ST JAMES THE LESS, LANCING, WEST SUSSEX:
PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR EXTERNAL RELANDSCAPING
AT WEST END OF CHURCH

DESIGN ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT



The church from the southeast

1.0 The Church

1.1 St James the Less Church is the Anglican parish church of North Lancing, an ancient village today absorbed into the modern town of Lancing, but separated from it by the main A27 road which runs just to the south.

1.2 The earliest surviving masonry in the church dates from the 12th C: masonry at the ends of the chancel has been dated to 1120, while the arched doorway which now serves as the outer doorway to the south porch is of c1180.

1.3 The whole structure was rebuilt incorporating fragments of the earlier church between about 1280 and 1300, providing the present layout of aisled nave, central tower, and chancel, in a transitional style from Early English to Decorated Gothic. In the 15th C a stair turret was provided to the tower, blocking part of the north aisle, and a number of windows date from around that time. Following collapse, the top of the tower was rebuilt to its present height and form in c1620.



The church from the northwest

1.4 The first 19th C restoration is regarded as dating from 1827, the evidence being a plan showing reseating with pews and some repairs by the London architect William Ranger. Subsequent undated alterations included the quatrefoils in the clerestory, the replacement of the chancel roof, and some stonework repairs; the side aisle roofs were replaced in 1888. The vestry at the east end of the north aisle was added in 1934, the north extension for a lavatory was added in 2017.

1.5 The interior is substantially painted wall and ceiling plaster, with stained roof timbers. The floor is the usual 19th C red and black tiles in the aisles, with ledger stones around the font, and raised timber pew platforms.



Interior of church looking west

1.6 The church is surrounded by a large churchyard accessed via a footpath which runs from the lych gate in the north boundary wall east of the church, across the south front of the church to an ungated opening in the north boundary wall west of the church. The churchyard is full, with a good collection of 18th and 19th C gravestones, memorials, vaults and table tombs.



West end of church from churchyard

2,0 Proposed Development

2.1 The proposed development is part of a larger project that will see new facilities provided inside the church that will make it more useful for community purposes. The interior proposals will be approved by the Diocese under Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed building Consent.

2.2 The proposals which are the subject of this planning application concern landscaping works at the west end of the church. At present access to the west doors is by a short flight of steps down to a small stone-paved landing outside the doors, and this access is cramped and therefore rarely used. In conjunction with proposals for opening the west doors more frequently, and especially so that a view into the church can be had from outside, it is proposed to enlarge the landing area and provide new more generous steps from the footpath which goes past the church; it is also proposed to provide a ramp down for buggies and managed wheelchairs when it is preferred to use this entrance as against the level south porch entrance.



Existing landing and steps outside the west doors from the north



Existing landing and steps outside the west doors from the southwest

3.0 Layout

The layout is constrained by existing tombs and graves, and in particular the large tomb to the west, and by the footpath to the south of the church. The landing has been

increased in size as much as is practicable within those constraints while leaving sufficient space available for generous steps and ramped access.

4.0 Scale

The height of the walls surrounding the enlarged landing matches those of the existing walls around the smaller landing, and the new handrails are as open as the existing handrail; it is considered that the scale of the proposals does not significantly or adversely exceed that of the existing arrangement.

5.0 Appearance

The extended landscape area borrows extensively from the existing palette of materials used in this area. The landing itself is paved, and the paving will be reused and supplemented by additional York stone paving. The walls are at present rendered brick with stone copings; the intention is to use a yellow-buff stock brick for the walls which will match the colour of the render but be more durable and stain-resistant, and to reuse the coping stones, again with additional coping stones in York stone. The steps will be in York stone with brick risers. Handrails will be in painted iron, blacksmith made, an improvement on the present handrail. The ramp and new areas of path will be in tarmac with a gravel chip finish to match the existing paths around the church.

6.0 Access

6.1 At present access into the church is via the south porch, which gives approximately level access to the ambulant, the wheelchair bound, and parents with buggies and the like. At times it is felt that being able to provide access from the west doors would be useful and convenient, and it is intended that this aim is met by the present proposals.

6.2 The landing outside the west doors is enlarged, and accessed by the ambulant by generous steps. The layout and proximity to tombs graves and other features means that it is not possible to provide a ramp of appropriate width and gradient from the path to the landing, but it has been decided to provide what is possible – a ramp of width approx. 1100mm and at a gradient of 1:10; this it is felt is perfectly usable for the occasions when access from the west doors is desirable rather than using the present wheelchair accessible approach through the south porch.

7.0 Historic Building Issues

7.1 The Church is briefly described in the first section. The churchyard contains a not uncommon mix of gravestones and tombs, with some of 18th C date and many of 19th C date, but no other features of historic interest. Notwithstanding, the new west area of landscaping has been designed to have no impact on the church building or on the visually important tomb to the west of the church; no other marked graves are affected by the proposals.

7.2 It is not considered that the existing landscaping arrangements at the west end are either old or of significance, but by using the same palette of materials the new landscaping will retain a similar appearance and relationship with the church building.

7.3 It should be noted that the Church benefits from Ecclesiastical Exemption, and Listed Building Consent is therefore determined by the Diocese of Chichester.

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