

**ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, BISHOPSTONE, EAST SUSSEX:
PLANNING APPLICATION FOR EXTENSION TO NORTH AISLE
HERITAGE STATEMENT**



St Andrew's Church from the south

1.0 Location

- 1.1 The village of Bishopstone lies on a knoll at the head of a Downland dry valley between Newhaven and Seaford; the valley narrows and continues further north to the settlement of Norton. The valley was once wet and tidal and connected to the River Ouse outflow before running alongside a shingle bar and eventually emerging by Seaford Head.
- 1.2 Today the church of St Andrew is at the centre of the village, surrounded by a few houses of 17th C date and later, but excavations on the green to the north of the church in 2007 showed that the church was once the centre of a more nucleated settlement of early date. The excavations produced evidence of buildings from before 800AD, and early 9th C Mercian charters note the estate as Mercian royal property.
- 1.3 Bishopstone, as its name suggests, belonged to the Bishop of Chichester, but seems to have belonged to the Bishop long before the episcopal seat moved from Selsey to Chichester. Ecclesiastically being of such early origins this church would have been a minster, that is a centre of a community of 'secular clergy' before the parish church system developed, and seems to have been connected to the minster church at Beddingham higher up the Ouse valley.

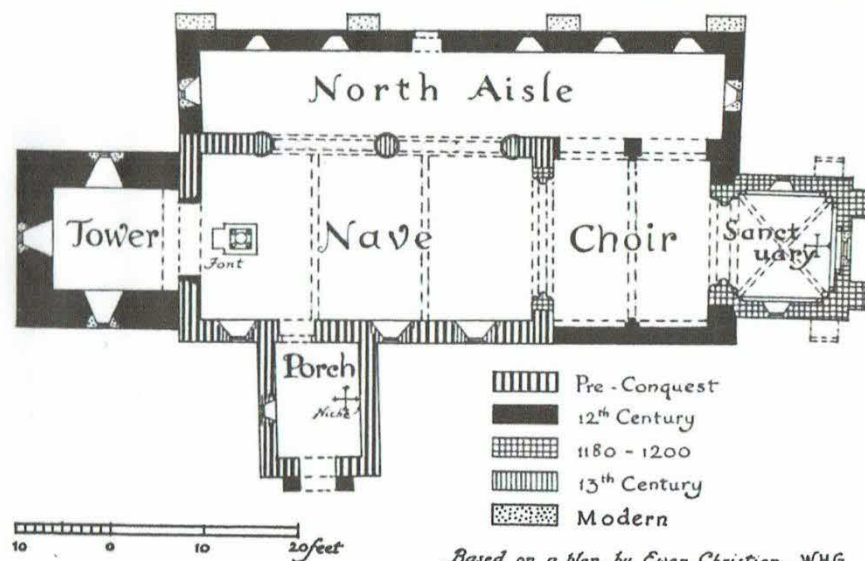


Bishopstone and church viewed from the west, from Rookery Hill

2.0 The Church

2.1 Today the church consists of a nave with a north aisle, a choir or chancel which is the continuation eastwards of the nave, and a small sanctuary at the east end, a west tower, and a south porch. At the west end of the north aisle is the modern underground boiler room. The church is built of flint with stone dressings; roofs are double pitched and covered in clay plain tiles; the tower roof is pyramidal and shingled.

PARISH CHURCH of ST ANDREW BISHOPSTONE



Based on a plan by Ewan Christian. W.H.G

- 2.2 The early church consisted of the present nave, with a porticus on the south side, subsequently converted into a porch. It is assumed that there would have been a similar porticus on the north side, but this would have been destroyed when the north aisle was constructed. A porticus was a side chapel, with entry only from the body of the church, and an altar against the east wall. In the early church the entrance would have been in the west wall of the nave, and it is assumed that the later construction of the tower, which has no external entrance, was coeval with the conversion of the south porticus into a porch with a new central external south doorway.
- 2.3 The nave and porticus are of flint with stone dressings, mainly Caen; the west quoins to the nave are in typical Saxon long-and-short work. The nave south wall has three unusually low narrow arch-headed windows dating from 1849.
- 2.4 The date of the early church has left scholars divided, some preferring an early date in the 8th or 9th C, while others prefer the 10th to 11th C, but agreement exists that it is pre-conquest, supported by the rare survival of the porticus. Other survivals of the early church, as the plan above indicates, are the nave south and west walls and parts of the north and east walls although most of the latter were destroyed by later alterations.
- 2.5 The earliest Norman work is reputed to be the construction of the tower, and as this would have blocked the west doorway into the nave and prevented access into the church it can be assumed that the conversion of the porticus into a porch with the new gabled south doorway was part of the same phase of construction.



Tower, and porticus to right

- 2.6 The tower is of four reducing stages, finishing with a corbel table where the roof rises, and of flint which apparently was once plastered, again with mostly Caen stone dressings. The ground floor round-headed windows are modern. Windows in the second and third stage are narrow and tall. At the top stage, belfry level are similar double openings. The tower was built without disturbing the older west wall of the nave, although the wide and low arch through that wall must be of the same date. A large arch was thrown across behind the nave wall to carry the upper part of the east wall of the tower – this arch was not visible from the nave, and neither were the small high-level windows in the east wall of the tower.
- 2.7 The alterations to the porticus must have followed at a similar time. These included the rebuilding of the inner doorway to the nave, and the erection of a central gabled south doorway to the outside, with shafts and chevron arch over – from this time the porticus served as the south porch. A feature which has caused much discussion is a sundial located in the south wall externally immediately above the Norman doorway; this sundial is inscribed Eadric and is believed to be Saxon, but has clearly been re-set as it is immediately outside a blocked window opening.
- 2.8 The construction of the tower was followed by the construction of the choir or chancel, and perhaps the north aisle, with its small round headed windows of early 12th C date (except for the 19th C west and east windows), at the same time – the arcade to the nave appears to have been built or rebuilt at the end of the 12th C, and the precise sequence of construction here is not clear. Unusually the choir was built as wide and as high as the nave, with arcades to the north and south, that to the south being blank.
- 2.9 The small square sanctuary, lower and narrower than the choir, was the last of the Norman building, It has water leaf capitals inside, round arched windows, much renewed, massive buttresses to the east and a single circular window in the gable. It is thought to date to around 1175.



Church from the east, showing sanctuary, and choir as extension of the nave

- 2.10 The church remains rich with features of 12th C date. These include the doorway in the south wall of the porticus, windows in the tower and the decorated corbel tables around the top of the tower. Inside the church the chancel arcades and arch are 12th and 13th C, although some of the Romanesque detail in the sanctuary dates from the 1849 restoration, although thought to be based on historical evidence; the aumbry in the sanctuary is also of 12th C date. The font of Eastbourne stone, located at the entrance to the tower, is also said to date from the 12th C. In the tower is a 12th C coffin lid, found serving as a lintel to a private pew in the church in 1849, and there is another grave marker possibly of 11th C date.
- 2.11 There seems to have been little change in the church after the 13th C. Two blocked 16th C windows were found in the chancel in 2007, and preserved. Post-reformation changes included a south nave window perhaps of 18th C date and shown in the sketch of the church which accompanied the notes made by Sir William Burrell when he visited in 1777. Internally flat plaster ceilings are shown in a drawing of 1820; the massive north aisle buttresses may well date from the same year.



The Burrell view of the Church of 1777

- 2.12 A major restoration of the church took place in 1849, at which the sanctuary acquired its present form with a ribbed vault of timber and plaster. The east wall was reformed, the lower choir windows were blocked and those above received pointed heads. This restoration included new seating. It is understood that more work took

place in 1860 of which nothing is known, but following which the main body of the church seems to have been left in sound condition.

- 2.13 Following a report in 1884, Ewart Christian was asked to carry out a further phase of repair and refitting. He noted that the condition of the fabric was generally good apart from a few small repairs and the rebuilding of the gable wall over the west chancel arch which was part unsound. He noted that the ground level around the church was much above the floor levels, and recommended that it be lowered next to the walls, 'forming a paved trench and drainage to carry off the water'. He commented that the tower and porch were not restored during the 1849 work, and some of the masonry of the tower was much decayed owing to the action of the sea air 'on the Caen stone of which it is constructed': implicit in this comment is that the tower flintwork was still plastered and therefore invisible at the time. The shafts of the porch archway needed restoration, and the blocked window on the west side of the porch should be opened. The tower roof needed rebuilding. Plaster was removed from the ceilings to expose the roof timbers. While the nave roof was ancient (he thought 15th C) it was capable of repair, but the other roofs were of poor quality and in need of replacement. Christian's work also revealed the 14th C niche in the east wall of the porticus, believed to indicate the position of the altar originally in this porticus.
- 2.14 Christian noted that the seating and other fittings put in in 1849 were poor and not well arranged, and refurnished the church including bringing the pulpit forward and locating the harmonium in its present location at the east end of the north aisle.
- 2.15 Further repairs were carried out between 1952 and 1954 by WH and WE Godfrey. The east quoins of the south porticus were renewed in 1984, and the repair works of 2006-7 revealed the early windows in the north nave, chancel and south porticus.



The 12th C north aisle with later buttresses



Internal view looking east from the nave into the choir and sanctuary, with the north aisle to the left.



Internal view looking west from nave into the base of the tower

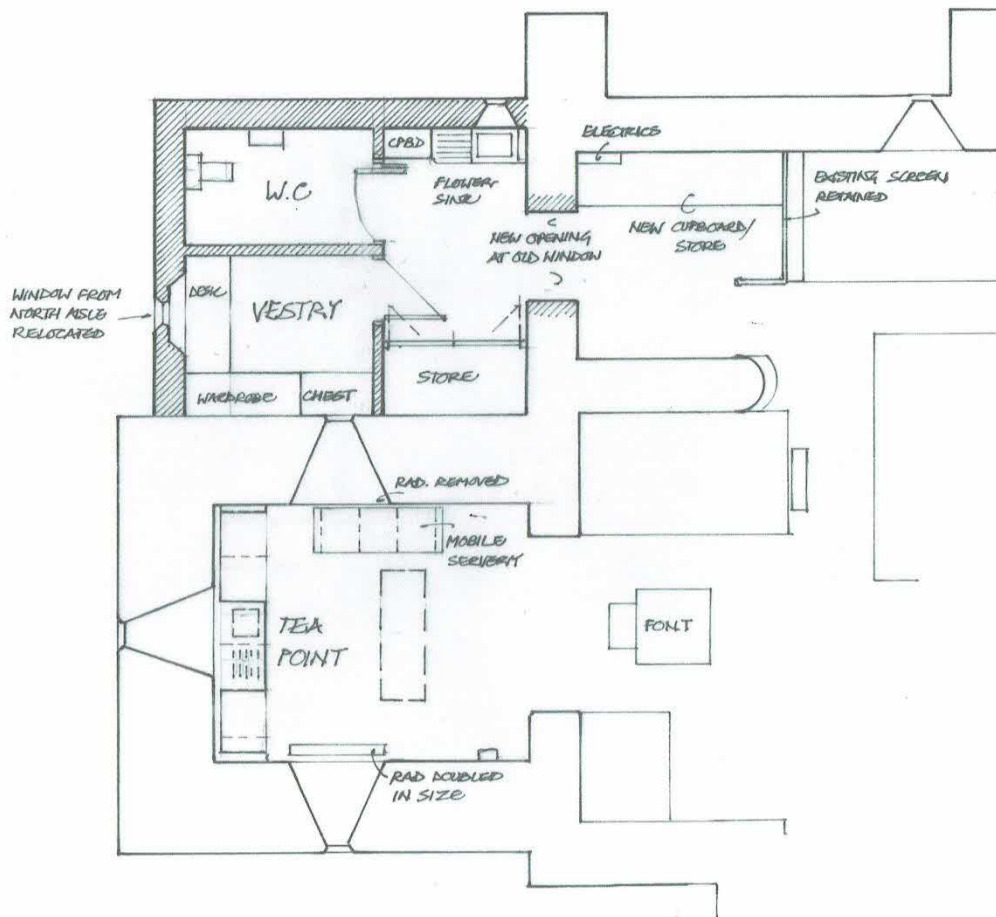
3.0 Significance

- 3.1 St Andrew's Church is Listed as being of special architectural or historic importance Grade 1, the highest grade. The listing description has not been developed since 1950, the date of its first listing, and is as sparse and uninformative as is usual for descriptions of such date:
'Notable for its Saxon work in the south porch and tower, but mainly Norman-early English. C12 Font and medieval coffin lid.'
Being Listed Grade I indicates that St Andrew's church is of national importance.
- 3.2 St Andrew's Church is within the Bishopstone Conservation Area, designated in 1976. The Conservation Area Appraisal (2003) notes that the whole of the Conservation Area is within a designated Area of Archaeological Interest, and there is evidence that Bishopstone was an important pre-Conquest ecclesiastical centre. The Appraisal identifies the church as the focal building of the Conservation Area, and notes that the wall around the churchyard and the enclosure to the east are separately listed Grade II. The graveyard of the church features box tombs including the graves of the Catt family, and it is noted that these had been recently restored and form an important feature of the character of the graveyard and church.
- 3.3 Minsters were not uncommon, in that any church which was founded before 1000 was likely to be a minster, and there are many churches in the area which started as a minster. What is perhaps uncommon about St Andrew's Church is that it is a church founded in Saxon times, extended in Norman times, and with no substantial alteration since until the 19th C restorations. Perhaps as a result of having no medieval alteration there survives a substantial corpus of Saxon and Norman architectural and sculptural detail, ranging from decorated arches to the decorated corbel table on the tower, which increase the significance of the church.

4.0 Proposed Works

- 4.1 The proposals include two pieces of work: the installation of units and a servery in the tower to provide a tea point; and the construction of an extension to the west of the north aisle to house a wc and a vestry. As the church is listed, Ecclesiastical Exemption applies, which means that Listed Building Consent is not required for interior works; the works are considered by the Diocese after consultation and the Local Planning Authority is one of the consultees. Planning permission is required for external works, in this case the extension of the north aisle, in the usual manner.
- 4.2 The tea point is not part of this application, but, as an essential part of the scheme, brief comment will be made on the proposal. The tea point would consist of low-level fixed units, spaced slightly away from the tower west wall to allow ventilation. There will be in addition a mobile servery which at rest would be positioned next to the north wall of the tower, on casters so that it could be moved out to serve behind when in use. It is proposed that the units and mobile servery be constructed in oak to match other furniture in the church.

- 4.3 The extension is on the site of the present underground boiler room, and would require a doorway to be constructed through the west wall of the north aisle, roughly in the location of the existing west window. The proposal is that the extension will touch the north aisle and tower north walls, with the aisle north wall and aisle roof continuing westwards along the tower north wall. Drainage for the wc etc would be via gravity drainage across the narrow north area of the churchyard into the adjacent village green where there is mains drainage.



Plan of west end of church showing tea point and wc extension

- 5.0 Impact of the proposed Extension on the Historic Fabric of the Church, and its Significance
- 5.1 The proposed tea-point will have modest impact on the church and church tower. It will be broadly freestanding, it will be substantially lower than windows and other features, and it will be reversible if at any point it ceases to have use.
- 5.2 The extension will have a greater impact on the significance of the church. Its construction will require an opening to be made in the fabric of the aisle west wall; the window in this wall is known to be of 19thC date, and a recent archaeological

appraisal of the surrounding masonry by Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd concluded:

The west wall of the north aisle is essentially of 12th century date and incorporates the surviving northwest quoin of the Saxon nave. A chimney has been added in the 20th century, and the window was re-modelled in the 19th century, being enlarged and with a new surround. At the same time it appears the lower part of the wall was thickened internally, probably to take the enlarged internal splay. The external face of the wall also appears to have been re-faced at this time, although the lower part of the wall appears original.

The reason for the step in the west wall just above the level of the window is unclear – Butler suggests that the lower part of the wall was thickened to provide space for the window splay, but the fact that the west wall as existing is the same thickness as the north wall, and the upper part of the wall is unrealistically thin in masonry and would certainly not have been that thickness down to ground level, suggests that the upper part may once have been timber framed and was made solid when the window was changed and the wall refaced. Whatever, it is likely that the wall retains part of its Medieval core.

- 5.3 The extension will touch the fabric of the north aisle and north tower wall, which can be achieved without significant harm; they will however cover up a certain amount of historic fabric. While the opportunity will be taken to leave exposed as much of the north aisle wall and tower wall as possible, the need to furnish the spaces will result in some fabric being concealed.
- 5.4 The site does have the advantage in that it must have been excavated to a significant depth already, and the foundations for the extension are unlikely to have significant impact. The proposal also has the possibility of removing the later add-on chimney on the aisle west wall. The excavation work is not likely to affect the significance of the church adversely.
- 5.5 The drainage distance across the north side of the churchyard will be short, and will be carried out with an archaeological watching brief. If features are encountered it should be possible to move the drainage run accordingly. The drain run will continue across the adjacent field to meet the main drain heading east-west; this run would also be excavated with an archaeologist in attendance, although the field has relatively recently been extensively excavated archaeologically.

