

Planning Application 21/01265/FUL:

External works to provide level access to the Church of St Etheldreda and the Holy Trinity, Fair Green, Reach, Cambridge CB25 0JD

Condition 5: Scheme of Biodiversity Improvement

Introduction

The Victorian church at Reach stands in a small churchyard on Fair Green in the centre of the village. Thanks to a generous legacy, a project is now underway to make various improvements to the church building and some adjustments to the entrance path to improve disabled access, the latter being the subject of this planning permission.

The Parish of Burwell with Reach also includes the much larger church and churchyard of St Mary's in Burwell. During the last 2 years, a team of people with significant ecological expertise has been working on St Mary's churchyard, in collaboration with other ecological groups in the village and has gained a Bronze Churchyard Conservation Award as part of a scheme run by Ely Diocese in association with The Wildlife Trust. This team has now extended its interest to Reach churchyard and has recruited two new members who live in Reach, one of whom is a landscape gardener. They have produced this scheme and will oversee its implementation.

Description of the Site

The site consists of a path round the church with a larger area at the back (see plan). The boundaries are mainly walls, although the north-east corner is open to fields with views across the fen. The south-eastern boundary is dominated by a ruined arch from a former church that recently underwent a major conservation project and is a popular local landmark.

Apart from the path, which is mostly aged gravel, the area is covered by grass. For many years it was regularly mown, but during the lockdown for COVID 19, it was left unmown and various wildflowers were observed (see plan). There are a few small trees and shrubs and one larger cherry tree.

The construction of a new ramped path, together with the digging required to bring water, sewage and electricity into the building, will disrupt the north-west corner of the site, but the rest will only be disturbed to the extent that the builders will use it for their storage areas and welfare units.

There is a longstanding, strong colony of bees, *apis mellifera*, possibly the Italian strain rather than the native English, in the roof under the apse. This is being given due consideration during the redevelopment works and will be crucial for pollination.

Proposed Scheme of Improvement and Management

- **Mowing plan**

Whilst maintaining a clear path and an edge round the church, the mowing of areas 1,2 and 3 and possibly other areas will be delayed during the first year to monitor the wildflowers that appear naturally. It is felt that area 2 on the south side of the church will produce best results if left uncut. Depending on what is discovered, mowing will then be planned to allow natural wildflowers to set seed and become established.

- **Planting**

Herbs to attract insects, eg thyme, fennel, lavender will be planted in an area north of the arch, possibly using stone from a redundant pulpit removed from the church to make raised beds.

Spring bulbs– eg snowdrop, native bluebells, wild daffodils, wood anemone, will be planted in suitable areas.

The nettle patch to the south of the arch will be maintained.

- **Trees and Shrubs**

The existing trees and shrubs will be maintained and pruned as required. Additional native shrubs may be added as the site matures.

- **Habitat piles**

Areas will be identified for piles of clippings and prunings to provide habitats for insects, small reptiles and mammals. They will be monitored over time to identify the species that use them. There is an existing log-pile near the road, which will be retained, but may possibly be re-sited to a less formal part of the grounds.

- **Bird and bat boxes**

A bird box will be mounted on the large cherry tree in the north-east part of the churchyard, which is the only tree suitable at present. Other boxes might possibly be mounted high on the church wall. Swift boxes and bat boxes will also be considered. Bird feeders are a possibility but would need more maintenance.

Future plans

The ground behind Reach church has not been greatly used in the past, but it is an attractive site and we plan to include a seating area and maintain it in the future as a pleasant resource for users of the church and the wider community. Our experiences in Burwell have taught us how maintaining the churchyard with biodiversity in mind not only produces a beautiful environment, but also attracts a great deal of interest from the general public. Our plan is to maintain Reach churchyard along the same lines and, if possible, to gain a Churchyard Conservation award there too. We also hope that, in the future, it may be possible to register the churchyard under the Quiet Garden Movement, which aims to identify beautiful places for reflection and rest <https://quietgarden.org>.

The builders expect to be on site until mid-late October 2022 and so implementation of the biodiversity improvement scheme will start after that.

January 2022

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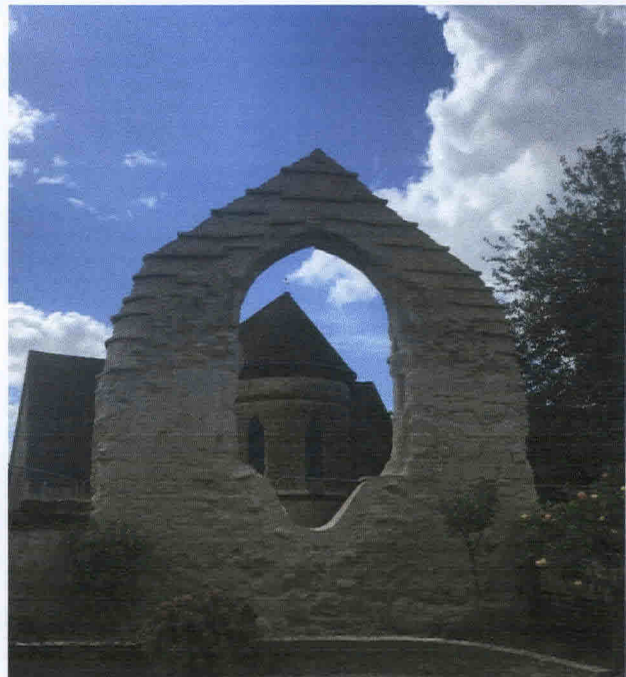
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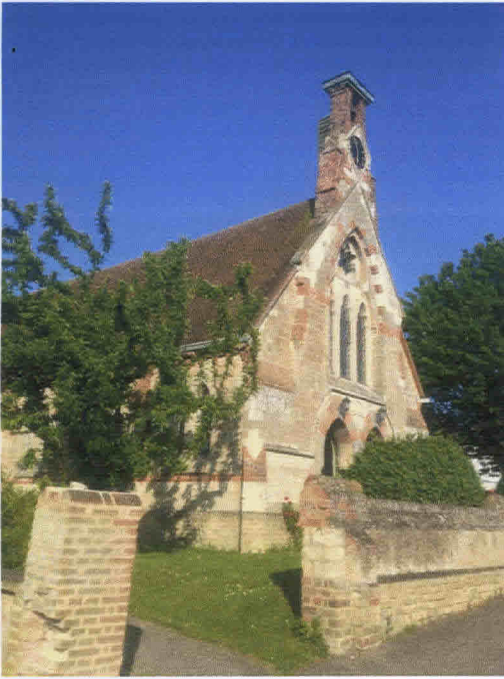
View of back of church (east end), looking south to north



Ox-eye daisies at back of church



View of church through the arch from the neighbour's garden. Cherry tree on right



View from road including crab apple

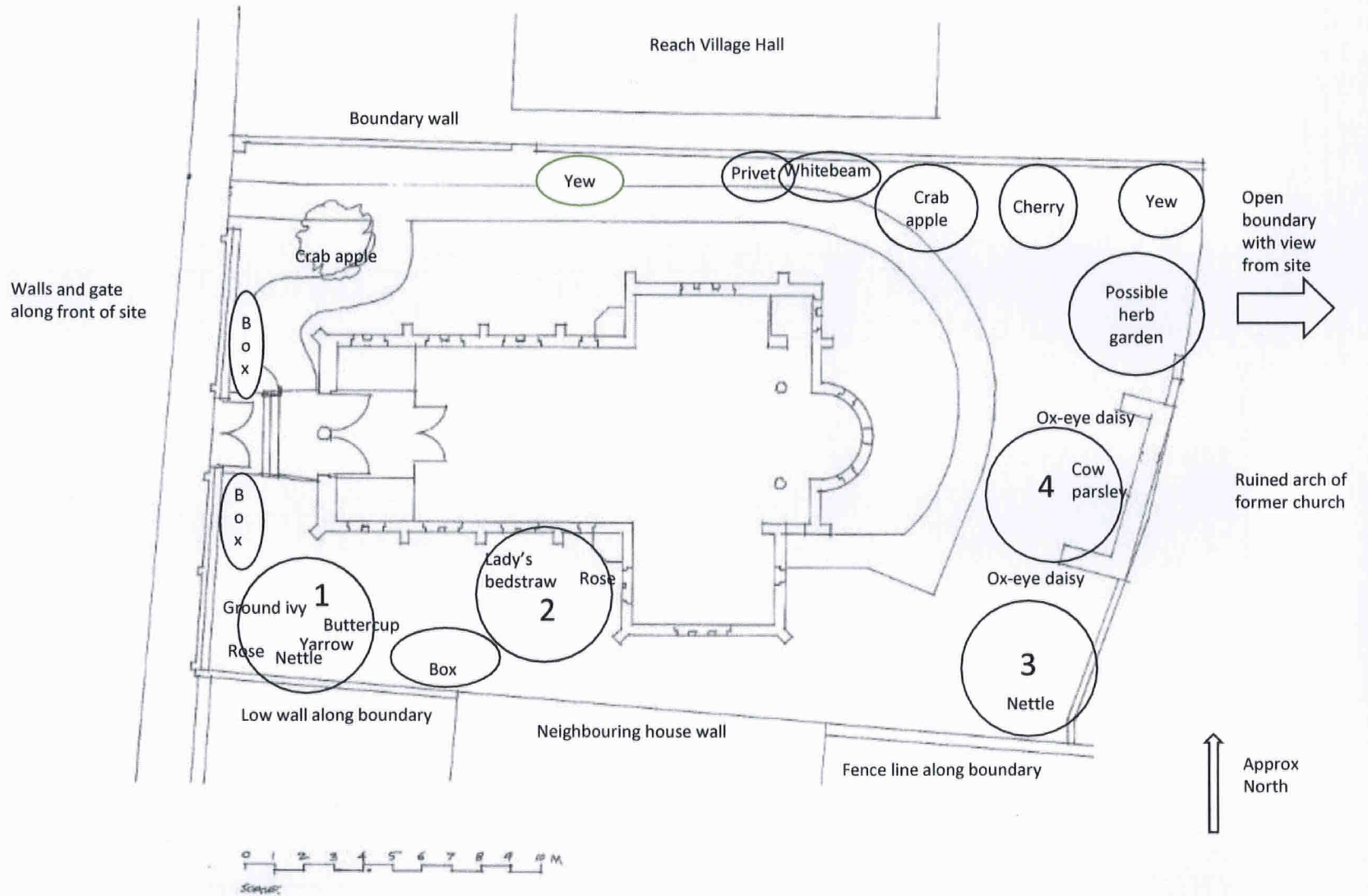


Arch (south east side) and cherry tree



Path on north side looking east to west

St Etheldreda's,
Reach



Plan based on drawing by Freeland
Rees Roberts Architects (Jan 2021)

NB PLANTING IS NOT TO SCALE!
Jan 2022