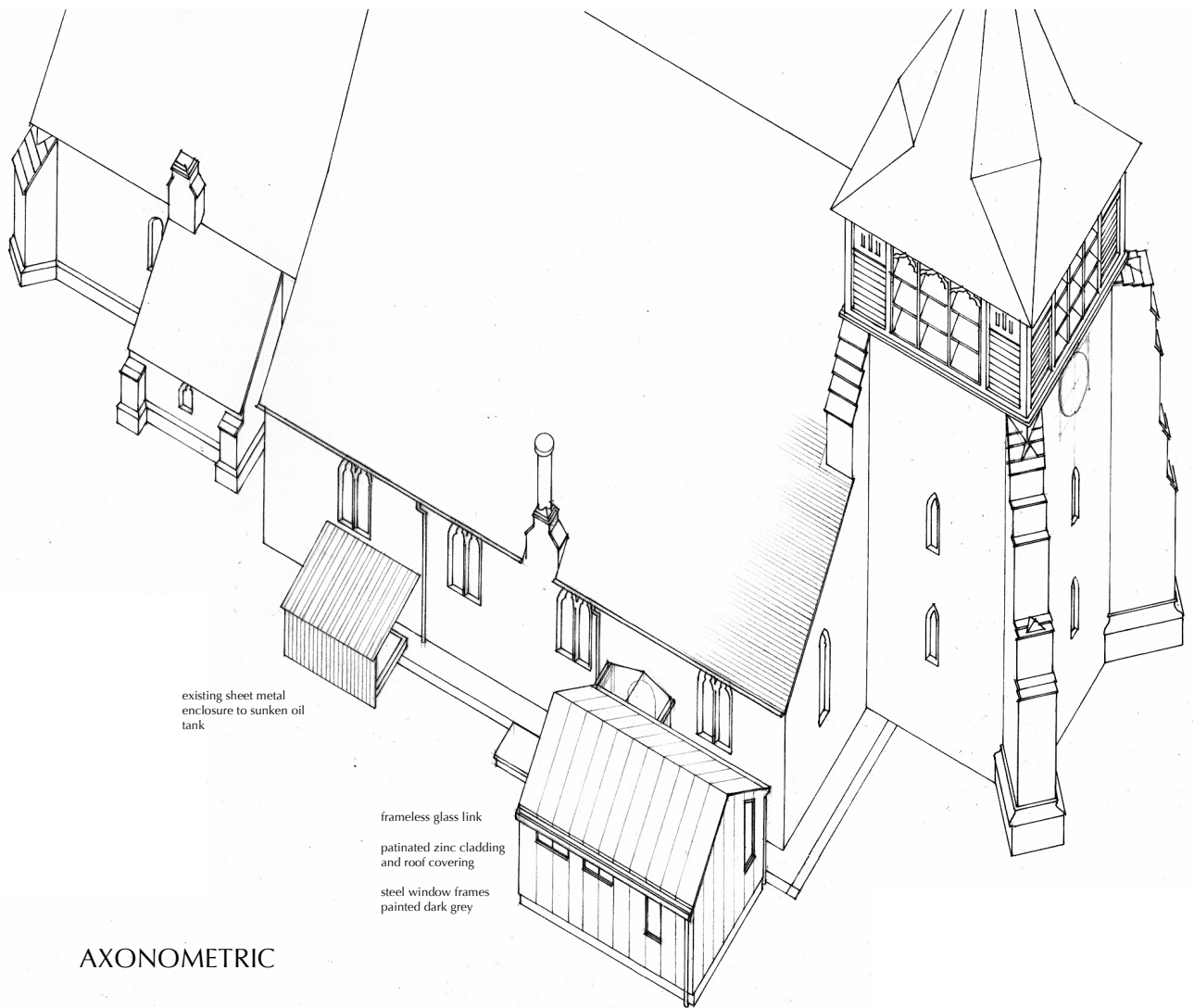
OPTION A



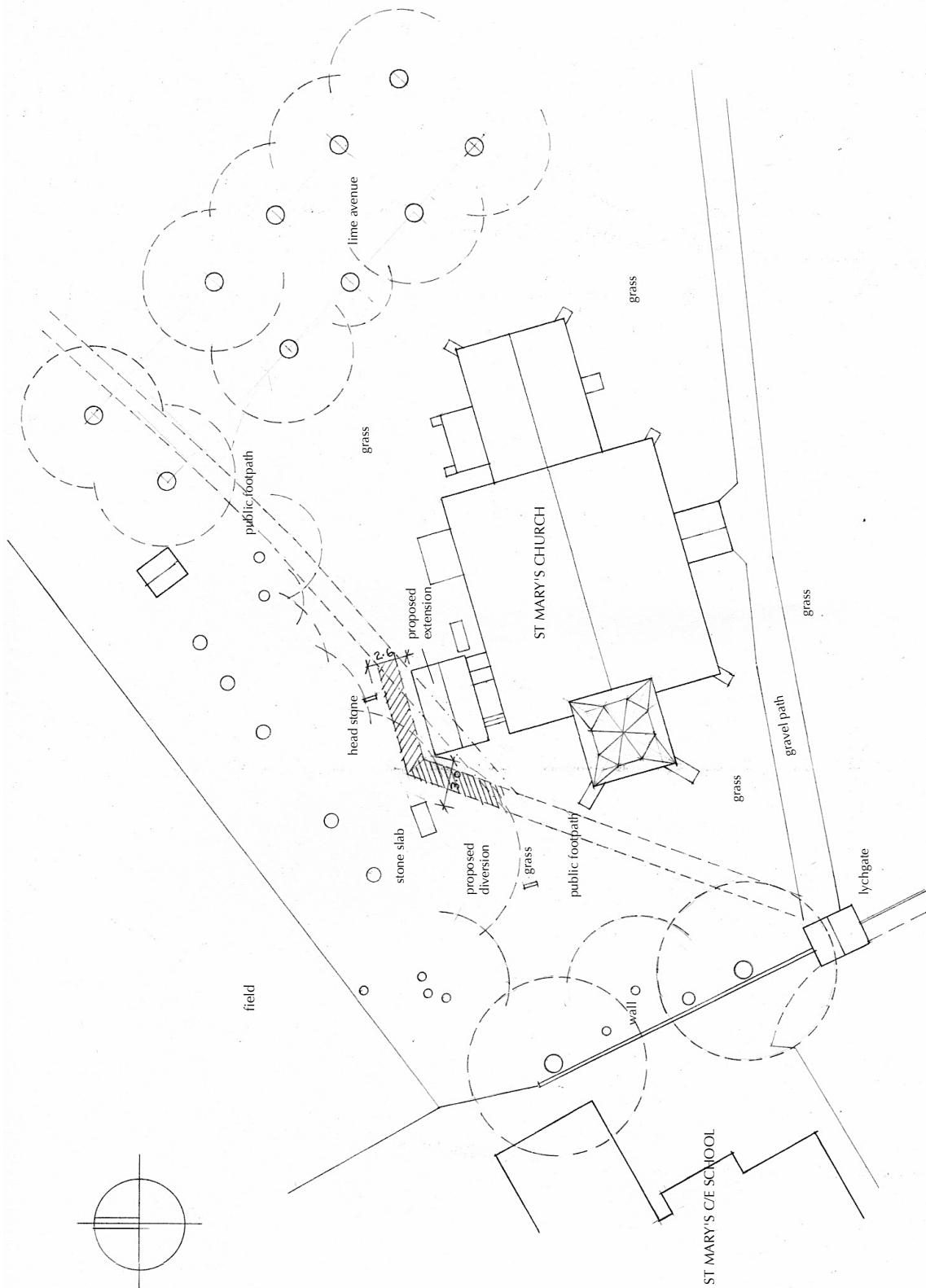
THE REJECTED OPTION



THE PREFERRED OPTION - AS DEVELOPED



VISUALISATION - as viewed from lychgate



SITE PLAN, SHOWING FOOTPATH