

## DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed formation of access to raised area of land outside the churchyard to include an opening in a Grade II listed stone wall, with a new gate and ramp with associated landscaping.



St Nicholas Church,  
London Road,  
Arundel,  
West Sussex,  
BN18 9AT

for

The Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas, Arundel

Project No: 501.J

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## I. Introduction

- I.1. This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared to inform and support the enclosed application for Planning and Listed Building Consent. This has been submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority by the PCC of St Nicholas Church, Arundel in accordance with Planning Policy SD12. The application is for works to provide inclusive access to a currently unused, raised area of land with high potential for parish and community benefit.
- I.2. A similar proposal was granted planning and listed building consent on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022 under applications SDNP/21/05600/FUL and SDNP/21/0560/LIS. This was for a more extensive proposal including a gate, ramp and steps.
- I.3. This application seeks permission to relocate the ramp element to more beneficial position to improve access, maximise the amenity space available and reduce the need for retaining structures. The position is one previously indicated as preferential by the case officer for the approved application.
- I.4. The works comprise formation of an opening in an existing stone wall that encloses the raised area of land and provision of a new gate for access. Excavation will be required to lay a ramp up to the higher level with a graded bank either side. Low level planting is proposed to enhance the appearance of the raised area and act as a barrier to the edges. Such planting was approved under the previous application's landscaping plan.
- I.5. The area of land is outside of the churchyard and is therefore not within the curtilage of the Grade I listed church (list no: 1027914). The lower walls which enclose the south and east edges of this area are designated under a separate Grade II Listing (list no: 1353744). It is the masonry of these walls which is proposed for alteration.
- I.6. The area is enclosed to the north by the separately listed gateway and adjacent southern wall of the churchyard (list no: 1353743 & 1027915) and to the west by the large boundary wall with the gardens of Arundel Castle (list no: 1353744). No works are proposed to these structures.
- I.7. The church of St Nicholas is located on the northern edge of the town and adjacent to the London Road which leads from the High Street, up the hill and north out of Arundel. The raised area of land is directly adjacent to the road and south of the churchyard.
- I.8. The northern edge of London road also demarks the boundary of the South Downs National Park. The application site, churchyard and castle grounds are all within the boundary. The main area of the town is within the Arun District Council Local Authority.
- I.9. The site is located in the centre of the Arundel Conservation area. This encompasses the entirety of the historic town going south as far as the river as well the grounds of Arundel Castle to the north. The castle grounds are part of the wider Norfolk Estate. The raised area of land in question is owned by the Angmering Park Estate; A branch of the former Norfolk estate prior to division amongst trustees of the previous Duke.
- I.10. The raised area of land has been vacant since its formation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. No safe or dedicated access has ever been provided and it has therefore been populated only with maintained vegetation. In 2019 application SDNP/19/00559/TCA was granted permission to remove the existing diseased and dying Mock Acacia trees and other mature shrubs. This has now been carried out and the land made ready for grass seeding as approved in October 2021.
- I.11. In 2017 the Trustees of the Angmering Park Estate granted provisional permission for long term access to the raised area of land. This is for use by the PCC of St Nicholas Church for Parish and community events.

- 1.12. With the tree clearance now complete it has become necessary to consider proposals for a permanent, dedicated and safe access to the site. This is ahead of the planned Parish event in June 2024 which will coincide with the annual Festival of Flowers at Corpus Christi celebrated by the Cathedral.
- 1.13. The new gate location is positioned to improve shared access for visitors to both St Nicholas and the cathedral.

## **2. Description of the site, setting and significance.**

- 2.1. The raised area of land that comprises the application site has an area of 660m<sup>2</sup> it is an average 34m in length (west to east) and 15-20m in width from the south wall of the St Nicholas Churchyard out to the pavement on London road.
- 2.2. The land is raised approximately 1.2m above the pavement and the ground level follows the tops of the coping stones on the lower walls. The south wall of the churchyard stands about 1.5m higher and the west wall to the Castle grounds taller still at 3.5m.
- 2.3. Following tree and vegetation clearance in 2019/20 the soil was rotovated and seeded in October 2021. The only existing permanent features are the signs erected for St Nicholas Church.
- 2.4. The lower stone wall in which an opening is to be formed is described as follows in the listing text:

*C19. In front of gate, running south either side of approach road, then turning east and west respectively to abut the west end of the Priory or the octagonal tower at the east end of the next wall. Purbeck stone. Pulborough stone coping. 3 ft high, approximately.*
- 2.5. The limestone stone is laid in rough courses of undressed stones of varying size bedded and pointed in lime mortar. This is assumed to be a facing to a thicker rubble backing that retains the ground behind. The stone coping follows the line of the adjacent ground level. These stones are of varying length. There are no intermediate piers, only the large sandstone quoins at the perpendicular abutments to the octagonal towers of the Churchyard gate and castle wall.
- 2.6. Having been built to a high standard, the stone remains in good condition and well maintained with only minor areas of failed pointing and loss to the face of the coping stones, but no notable structural defects that need to be addressed.



- 2.7. The gateway and south wall of the churchyard are also dressed with sandstone although they are constructed in flint. This establishes their earlier construction and higher significance to the churchyard. Square knapped flints to the gate structure are an very fine example.



Fig. 01 Site Location Map - Google 2020

#### Setting

- 2.8. The site area is of high importance when viewed and considered in context of the significant buildings around it including the Church and Priory, the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Tower house (former vicarage), the large Catholic Cathedral and the Castle itself.
- 2.9. The removal of trees and shrubs from the raised area has opened up previously hidden views of St Nicholas Church from the London Road. These have been carefully considered because they are critical to the visibility of the church to passing visitors. Views will be maintained through the use of proposed planting.
- 2.10. Pre-application advice from Historic England in 2021 highlighted the importance of the symmetrical composition of these two raised areas of land either side of the gateway to St Nicholas Church. This will be considered further when discussing the impact of the proposals.
- 2.11. Historic England recently described the setting around the application site as follows.
- 2.12. *"The church sits between the Castle and the 19th century Cathedral which together create an outstanding collection of historic buildings. It is set within an attractive closed churchyard that is bounded by high stone wall"..... "St Nicholas is a large cruciform church started around 1380. It is a very good example of the early perpendicular style. Unusually, the parish uses the nave and transepts and the chancel is the funerary chapel of the Dukes of Norfolk. St Nicholas may be the only surviving example of the mediaeval practice of two ecclesiastical foundations under one roof."*
- 2.13. The application site is at the heart of the Arundel Conservation area which was designated in 1975. The area is characterised by 18<sup>th</sup> Century facades lining the principal streets and evidence of earlier buildings behind and beyond these. St Nicholas Church sits on the northern edge of this historic townscape. The remainder of the setting is occupied by the grounds of Arundel Castle, a grand and predominantly 1890's remodelling of the originally Norman site, which is one of the towns key attractions.



Fig. 02 – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Photograph showing the Catholic Cathedral which dominates the setting and the raised area of land (The application site) on the right.

### 3. History and development

*Contributed by John Morrison – Chair of St Nicholas Fabric Committee*

- 3.1. The Earls of Arundel and then Dukes of Norfolk have been sponsors and patrons of a series of prestigious religious buildings located in this area. These include the current Parish Church dating from 1380, joined to the College of the Holy Trinity but separated from the outset by an ornate metal screen. The church occupies the Nave, tower and side transepts of an imposing perpendicular space while the College Chapel was located in what would have been the Chancel space. Alongside the Chapel, other College buildings formed a quadrangle. There had been a Saxon Minster and Norman Church on the same site while the College was preceded by an “alien” priory that directly succeeded the minster in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The third 14<sup>th</sup> Century foundation in this area was the hospital or alms house of the Holy Trinity (the Maison Dieu) completed in 1395.
- 3.2. Today, the church of St Nicholas, continues as founded, the Chapel of the College of the Holy Trinity is now known as the Fitzalan Chapel while the Maison Dieu is completely buried beneath the Collector Earl Garden in the enclosed castle grounds to the west and only identified at this location in 2009. To the south east of the church, the boundary wall contains portions of the College Quadrangle boundary while to the West of the Church, one face of the Maison Dieu boundary wall can be easily identified. The Quadrangle of College buildings now provides the footprint of the Priory Care Home and the Priory Playhouse.
- 3.3. Arundel sits on a major medieval pilgrimage route running from Canterbury to Southampton and it is highly likely that the Maison Dieu, located alongside the Marygate entrance to the town, would have provided overnight accommodation to pilgrims. Visiting the church and listening to the choir of the College, would have been a highlight of a pilgrim’s visit to or through Arundel. Significant amounts of medieval graffiti can be seen on stonework throughout the church but particularly within the north transept. For many people, the Reformation marked an almost complete end to pilgrimages but in recent years, visitor numbers to the Church, Fitzalan Chapel and Cathedral have



grown considerably and both individual and group pilgrimages are a feature of the use of all the existing religious buildings.

- 3.4. Today the area has little residential or commercial use, remaining dominated by the castle, church and cathedral, with the north-western area beyond the religious buildings forming part of the castle grounds (and used for ornamental gardens and nurseries).



Fig. 03 – 1785 and 1840 maps showing significant changes to the area through construction of the London road, re-routing the road from the north to the south of St Nicholas Church. The current shape of the application site is established on the 1840 map. The orchard was largely lost and the Vicarage (Tower house) built on the south side of the road.

- 3.5. The entire area was radically altered by the blocking of the northern end of the High Street/ Marygate Street in 1803, with building along the newly created London Road including the present Roman Catholic Cathedral.
- 3.6. Prior to creation of the London Road, the land to the south of the church was a sloping field and orchard. During building work in the first half of the 19th Century, part of this space was used to dump rubble. As well as financing a new Catholic Church that became a Cathedral, the Duke funded the creation of a new and imposing entrance to St Nicholas Church and also enclosed the space and adjoining castle boundaries with walls of Limstone and sandstone. No access was created for this enclosed portion of land bordering the new church drive and London Road.
- 3.7. No records exist that provide a clue as to why the raised portion of land has no access point. The Duke had extended the churchyard from the existing Lime trees to the new boundary with gates but there is no information as to why the boundary was fixed at this point rather than alongside the new London Road. Details do exist about complaints about the rubble left on the land and perhaps the Duke was responding to these criticisms and providing a more attractive perimeter to the boundaries of Castle, Priory, Chapel and churches (Anglican and pre-Cathedral Catholic).



*Fig. 04 – Painting of the land south of the church in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century before the London road was created.*





*Fig. 05 – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century photograph of the gate to St Nicholas Churchyard with the raised and overgrown areas of land to the left and right.*

#### **4. Amount and Extent of Proposed development Including assessment of impacts**

- 4.1. In accordance with NPPF guidance on Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (para. 195) the impact of the proposals has considered in relation to the significance of the structure itself and setting described above.
- 4.2. The proposals have been developed with consideration for SDNP policy SD13 para b) whereby the harm to the significance of the listed structure or its setting is considered to be outweighed by public benefits to the parish and the opportunity for fundraising events toward long-term conservation repair of the surrounding assets. Re-use of a redundant heritage asset in this manner is also considered to be a positive mitigation under para 5) of policy SD12.
- 4.3. This application is for consent to form a access up on to the raised area of land. In order to achieve this the following interventions are proposed.
  - Formation of a breach (1.95m width) in the lower limestone faced wall and Sandstone coping
  - Dressing the corners of the opening with new Fittleworth stone Quoins
  - Excavation and grading of the land behind to construct a ramp. Excavation approximately 60sqm and up to 1.2m depth.
  - Construction of a short returns to the breach in the wall to be faced in Devonian limestone. and capped with Fittleworth stone copings and quoins at the exposed edges.
  - Construction of a ramp and landings in two flights to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and DDA legislation for accessibility. Ramp surface to be gravel laid in retention grids on a free draining sub-base.
  - Installation of a new painted wrought iron access gate.
  - Low level planting around the outside of the ramp and steps.

### *Proposed Opening*

- 4.4. The width of the proposed opening has been kept as narrow as possible to allow for safe and accessible turning at the base of the ramp and steps. The width required is minor in relation to the overall length of the wall and therefore the majority of visible limestone construction is retained. The stone removed from the opening will be retained and re-used in the new walls.
- 4.5. The opening is sited at the most accessible point between St Nicholas Church and the cathedral to form a coherent access for parishioners and visitors. At this point the difference in ground level is lowest to reduce the amount of excavation required.
- 4.6. The opening is to be formed between two complete sections of coping stone to mitigate the need for cutting original stone which can instead be re-used to replace badly weathered copings further along the wall.
- 4.7. The corners of the opening and the new abutting walls will be faced with Fittleworth stone with a proportion, layout and tooled surface finish to match those on the adjacent gate structure.



*Fig. 06 – Section of lower, limestone stone wall and location of proposed breach.*

### *Excavation – Soil Management*

- 4.8. In order to form a stable surface about the ramp the raised area of ground will need to be graded to the plan area shown and battered back for safe construction. Where possible the quantity of soil to be removed from site will be reduced by distributing over the site as fill to level those areas which are being planted. Grassed areas can be re-seeded following this operation.
- 4.9. The history of the site suggests that the make-up of the raised ground is primarily fill material and rubble from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century works to the road and surrounding buildings. An archaeologist will be consulted to assess the potential of the made-ground for features of archaeological interest and where required a scheme for further investigations.
- 4.10. Any rubble will be broken down for use as hardcore sub-base to the ramp and paved surfaces subject to assessment of quality by the engineer and contractor. The intention is that the minimum will be removed from site as waste.

### *Surface finishes*

- 4.1.1. It is proposed to finish the surface of the ramp in gravel which will be laid in free draining retention grids. This will provide a reinforced surface that does not allow the gravel to migrate downhill and ensure it is firm enough for wheelchair access. The small area to the gate recess will be laid in tarmac to match the pavement on London Road.

### *Wrought Iron components*

- 4.1.2. The proposed gate will be recessed and mounted within the new opening in the lower stone wall. When the garden area is in use, it will swing inward to prevent interference with the pavement.
- 4.1.3. The gate will be made in wrought iron and painted black to provide a traditional appearance. The design and detailing of the gate is proposed as a simplified version of the main church gates appropriate to the lesser scale and significance.
- 4.1.4. Planting has been proposed as part of the application to minimise the requirement for guarding's and handrails as far as possible.

## **5. Landscape**

### *Proposed Landscape Appraisal - Planting*

- 5.1. A scheme of planting was submitted under application SDNP/19/00559/TCA. Whilst this obtained permission only to fell the existing trees on the site, it established the principle of a Beech hedge planted around the exposed edges of the raised area and set back slightly from the wall. Four apple trees were also proposed to reflect the historic location of the orchard and to enhance ecology.
- 5.2. The proposed hedge and trees will be planted in spring 2024. The purpose of the beech hedge is two-fold. It will act as a guarding to prevent falls from the main raised area and provide some visual concealment to events on the site. The hedging will be maintained at a low level to ensure that the attractive and prominent views of Grade I listed St Nicholas Church are not restricted. This is in accordance with policy SD6 – Safeguarding views.
- 5.3. The length of hedge is considered appropriate to the immediate landscape character in accordance with policy SD4. A similar boundary treatment exists in the form of an evergreen hedge along the roadside of the Catholic Cathedral. The selection of a beech hedge is intended to be less formal but still native choice.
- 5.4. The main area of the site will be sown with grass seed upon completion of excavations.

## **6. Lighting Assessment**

- 6.1. No permanent external lighting features are proposed as part of this application. The raised area will only be used for specific events throughout the year. As such it is not proposed to allow unsupervised access that would require permanent lighting in the evening for safety and security purposes. Lighting for events will be of a temporary, bespoke and limited extent.
- 6.2. This is in accordance with the SDNP policy SD8 which sets out to protect the National park as an International Dark Sky Reserve and the recorded levels of bat activity in the churchyard to the north of the site.

## **7. Noise Assessment**

- 7.1. In accordance with Policy SD7, the proposals have been considered against the requirement to preserve the relative tranquillity of an area. The site falls within an area of reasonably low tranquillity (as identified in the policy map) as a result of the proximity to urban area of the town and a busy road.

- 7.2. The proposed use of the site will naturally generate an increased level of noise during occasional use for Parish and community events. However, the proposed annual events are limited and often linked to wider festivals in the town that encompass the Church, Cathedral and Castle and therefore a shared increase in activity.
- 7.3. It is not possible at this stage to estimate noise levels from proposed events, however these will be planned on an individual basis with consideration for the dwellings in Tower House and Tower house close across the road.

## **8. Access**

- 8.1. The key outcome for these proposal is the provision of inclusive access for people with a range of mobility needs. The ramp has been designed to a compliant gradient of 1 in 16 and flights are within the maximum length of 6m between landings. The landings are sized to provide turning circles for wheelchair users.
- 8.2. The proposed retained gravel grid surface will provide a robust surface finish that is suitable for wheelchair access. Similarly, the main area of the site will be maintained as grass instead of restrictive surfaces such as loose gravel or bark.

## **9. Historic England Consultation**

- 9.1. The proposals take into consideration the advice provided by Alma Howell of Historic England, following her visit to site in September 2021. This presented an option for an opening in the lower wall (albeit in a different location approved in 2022) alongside options for openings in the listed churchyard wall.
- 9.2. Historic England offered the following comment:

*In terms of the options presented to us, we consider that the option that would cause least harm to the significance of the church and its setting would be option 1. This is because the proposed opening in the wall and gate to the garden would be less prominent and visible in views from the street. In addition, the opening would impact on a subsidiary rather than main wall.*

*Options 2 and 3 would require creating an opening in the main listed wall adjacent to the central gateway. Not only would this opening be more prominent in views, it would also disturb the continuity of the wall and the importance of the gateway as the main entrance to the church. With option 2, the ramp when in use would also create a visual intrusion immediately adjacent to the main gateway.*

*We think however that some harm will be created by option 1 and primarily from the ramp cutting into the land and disturbing the symmetrical appearance of the two open spaces at the front of church. However, we think that this level of harm is relatively low.*

- 9.3. The proposals have been developed on the strength of this advice. Option 01 was also considered to be the least impactful by the applicant and design team as there is less potential for disruption of marked and unmarked graves and fewer structural issues to overcome than adapting the higher flint wall.
- 9.4. Whilst it is still intended to enact that proposal for stepped access, this secondary opening is far from the main churchyard entrance and therefore a reduced impact against the concerns highlighted.

## **10. Summary and Conclusion**

- 10.1. The church have fittingly summarised the benefits of the proposal to the church and wider community in their statement of need:

*Access to the raised portion of land to the south and west of the church gates will greatly assist the community engagement and service provided by the church and other organisers of events on this most attractive site. At the same time careful planting will hide potentially intrusive features such as the*



*ramp but also attractively frame the imposing and uplifting architecture of the surroundings. The gate design is intended to reflect, in an unobtrusive manner, the gates of the church.*

*The potential community gains of the proposed and accessible Parish Garden are huge and as stated by Historic England the harm caused to a heritage asset relatively low. The PCC are proud of the care given to the Grade 1 church and Grade 2 boundary walls. They firmly believe that the design of gate, piers and ramp enhance all the construction of earlier generations.*

- 10.2. This statement sets out the measures that have been taken to ensure the design of the proposed access complies with relevant policies set out by the South Downs National Park Authority. The proposals are considered to demonstrate the standard of design that is appropriate to the heritage significance of this area of Arundel and reduced impact on the Grade II listed structure itself.