

ST. MARY'S CHURCH IN  
SWYNNERTON.

HERITAGE IMPACT  
STATEMENT

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH  
COUNCIL OF ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH

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CHURCH, SWYNNERTON

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background to the project

Commercial Archaeology Ltd (CAL) has been commissioned by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St. Mary's Church in Swynnerton (Figure 1, NGR SJ85223 35502), Staffordshire to prepare a Heritage Impact Statement relating to a number of alterations which they have proposed within the church building. The church is a grade 1 listed building and thus considered of high architectural and historic importance. It is also situated within the Swynnerton Conservation Area (SBC 2013)

The church falls under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Lichfield and a site visit undertaken by members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee concluded that the proposed changes would represent *serious and largely irreversible interventions* to the church (Appendix 1). On this basis the PCC was advised by the DAC to commission a Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) which would examine the proposed changes and their impacts in detail.

This report specifically addresses the heritage significance of the church and identifies the potential impacts of the proposed changes on that significance. The impacts assessed within this HIS relate to a number of alterations/refurbishments proposed for the interior of the church. Therefore, assessment of impacts on the setting of the church is not considered relevant.

The purpose of the HIS is to understand the significance of the church, the impacts from the proposals on that significance and how the proposals have attempted to address the heritage value of the listed building.

### Terminology

This heritage statement has been compiled using the following standard terminology:

**Conservation Area** – an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)



Act 1990 requires every local planning authority to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest to designate as conservation areas.

**Listed Building** – a building, object or structure considered to be of special architectural and historic interest. Listings comprise Grades I and II\* for the most exceptionally important buildings and Grade II for those considered of special interest. Buildings can also be locally listed which means that their conservation as heritage assets is an objective of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application.

**Designation** – this recognises the significance of a heritage asset and increases its status of protection within the planning process. Designated assets can be statutorily protected as in the case of listed buildings and scheduled monuments or non- statutorily protected as is the case with registered parks and gardens and conservation areas.

**Heritage Asset** – this term refers to buildings, sites, places, monuments and landscapes which have been recognised as having a level of heritage significance which makes them a material consideration in the planning process.

**Historic Environment Record (HER)** – a repository which stores data on heritage assets within a defined geographical area.

**Significance** – the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations based upon its heritage interest which may be archaeological, architectural, aesthetic or historic.

**Setting** – the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. The extent is not fixed and will vary according to the historic character of the asset and the development of its surrounding. Setting itself is not a heritage asset nor a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset (HE, GPA 3 2015).

**Faculty** – a process that allows the Church of England to care for alterations to its buildings outside of secular listed building consent. When a parish wishes to make alterations to a church they must apply



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to the Chancellor of the relevant Diocese who will be advised by the Diocesan Advisory Committee regarding the proposed works.

**Diocese** – a specific geographical area over which a bishop exercises his pastoral oversight. Also known as a *see*.



## 2. PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT GUIDANCE

This HIS has been prepared within the context of Government policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment as set out in Section 12 of the NPPF entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2012).

The report has also been written in accordance with the following documents:

- *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015a);
- *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2008);
- *Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (Historic England Advice Note 2 2016)
- *Standards and Guidance for Historic Desk-Based Assessment* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014);

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).**

Government policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment is set out in Section 12 of the NPPF entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2012). Sites of archaeological or heritage significance which are material considerations within the planning system are known collectively as *heritage assets*.

The NPPF acknowledges that heritage assets are a finite and irreplaceable resource and that their conservation can bring wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits and overall seeks the delivery of sustainable development in addition to the conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

### **NPPF states in relation to proposed development:**

*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance* (Section 12 paragraph 128).

**Paragraph 129 states that:**

*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

**Designated heritage assets are distinguished from assets of lesser significance:**

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional (Paragraph 132).*

**Paragraph 134 states that:**

*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including its optimum viable use.*

**In terms of new development Paragraph 137 makes clear that:**

*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.*





**With regard to non-designated heritage assets NPPF states:**

*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (Section 12 paragraph 135).*

It is acknowledged that non-designated sites will normally be preserved through excavation and recording in accordance with their significance and the extent of the harm to their significance from the proposals.

**NPPF states that this is to:**

*Avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspects of the proposals (Section 12 paragraph 129).*

*Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest will also be subject to the policies reserved for designated heritage assets if they are of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments (Section 12 paragraph 132).*

**Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

Advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment is also published in the PPG which provides guidance on how the historic environment should be assessed within NPPF (DCLG 2014). This document states that:

*The appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the Core Planning Principles that underpin the planning system... and ...planning decisions should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of present and future generations.*



The main factor in the NPPF paragraphs 132-134 is whether a proposed development will result in **substantial harm** or **less than substantial harm**. Whilst these are not defined in the NPPF the PPG provides guidance:

*What matters in assessing if a proposal causes substantial harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the NPPF makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the NPPF. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. **It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed** (Paragraph 017).*

The PPG also provides guidance for the interpretation of less than substantial harm where the harm arising should be weighed against the public benefits of the development:

*Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in NPPF (Paragraph 7). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.*

### **The Listed Buildings Act (1990) and Ecclesiastical Law**

The Listed Buildings Act sets the general duty as regards the exercise of planning functions in relationship to any listed building:

*In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special*



*regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses (section 66).*

All churches are subject to planning law, and planning permission is required for development or change of use regardless of denomination or faith. However, churches of certain denominations are exempt from listed building consent and conservation area consent. This originates from the *Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act 1913*. This exemption applies to the Church of England. The Church of England's system of planning control is governed by canon law, ecclesiastical law and heritage law. Under the provisions of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 all works, alterations and additions to parish churches, their churchyards and contents require faculty approval which is a permissive right to undertake works to a church building or its contents. A faculty must be obtained by the parish church council from the relevant diocese before works are undertaken.

### **Local Planning Policy**

The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (adopted 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017) recognizes that:

*The Historic Environment is a precious and irreplaceable asset which must be conserved for future generations. The town centres of Stafford, Stone and many of the rural villages have historic cores which are designated as Conservation Areas (Section 2 Environment para. 2.15).*

The plan also notes that:

*The Borough contains numerous historic buildings, including 819 listed buildings and 30 Conservation Areas. Whilst the majority of listed buildings in the Borough are in good or reasonable repair, a number of buildings are in severe disrepair threatening the loss of historic detail and fabric (Section 2 Environment para. 2.16)*

A key objective of the Plan is to:

*Encourage the sustainable management of heritage assets, especially those identified as at risk, and deliver development which respects local character and distinctiveness.*



### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

All work undertaken in the preparation of this report is consistent with the guidance set out in Historic England's publication *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (HE2015a) and *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2008);

Importantly these documents provide assistance in the interpretation and implementation of the NPPF and PPG and provide crucial guidance on how to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on a heritage asset. There are six main guidance points:

- To understand the significance of the affected assets;
- To understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
- To avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of NPPF;
- To look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
- To justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development aim of conserving significance and the need for change, and
- To offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving the archaeological and historical interest of the heritage assets affected.

The following criteria will be used in this report to assess significance:

- **Evidential value** which arises from the potential of a place or building to provide evidence about past human activity, very often in the form of archaeological remains;
- **Historical value** which arises from connections between the place or building with past people, events and aspects of life which can be connected to the present;
- **Aesthetic value** which represents the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual inspiration from a place or building;



- **Communal value** which derives from the way in which people relate to the place or building, perhaps through a collective experience or memory;
- **Architectural Interest** which relates to a building's importance in terms of its architectural design, decoration, craftsmanship, its technological innovation or significant planform;
- **Historic Interest** requires a building to illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people.

The terms *architectural and historic interest* are incorporated into legislation where places and buildings considered of *special* interest are statutorily protected by inclusion into lists and/or registers (DCMS 2010). St. Mary's Church is a grade 1 listed building and therefore considered of national/high significance because of its special architectural and historic interest.

In accordance with Paragraph 132 of the NPPF the impact of the proposals on the significance of the church will be considered as ***less than substantial harm*** or ***substantial harm***. This terminology will be used in relation to assessing the degree of harm to the asset's significance and not to the scale of the development. In addition, the guidelines set down in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (Historic England 2008)* will also be used in this report to consider the proposed changes to the church.

Similarly, where a proposal could impact on potential non-designated archaeological remains, below the level of the church floor for instance, the magnitude of that impact on those remains will be considered in this report. As with the church building itself the effect of those proposals on the significance of any below ground remains will also be considered in accordance with NPPF. A judgement will be made regarding the scale of harm or loss to the significance of the below ground remains balanced against any public benefits (Section 12 paragraph 135).

The proposals reviewed in this HIS relate to changes and refurbishments proposed for the interior of the church. On that basis assessment of impacts on the setting of the church are not considered relevant to this report. Each proposal is assessed separately in detail and then a final conclusion made regarding the cumulative impact on the significance of the church as a whole.



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As part of preparing this HIS, a site visit has been undertaken, attended by a CAL representative Helen Martin-Bacon, MCIfA and a member of the Parish Parochial Council, Mr Steve Parkhouse. All proposed changes and refurbishments for the interior of the church were discussed in detail during this meeting.

### **Dissemination**

A copy of the Heritage Impact Statement will be deposited with the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record for public viewing.



#### 4. HERITAGE

##### Historic Context

Whilst Swynnerton village is largely attributable to the development of the Swynnerton Estate from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, its origins lie in the Saxon period when the first documentation for its existence appears. The name *Swynnerton* probably derives from a Saxon translation meaning *farmstead of the swineherd*. The village has been known by a variety of names including in the Domesday Book, *Sulvertone* (1086), *Suinnerton* in 1242 and *Swynforton* in 1272 (SBC 2013).

An original Saxon/medieval manor house is believed to have been located on the lower ground to the south of the village but was more likely situated nearer to the historic core of the village close to the 12<sup>th</sup> century Church of St. Mary's. This manor house was destroyed during the Civil War and a new house was begun during the Restoration of 1660 on the present site of Swynnerton Hall. Many of the buildings in the village were apparently relocated at this time to make way for the new estate and the new village was sited behind the Hall in order not to impinge on views. Major landscaping of the Hall's grounds was undertaken in 1810 by James Trubshaw although plans, which appear not to have been completed, had been drawn up for the area south of the Hall by Lancelot Capability Brown in 1758 (*ibid*).

The Swynnertons were Lords of the Manor from the Norman period to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, this changed in 1562 when Elizabeth Swynnerton married Sir William Fitzherbert. The Fitzherberts, ancestors of the present Lord Stafford, enhanced the Hall and surrounding grounds including commissioning the building of the Roman Catholic Church of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption in 1868.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the historic core of the village was well established and has remained relatively unchanged until the modern period.



### Significance of St. Mary's Church

St Mary's Church, constructed from local sandstone, occupies a prominent position within the village of Swynnerton situated as it is on a raised area of ground overlooking the surrounding village road network (Plate 1).

The church is multi-period and whilst traces of its apparent earliest origin are visible in the 12<sup>th</sup> century fabric of the church it is possible that the medieval structure superseded an earlier Saxon structure given the known Saxon origins of the village (Plate 2).

The list entry from Historic England (listed entry number: 1374205) describes St. Mary's Church in the following way:

*The core is 12<sup>th</sup> century with the aisles being added in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the chancel being rebuilt during this period. The south chapel was added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the tower built against the 12<sup>th</sup> century front with its Norman doorway in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Norman west doorway also in the tower was probably re-set. There was heavy restoration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the clerestory was added and the roofs renewed. In the south chapel is a notable large stone seated figure of Christ of late 13<sup>th</sup> century date, found under the floor. Triple sedilia are present in the chancel and chapel. There is a 15<sup>th</sup> century chancel screen and a defaced effigy of a cross-legged knight (probably Sir John Swynnerton circa 1264), situated in a recess on the south side of the chancel. There is a good east window by Powell, 1864, designed by Sedding. Graded for both architectural and historic interest.*

The figure of the knight is carved from local stone and is clothed in the complete armour of a crusader with a Norman shield hanging from the left arm. It is believed that the tomb beneath was opened in 1856 and revealed the well-preserved remains of a young knight.

The significance of St. Mary's Church arises from a number of factors. As previously stated the church fabric both externally and internally displays evidence of its multi-period, multi-phase development from the 12<sup>th</sup> century through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also possible that the original 12<sup>th</sup> century church





was the successor of an earlier Saxon church built near to the Saxon manor house thought to have existed near to the location of the church. The church therefore possesses great **evidential value** in that its existing structure and any archaeological remains beneath the church could provide evidence of the church's earliest origins and phases of activity pre-dating the 12<sup>th</sup> century building.

To a great extent the church's **historical value** lies in its connection to the Swynnerton family who were lords of the manor from the Norman period to the 16<sup>th</sup> century as exemplified by the effigy of Sir John Swynnerton in the chancel and in the church's role as a focal point in the village from earliest times. Sir John was Constable of the Tower of London and a Baron in the first Parliament. Similarly, the church has historic connections to the Fitzherbert family. Beneath the south chapel is a large vault which contains the remains of 16 members of the family buried there between 1612 and 1865.

The church, both externally and internally, is imbued with a great sense of history and of tranquillity whilst also possessing an appearance and character which inspire a sensory and intellectual response in those who visit it. The church's **aesthetic value** is therefore high.

In tandem with its aesthetic qualities the church's **communal value**, arising from its long-established collective spiritual and social role within the village, makes it a place which is highly valued by local parishioners and the village community at large.

In relation to architectural and historic interest the church possesses a number of qualities which contribute to both. The church fabric displays evidence of its various phases of construction from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards with architectural detailing reflecting the church's historic development in addition to its past liturgical and ritual functions. Pevsner (Yale 2002) for example noted the Norman doorways in the West Tower with their characteristic colonnettes and zigzag, beakhead decoration, the defaced sedilia and piscina in the south chapel and the east window described as *very remarkable, bold in colour and bold in the stylization of the figures in the scenes represented* (Plates 3 & 4).

The east window was manufactured by the firm of James Powell and Sons (also known as Whitefriars Glass) who were major manufacturers of stained glass windows who met the demand created by the Gothic Revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The designer of the window was J.D Sedding a member the Sedding



family, well-known architects of the time who applied a sympathetic and informed approach to church restorations (Plate 5).

Physical evidence of the church's connection to past national historical events is perhaps reflected in the defaced sedilia and piscina in the south chapel noted by Pevsner, along with the defaced effigy of Sir John Swynnerton in the chancel resulting from the ravages of the Reformation which swept the country during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that the statue of Christ in the south chapel was hidden beneath the floor of the church at this time to protect it from the fervid attentions of local Reformers.

Architecturally apart from being a good example of a traditional village parish church of great antiquity displaying evidence of historic construction techniques and responses to changing beliefs and fashions in design both internally and externally, the church has connections to well-known 19<sup>th</sup> century architects and craftsmen, as evidenced by the east window.

In summary, St. Mary's Church is of considerable historic and architectural importance and any proposed changes to the church need to be carefully considered in terms of whether they adversely impact on the significance of the church as displayed in the values described above. Similarly, it also needs to be considered whether any of those proposed changes will serve to enhance the heritage significance of the church through increasing understanding of the building's past and reinforcing its heritage value by sustaining those values for present and future generations.



## 5 PROPOSALS (see Appendix 2)

St. Mary's Church is a focal point of village life in Swynnerton and apart from its obvious religious and liturgical functions the church hosts a number of community activities. The church is well-attended with a congregation of around sixty and has a very active parochial church council who organise a wide range of events focussed on the church. A number of changes are proposed for the interior of the church intended to accommodate the parish council's wish to offer more facilities for expanded hospitality and for more children's and young people's activities.

Whilst the nearby church hall is currently used for some church events and activities it is separate from the church and does not offer sufficient space for all of the planned undertakings. In addition, the church hall is not close enough to the church to be used during and immediately after a church service.

Several of the proposed changes discussed below would be reversible and would not necessarily constitute major impacts on the significance of the church. However, there are others which would result in substantial harm to the fabric of the church and therefore on the significance of the listed structure. The latter impacts need to be weighed against any public benefit which they may accrue from their implementation.

The proposals comprise the following:

### 1 West End

- Replacement of the timber doors from the porch into the narthex with glazed doors;
- Removal of the Victorian font from near the west door to nearer the altar in order to free up the narthex for improved circulation and social space;
- Removal of the last three rows of box pews from the narthex again to make space and improve circulation;
- Installation of a disabled toilet in the south porch;
- Installation of a refreshment area at the west end of the south aisle (currently occupied by a children's area);
- Transfer of the children's area to the west end of the north aisle.



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## 2 Junction of the Nave and Chancel

- Raising of the chancel floor above the current Victorian tiles by the installation of a false timber floor to provide a level surface;
- Transfer of the chancel screen to the junction of the narthex and nave;
- Removal of the choir stalls in the chancel.

## 3 The Lady Chapel

- The insertion of a doorway between the south aisle and the chapel;
- Raising the floor level of the chapel through the installation of a false timber floor to meet the level of the chancel;
- Sub-division of the chapel to provide a meeting area and activity space;
- The insertion of a mezzanine floor in the chapel to create additional room.



## 6. IDENTIFIED IMPACTS ON ST. MARY'S CHURCH

The following potential impacts arising from the proposals have been identified:

- Impacts on the historic fabric of the listed structure;
- impacts on appreciation and understanding of the church's significance;
- impacts on the aesthetic and architectural significance of the building;
- impacts on evidential value in particular below the level of the church floor.

### 6a WEST END OF THE CHURCH

#### **Replacement of the timber doors from the porch into the narthex with glazed doors.**

The current timber doors (Plate 6) giving access to the narthex from the west porch are relatively recent but have a traditional appearance in keeping with historic character of the church. However, whilst glazed or partially glazed doors may introduce a more modern element at this point any minor impact on the traditional look of the entrance to the narthex would be offset by an appropriate door design which reflects the wider traditional character of the church. In addition, glazed doors at this point would allow visual inter-connectivity between the west porch and the main body of the church with long views towards the chancel (Plate \*).

It is therefore judged that replacement of the timber doors with glazed or partially glazed doors will not have a significantly detrimental effect on the aesthetic and traditional appearance of the church or on its wider significance.

**Impact – less than substantial/reversible.**

**Benefit – visual inter-connectivity from the west porch to the altar.**

#### **Re-siting of the Victorian font.**

The Victorian font at St. Mary's (Plate 7) occupies a traditional liturgical location near the entry to the church intended to remind Christians of their own baptism as they pass by. The proposal is to re-locate the font from its position in the narthex nearer to the altar in the chancel.



The latter is also a traditional position for fonts which provides the advantage of positioning Christenings in full view of the congregation. The current location of the font in the narthex at St. Mary's hinders visibility for those attending Christenings and the current lack of space around the font means that there is very limited access for family and friends during Christenings. It is also the case that the existing cramped position of the font makes it less noticeable as an example of baptismal furniture in its own right when people enter the church.

The re-location of the font into the chancel near the altar would therefore be in keeping with traditional ritual practice but would also have the advantage of improving visibility of and access to baptismal ceremonies for the congregation. It would at the same time serve to draw the attention of the assembled worshippers to the architectural and aesthetic qualities of the Chancel as a whole. It is therefore judged that there would be no erosion of significance from this proposal.

**Impact – less than substantial/reversible**

**Benefit – improved visibility of and access to the font.**

**Removal of the last three rows of box pews from the narthex.**

Traditionally the narthex functions as an entry space, located just inside the western entrance of a church, serving as a gathering place for worshippers and also representing a transition from the outside world to the place of worship. Currently, it is difficult for the narthex at St. Mary's to fulfil this traditional purpose given the location of the font to the south of the west entrance and the considerable amount of space taken up by the last three rows of pews to the north of the entrance (Plate 8). Removal of the pews along with re-siting of the font (discussed above) would provide the space for the narthex to fulfil its traditional function without impinging on any heritage values associated with the church.

**Impact – less than substantial/reversible**

**Benefit – restoring the traditional planform with narthex area and making space.**



### **Transfer of the children's area to the west end of the north aisle.**

The children's area comprises portable furniture, books and pictures painted by the children. It is currently located at the western end of the south aisle and has no adverse impacts on the heritage value of the church (Plate 9). Similarly, its relocation to the west end of the north aisle will have no adverse impact on any of the church's heritage values or on its significance.

#### **Impact – less than substantial/reversible**

**Benefit – providing facility for education and social events for children.**

### **Installation of a refreshment area at the west end of the south aisle.**

It is understood that this will consist of the installation of a bar with storage, sink and running water. Facilities for coffee/tea making will require the construction of a drainage outlet, most likely in the floor of the church, leading to a below ground tank located just outside the south wall of the church. The creation of a refreshment area at this point (Plate 10) will complement the function of the narthex as a gathering space and if designed not to obscure the windows at the western end of the southern aisle will not necessarily impact on the heritage value of the church. Many churches, including listed ones, now offer similar refreshment facilities to cater for both religious and social gatherings which serve to generate funds and increase attendance.

Whilst not entirely in keeping with the traditional look of the church sympathetic design, which ideally is also reversible, of the proposed bar could do much to offset this. The proposal also offers the positive benefits of facilitating an extension of church functions and enhancing the church's community value.

Any necessary intervention in the floor of the church for drainage would constitute localised substantial harm to the fabric of the listed building and to any archaeological remains below the floor. However, this could be mitigated through archaeological monitoring which may provide important evidence relating to earlier/pre-12<sup>th</sup> century phases of the church's development.

**Impact – (bar) less than substantial.**

**Benefit – provision of hospitality encouraging use of the church for social and religious activities.**

**Impact – (drainage) substantial localised harm**

**Benefit – potential enhancement of understanding the archaeological origins of the church.**



### **Installation of a disabled toilet in the south porch.**

A disabled toilet and baby change area is proposed for the south porch constructed from stud partitioning internally with fake timber doors to be fixed to the external arched entrance. The location of any drainage is likely to be into a septic tank near to the south wall of the church (though this has yet to be confirmed).

The proposal would represent a major change in function for this part of the church and would also involve intervention in order to install drainage (Plate 11). This would constitute localised substantial harm to the fabric of the porch and to its aesthetic value. However, it would not necessarily adversely impact on appreciation and understanding of the church's architectural and historic interest as a whole.

The south porch is in fact little used for access and egress and its conversion to provide welfare facilities for the disabled and for mothers with young children would be a positive benefit. Again any intervention necessary to install drainage could be archaeologically monitored and the harm done mitigated by the opportunity to learn more about the origins of the church.

**Impact – (stud walling) substantial harm but potentially reversible.**

**Benefit – creation of facilities for the disabled and mothers attending church events.**

**Impact – (drainage) substantial localised harm.**

**Benefit - potential enhancement of understanding the archaeological origins of the church.**

### **6b JUNCTION OF THE NAVE AND CHANCEL.**

#### **Raising of the chancel floor.**

The proposal is to install a timber floor deck raised above the current Victorian tiles within the chancel to match the raised floor in front of the entrance to the chancel. The raised floor is intended to facilitate access into the chancel as the current step down at the junction of the nave and chancel is considered to be a trip hazard (Plate 12). Whilst the tiles in the middle of the chancel floor are hidden beneath a red carpet those that are visible to each side make a positive contribution to the aesthetic appearance of the chancel and their continued visibility is desirable.





However, should the raised decking be of suitable appearance and design it could be accommodated in the chancel without causing a major harmful effect to the significance of the church. It could also serve to preserve the Victorian tiles *in situ*.

**Impact – less than substantial harm/reversible.**

**Benefit – improving access to the chancel/preservation in situ of Victorian tiles.**

**Transfer of the chancel screen to the junction of the narthex and nave.**

The chancel or rood screen, which is 15<sup>th</sup> century in date and therefore a significant historic and architectural element of the church, occupies the traditional position of screening the chancel from the nave (Plate 13). The chancel screen at St. Mary's has great religious and historic resonance as well as being an example of a chancel screen which has not only survived the ravages of the Reformation but also the widespread destruction of screens in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when screens clashed with the wish of Church leaders and people to have open church interiors with uninterrupted vistas.

The proposal is to move the chancel screen from its current position to the west end of the church where it would be used to separate the narthex from the nave. The advantage of re-locating the chancel screen is that it would serve to open up views into the chancel from the nave as a consequence enhancing the experience of worshippers partaking in religious ceremonies. Its relocation would also serve to demarcate the narthex area from the nave which would be in keeping with traditional practice and historic church planforms. Re-location of the screen would not, therefore, erode appreciation of the heritage significance of the church as a whole and would not adversely effect its aesthetic value.

However, the proposal to move the screen would need to be informed by a structural survey and risk assessment to ensure that it is feasible to move the screen without damage and then protect it from harm in its new position.

**Impact – less than substantial/reversible**

**Benefit –opening views into the chancel from the nave.**



### **Removal of the choir stalls in the Chancel.**

Removal of the choir stalls in the chancel is considered undesirable as they occupy a traditional location within the church and are an integral part of the chancel (Plate 14). Whilst their removal would serve to open up space in the chancel and perhaps improve the visual connection between the nave and aisles and the altar their absence would not positively contribute to the heritage value of the chancel or to the overall significance of the church.

**Impact – substantial harm but reversible.**

**Benefit – improved visual connection to altar from nave and aisles.**

### **6c THE LADY CHAPEL**

#### **The insertion of a doorway between the south aisle and the chapel.**

It is proposed that a doorway is inserted in the wall separating the south aisle and the Lady Chapel in order to facilitate access to the chapel directly from the south aisle without the current need to enter via a doorway in the chancel (Plate 15). There is an external doorway to the chapel but the pathway to it through the graveyard could pose safety problems for the elderly, disabled or children, in particular in bad weather (Plate 16).

The proposed point of breakthrough coincides with the location of an original splayed window (now blocked) in the western wall of the chapel (Plate 17). Insertion of a doorway at this point would therefore constitute localised irreversible harm to the fabric of the church. In addition, the proposed doorway would be adjacent to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and highly significant statue of Christ (Plate 18) which is fixed against the western wall of the chapel. Should the proposal proceed it would need to be accompanied by a structural survey and risk assessment from a suitably qualified professional.

However, the new doorway has been proposed because there is a wish on the part of the parish church council to use the chapel as more than simply a storage space which is little viewed or used by members of the congregation or the wider public at large.



As a consequence, the localised substantial harm arising from the insertion of the doorway may be outweighed by an enhancement to the significance of the church presented by opening up the architecturally and historically important Lady Chapel, in particular providing access to the highly significant statue of Christ for public view.

**Impact – substantial localised harm non-reversible.**

**Benefit – providing improved access to the chapel, bringing the chapel back into use as an integral part of the church and enhancing significance.**

**Sub-division of the chapel and insertion of a mezzanine floor.**

The proposal for subdivision of the Lady Chapel involving the insertion of stud partitioning and a new first floor to form a room in the roof space arises from a wish to create more meeting space. Whilst additional meeting space may be a justified need the subdivision of the Lady Chapel to achieve this would constitute a major adverse impact on the significance of the chapel and on that of the church as a whole.

The Lady Chapel is a structure of great architectural and historic interest and these qualities along with its aesthetic value can only be appreciated by maintaining its integrity as an open space enhanced by unencumbered views of in situ architectural elements such as the east window, the sedilia and piscina and of course, the remarkable statue of Christ against the western wall. Its subdivision would also negate the potential enhancement of significance offered by improved access to the chapel through the insertion of the doorway discussed previously (Plate 19).

**Impact – substantial harm though possibly reversible.**

**Benefit- no benefits to offset substantial harm to chapel and church.**

**Raising the floor level of the chapel.**

The floor of the chapel is not in good condition and consists of grey tiles patched with red brick. The tiles and bricks are uneven and often cracked and worn (Plate 20). Apart from posing a risk as a trip hazard the current floor of the chapel does not contribute aesthetically to the chapel.



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Therefore, if the chapel is to be opened up to public view and used for church functions/meetings new flooring would be necessary. The proposed raised timber floor deck for the chapel, if of appropriate design and appearance would not have a major impact on appreciation and understanding of the historic and architectural significance of the chapel and would have the benefit of making the chapel a useable space.

**Impact – less than substantial.**

**Benefit – making the floor safe, contributing to making the highly significant chapel a useable space.**



## 7 CONCLUSION

Like many parochial church councils the PCC at St. Mary's in Swynnerton is faced with the dilemma of keeping an ancient building relevant and up to modern standards whilst at the same time trying to preserve its special architectural and historic interest. Not least of the needs for the church is, of course, generating funds for its upkeep through providing a variety of activities and events.

As described above a number of the proposed changes would have no major impact on understanding and appreciation of St. Mary's architectural and historic significance, in fact some would actually serve to enhance that significance. However, several of the proposed changes would result in substantial harm to the aesthetic, historic and architectural values which represent the significance of the church.

Given the extensive number of changes proposed the cumulative impact on the listed building, should all of them be carried out, runs the risk of substantially harming the significance of the church and a more appropriate course of action would be to prioritise those changes which have direct benefits on the church's capacity to hold both religious and social/community events whilst discarding those which would seriously conflict with the special architectural and historic/aesthetic qualities of the grade I listed building.



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## 10. REFERENCES.

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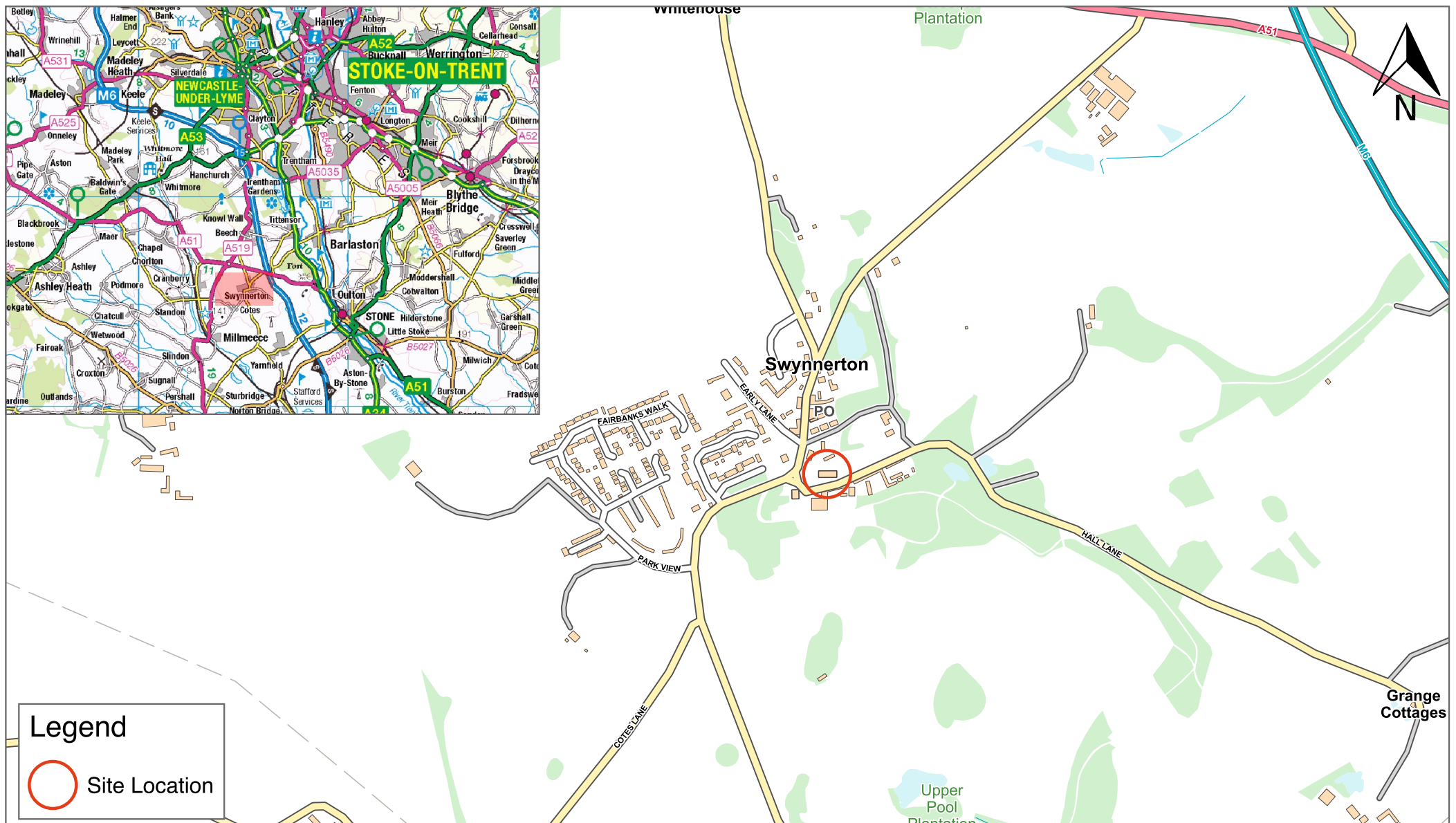
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Pevsner, N. 1951 *The Buildings of England. Staffordshire*, Yale University Press 2002.



Site: St Mary's Church, Swynnerton  
 Client: Parochial Church Council of St Mary's, Swynnerton  
 Approved by: H.M.B

Figure Number: 1

Scale at A4: 1:10,000



# PLATES





Plate 1. Church of St. Mary's looking east.



Plate 2. Evidence of phased building activity in west tower.



Plate 3. Detail of doorway.



Plate 4. Damaged sedilia in Lady Chapel noted by Pevsner.



Plate 5. View of east window in chancel.



Plate 6. View through timber doors to be replaced by glazed or partially glazed door.



Plate 7. The Victorian Font.



Plate 8. Shows the last three box pews taking up space within the narthex.



Plate 9. The children's area in the west end of the south aisle.



Plate 10. Shows the area proposed for the coffee and tea bar.



Plate 11. View into the south porch which would be closed off by timber doors.



Plate 12. Showing step down into chancel.



Plate 13. The chancel screen separating nave and chancel.



Plate 14. Choir stalls in the chancel.



Plate 15. Location of proposed doorway into Lady Chapel at the east end of south aisle.



Plate 16. Pathway to outer door for Lady Chapel in bad weather.





Plate 17. Splayed opening in Lady Chapel, proposed location of new doorway.



Plate 18. Statue of Christ in Lady Chapel.



Plate 19. Overall shot of the Lady Chapel revealing how subdivision would detract from its architectural integrity.



Plate 20. Floor of the Lady Chapel

# APPENDIX 1

**Diocese of Lichfield  
Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches  
Site Visit Report (FV)**

Church: Swynnerton S Mary

Grade: 1

Date of Visit: May 18<sup>th</sup> 2017

Date of Church: 12<sup>th</sup> C

Original architect: NA

QI Architect: Andrew Capper

For the PCC: The Vicar, Stephen Mackenzie and members of the church.

For the DAC: The Archdeacon of Stoke, Matthew Parker, Julie Taylor, Adrian Mathias and Kristina Williamson, DAC Secretary.

*Usual Sunday attendance: 58 in 2016*

## 1 Significance

Swynnerton S Mary is a highly significant church building. It is listed grade 1 and dates largely from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Fig 1). It has a west Norman doorway (Fig 2), an Early English chancel and an East window of the early 14C (Fig 3). The chancel's south windows are now internal but the adjoining south chapel which has enclosed them was *probably* built soon after the chancel itself (Pevsner, 1974 p 272). The Rood screen is "*Perpendicular, of one-light divisions with charming, dainty tracery*" (Pevsner) (Fig 4). The Chapel contains a seated statue of Christ, mid-thirteenth century in style and of "*a quality worthy of Westminster Abbey or Lincoln Cathedral*" (Pevsner) (Fig 5).



Fig 1 Swynnerton S Mary



Fig 2 Inner porch door



Fig 3 View of East End



Fig 4 Reverse of Screen



Fig 5 Seated Christ

## 2 Current Issues

2.1 The recent breakdown of the boiler necessitates a replacement and provides an opportunity to relocate the boiler from the existing boiler house just outside the churchyard to an external location nearer the church. It is hoped that this will result in an improved performance from the heating system. The new location is proposed against the north wall at the west end and between two 'shielding' buttresses. (Figs 6-7)



Fig 6 Existing service entry point; boiler would be to left of buttress.



Fig 7 Existing Boiler Room (brick structure)

2.2 The PCC wishes to create a welcome/hospitality area at the west end of church and to offer more facilities for hospitality, children's and youth work within the church building. [There is nearby church hall but this is separate to the church, is reached via the churchyard and does not offer enough space for all that is proposed and neither is it close enough to be used easily during and immediately after a church service (Fig 8)]



Fig 8 Church Hall



Fig 9 Victorian Font



Fig 10 Box Pews to rear of nave



Fig 11 South Porch (c.19C)



Fig 12 Porch, interior.

### 3 Proposals

The PCC has quite a lengthy 'wish list'; depending upon the availability of funding and what the final scheme comprises, it may tackle the work in stages. Ideally, it would like:

#### West End

- Partial glazing to the existing doors, or new glazed doors, from the porch into the nave (Fig 2).
- Removal of the Victorian font situated near the west door in order to free up the area for circulation/social space (Fig 9).
- Removal of the last three rows of box pews from the rear of church for the same reason (Fig 10)
- Installation of a disabled accessible toilet in the south porch (Figs 11 – 12)
- Possible installation of a refreshment point at the west end of the south aisle (the current children's area) (Fig 13).



Fig 13 West end of south aisle.



Fig 14 South Aisle



Fig 15 Proposed point of breakthrough/demolition\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*This area is immediately next to the 13thC seated figure of Christ which is fixed against this wall; demolition therefore poses a considerable risk to the statue; an item of world class heritage significance.

### **The Junction of Nave and Chancel**

- Removal of the nave dais created in a previous re-ordering and raising of the Chancel floor (by installation of a new timber floor to cover the existing Victorian tiled floor) to provide a level floor surface throughout.
- Removal of the Rood Screen (Fig 4)
- Removal of the Choir Stalls

### **The Lady Chapel**

- Creation of access from the south aisle to the Lady Chapel (Figs 14 -15)
- Raising of the floor level in the Lady Chapel to that of the Chancel
- Possible sub-division of the Lady chapel to provide a meeting area and an activity/crèche space; the insertion of a mezzanine floor has been suggested
- Possible insertion of a refreshment point in this area rather than in the south aisle
- Insertion of a second toilet to serve this area specifically (e.g. for use with the crèche).

## **4 Conclusion/Recommendations**

The DAC visitors advised that if executed, most of these proposals would result in serious and largely irreversible interventions in a highly significant listed, historic building. It was explained that the benefit of the proposed works had to be balanced against possible harm to the character, appearance and historic fabric of the building. The PCC would need to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the historic, archaeological, artistic and aesthetic significance of the building and therefore a heritage statement should be commissioned from a suitably qualified building archaeologist. The PCC should also prepare a well evidenced statement of need. Any re-ordering proposals should be decided upon and evaluated against both of these documents.

Following the visitors report to the whole DAC, the members wish to draw attention to the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 132 - 132 which they considered pertinent in this case:

“132. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. *Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

133. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation

- conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use”

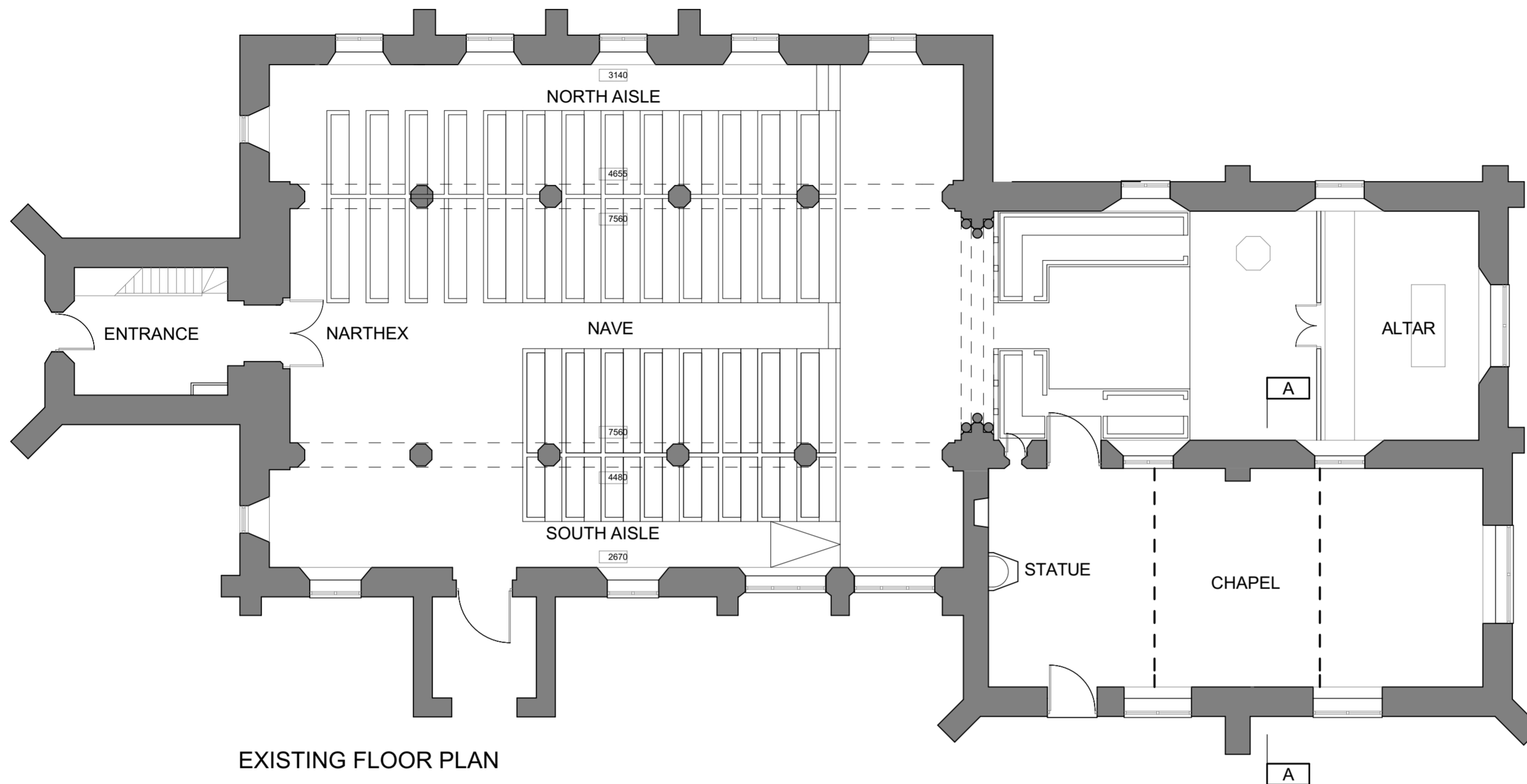
The full DAC does not consider that the level of intervention necessitated by the PCC's present 'wish list' has yet been and possibly could not be fully justified.

Members noted that Brough Skingley had suggested four options with regard to the location/relocation of the boiler and had recommended that the PCC explore the pros and cons of each before deciding on a proposal.

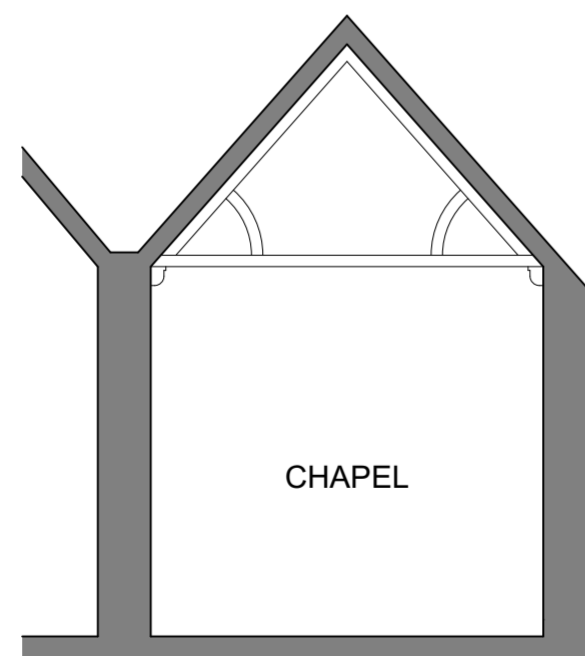
Kristina Williamson, Church Buildings Officer & DAC Secretary, 05/06/2017



## APPENDIX 2



EXISTING FLOOR PLAN



SECTION A-A

Rev ID Date Comment

**wood|goldstraw|yorath**  
ARCHITECTS QUANTITY SURVEYORS CDM CO-ORDINATORS

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Tel: 01782 208000 Fax: 01782 208712 E-mail: info@woodgoldstraw.co.uk  
www.woodgoldstraw.co.uk

Client.  
**ST MARY'S CE CHURCH,  
SWYNNERTON**

Project.  
**PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO  
EXISTING CHAPEL**

Scale  
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**20/04/2017**

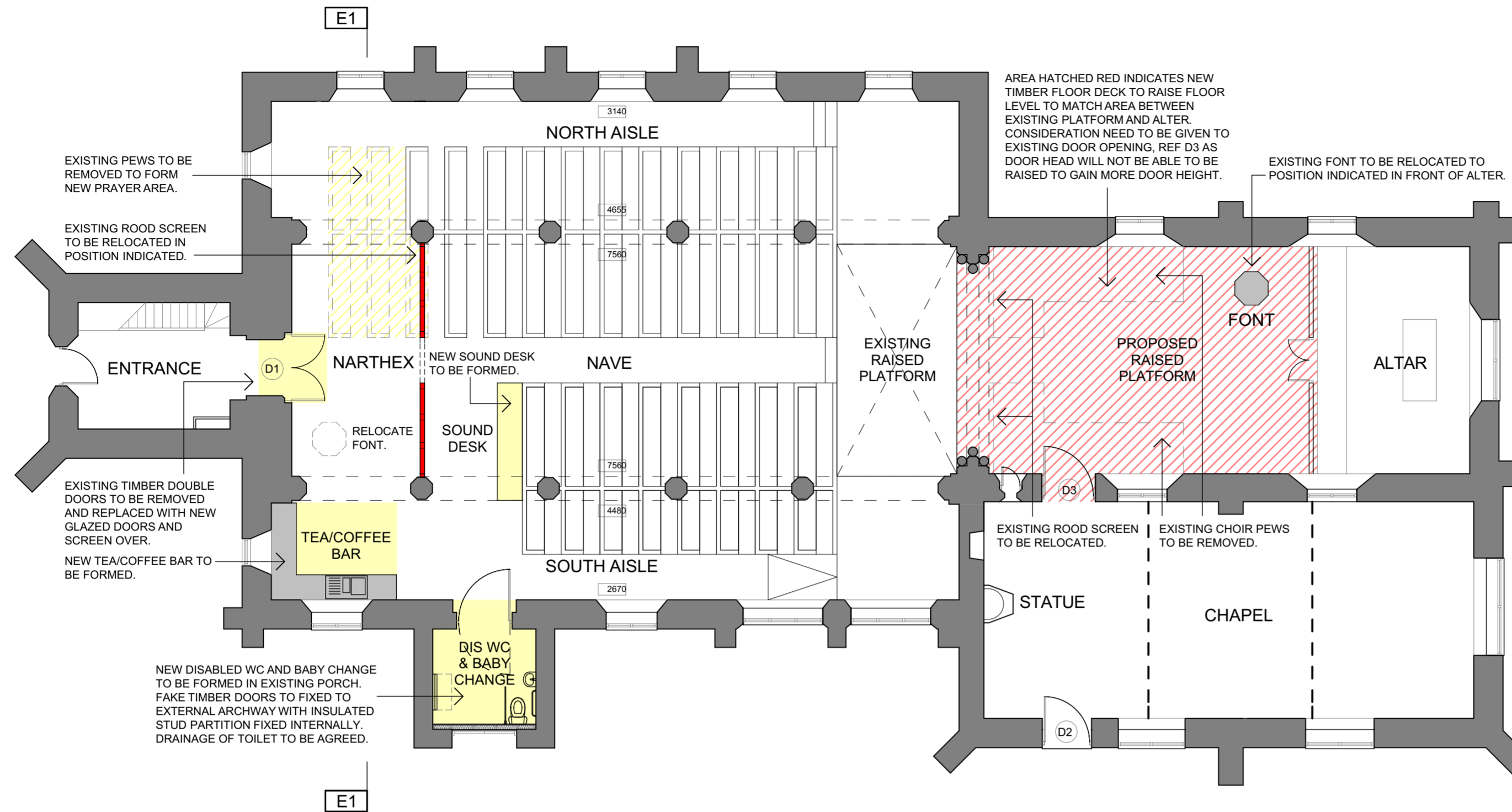
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**EXISTING FLOOR PLAN**

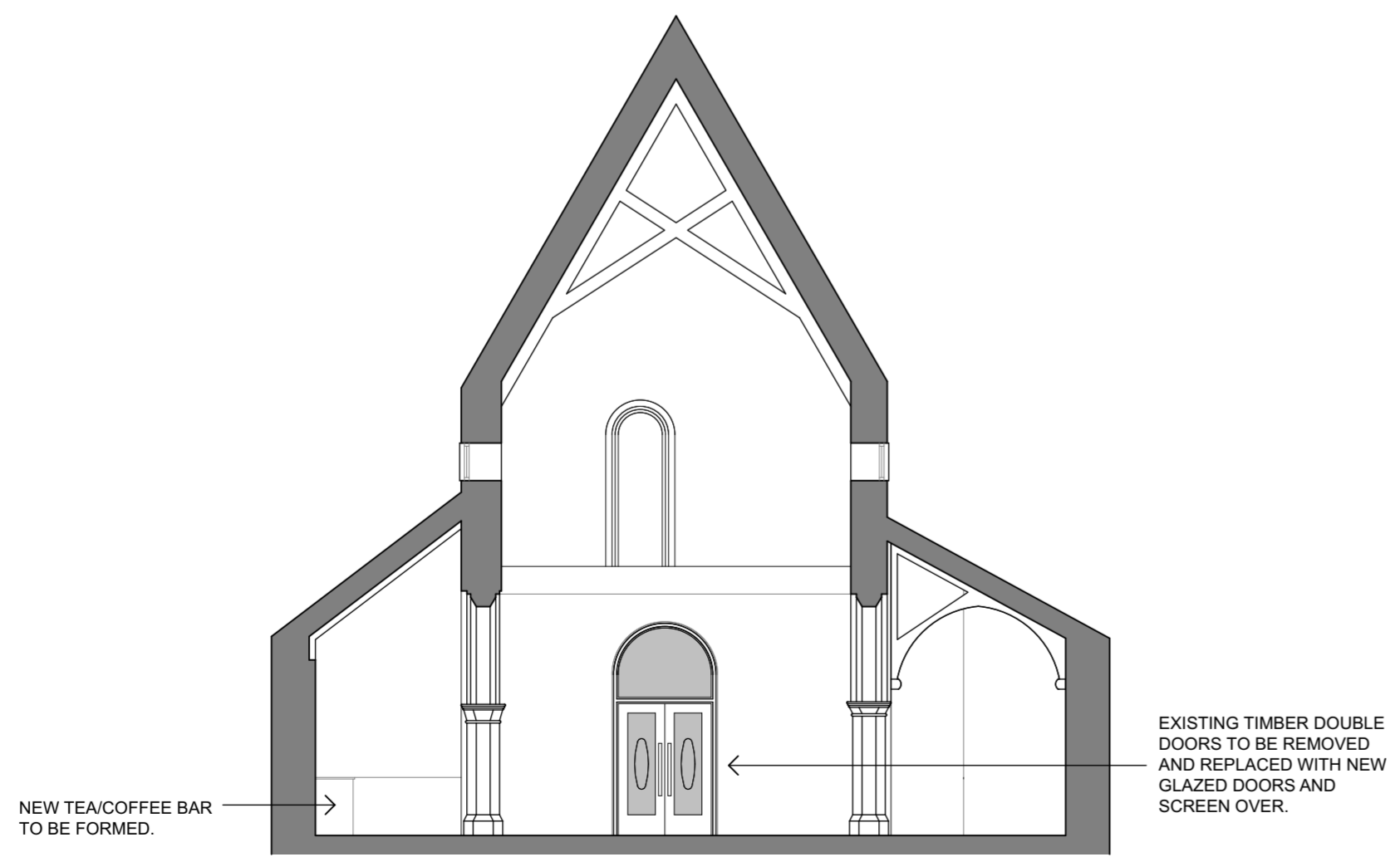
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**3656-07-02**

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PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN



INTERNAL ELEVATION - E1

Rev ID	Date	Comment

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 ARCHITECTS QUANTITY SURVEYORS CDM CO-ORDINATORS

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 Tel: 01782 208000 Fax: 01782 208712 E-mail: info@woodgoldstraw.co.uk  
 www.woodgoldstraw.co.uk

Client:  
**ST MARY'S CE CHURCH,  
 SWYNNERTON**

Project:  
**PROPOSED REORDERING OF  
 EXISTING CHURCH**

Scale <b>1:100</b>	Issue Date <b>24/04/2017</b>
Sheet Size <b>A2</b>	Drawn

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 INTERNAL ELEVATION**

Drawing Number <b>3656-05-18</b>	(Revision)	Revision ID
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 \3656-05 CHURCH RE-ORDER MODEL.pln  
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**SCHEME C - BRIEF SUMMARY OF WORKS WITHING EXISTING CHAPEL**

**GROUND FLOOR**

HATCHED AREAS DENOTE NEW TIMBER FLOOR DECK TO CHAPEL AND PART CHANCEL, BRICK PAVIORS TO BE REMOVED IF POSSIBLE. CONSIDERATION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO EXISTING DOOR OPENING, REF D3 AS DOOR HEAD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BE RAISED TO GAIN MORE DOOR HEIGHT.

NEW DOOR OPENING TO BE FORMED IN EXISTNG WALL, REF D4.

EXISTING STATUE CAN REMAIN IN POSITION.

NEW STUD PARTITION WALLS AND DOORS TO FORM MEETING ROOM.

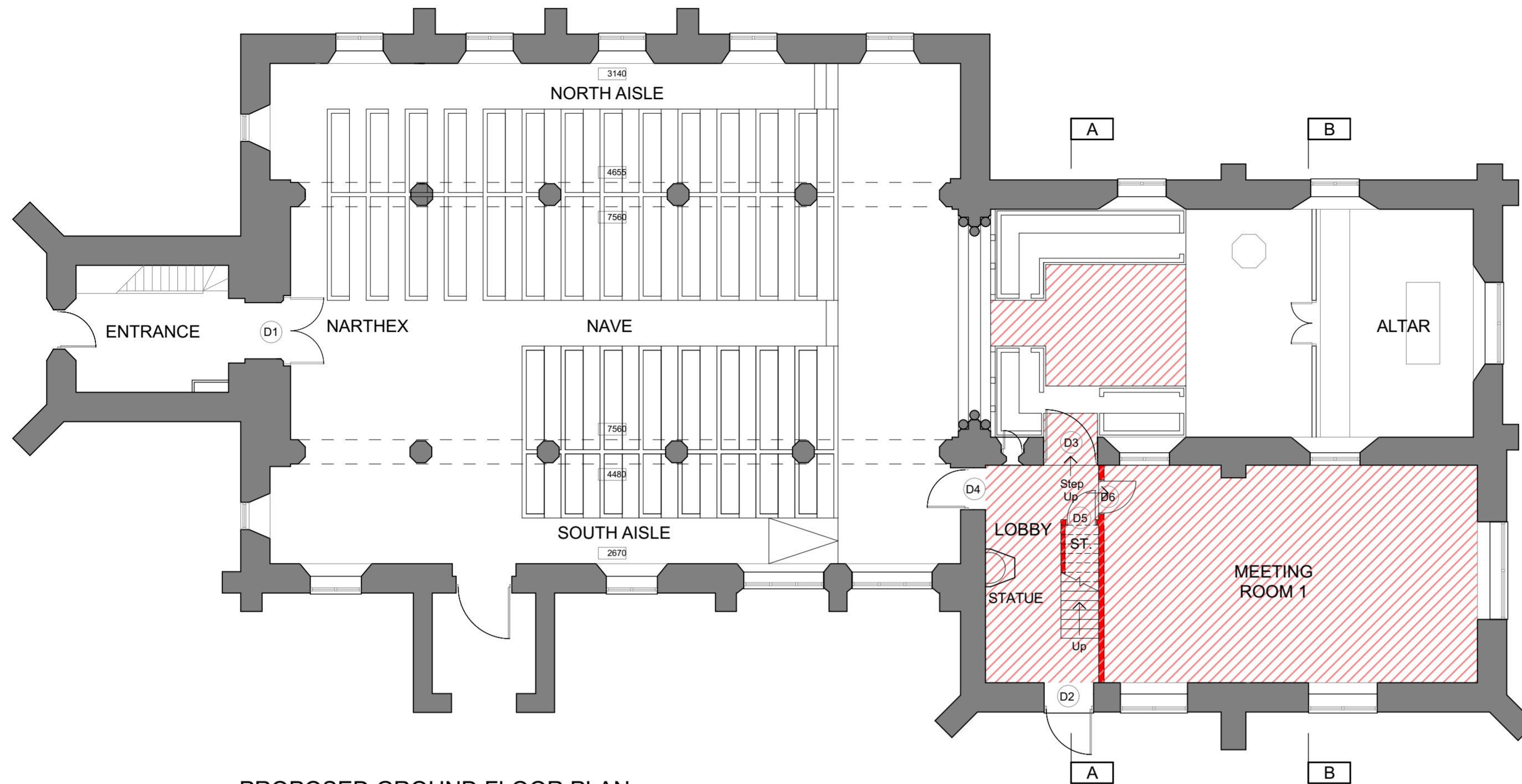
**FIRST FLOOR**

NEW TIMBER FIRST FLOOR TO FORM ROOM WITHIN THE ROOF SPACE.

EXISTING STATUE TO REMAIN IN POSTION AND ROOM MARKED STORE COULD ALSO BE AN OPEN AREA FOR STAIRCASE INSTEAD OF STORE ROOM, THIS MAYBE REQUIRED DUE TO HEIGHT OF STATUE BEING TALLER THAN PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR LEVEL.

NEW STUD PARTITION WALLS AND DOORS TO FORM MEETING ROOMS, STORES AND STAIRCASE LOBBY.

EXISTING ROOF TRUSSES TO REMAIN IN PLAICE WITH HEIGHT TO UNDERSIDE APPROXIMATELY 2100MM.



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Rev ID	Date	Comment
A	01/06/2017	

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Client:  
**ST MARY'S CE CHURCH,  
 SWYNNERTON**

Project:  
**PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO  
 EXISTING CHAPEL**

Scale: **1:100** Issue Date: **01/06/2017**

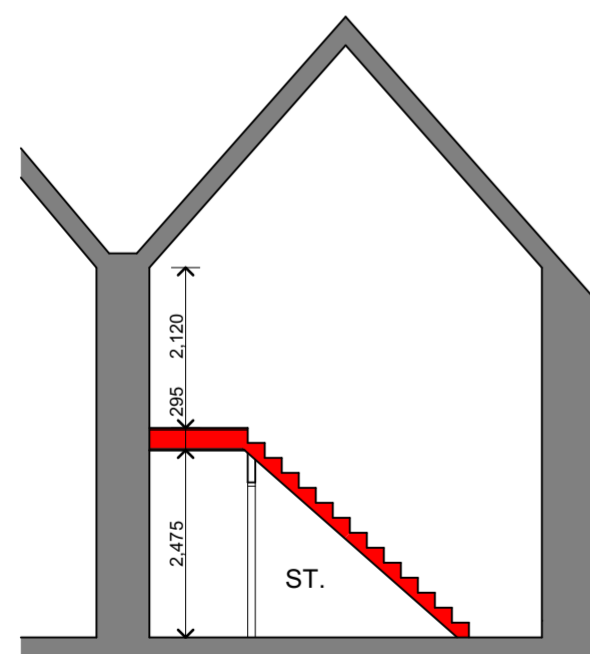
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Title:  
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 CROSS SECTIONS - SCHEME C**

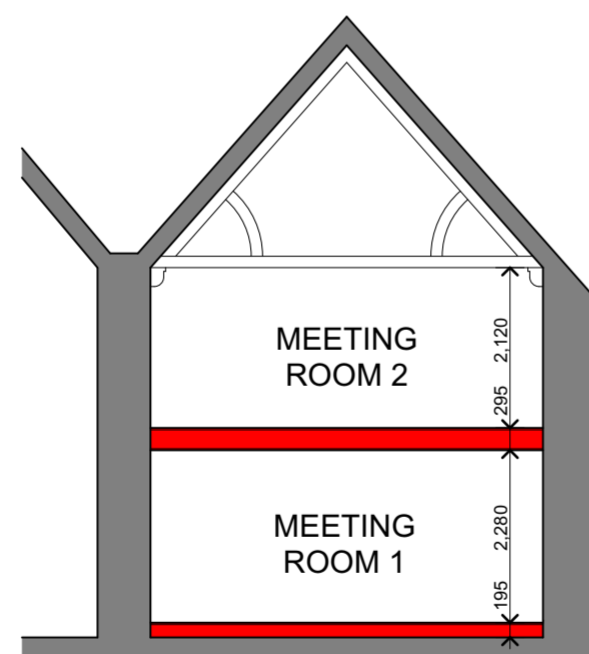
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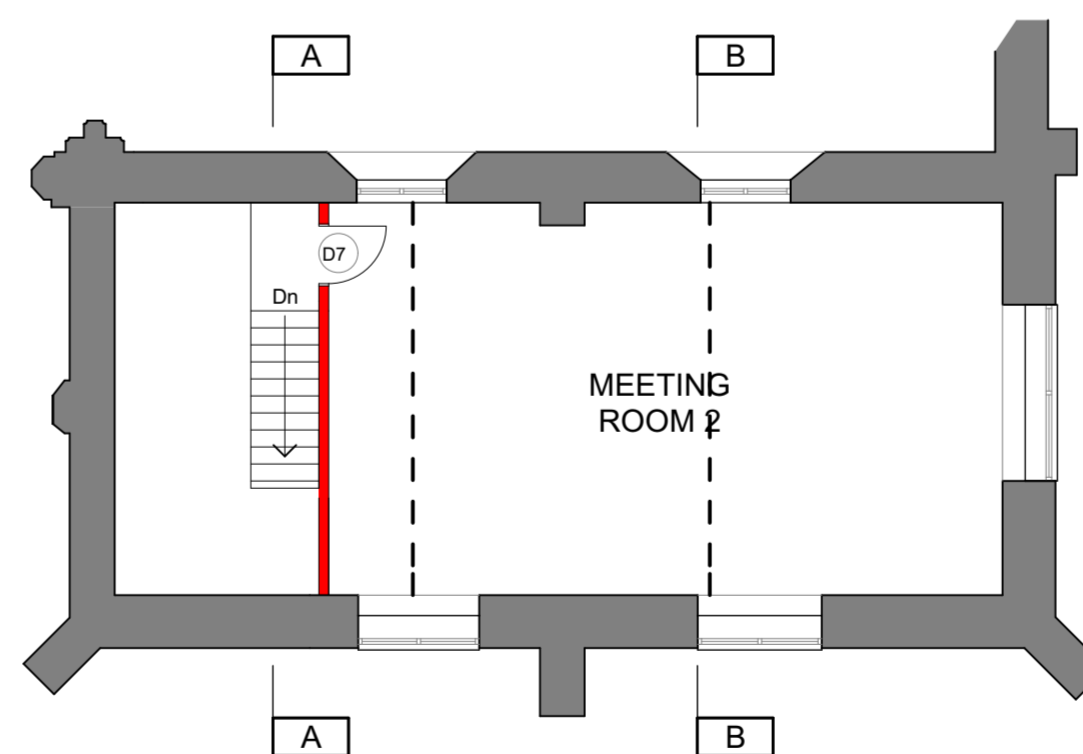
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SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



**HERITAGE SERVICES:**

Constraints reports for land acquisition.  
Desk-Based Assessments.  
Heritage Impact Assessments.  
Heritage Statements and Assessment of Significance.  
Listed Building and Scheduled Monument Consents.  
Historic Landscape Assessments.  
Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.  
Historic Building Recording.  
Setting Assessments.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES:**

Project Management and Set Up.  
Preparation of Methodologies.  
Scoping and negotiation with LPAs  
Preparation of Mitigation Strategies.  
Preparation of WSIs.  
Full range of Fieldwork Services.  
Consultancy and Advice.  
Preparation of Risk Assessments.  
PR & CSR/Public Outreach.

Contact Helen Martin-Bacon MClfA, Director Commercial  
Archaeology

[helen@commercialarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:helen@commercialarchaeology.co.uk)  
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