

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Section 1: Brief history and description of the church building(s), contents, churchyard and setting

This has been a site of Christian worship for at least 800 years although the present church building mostly dates from the 14th and 15th centuries: the latter, especially, was a time of extensive church rebuilding and restoration in this area. Whilst not a scheduled ancient monument, architecturally it is the most important building in the locality. It is listed as Grade I and is the only highly graded building of the 24 listed in this parish of 400 people. The first Rector is recorded in 1249 but there was probably a church here before that.

The church consists of a chancel, nave, south aisle, north porch and three-stage west tower which is Perpendicular in style with elements of what is known as Somerset tracery. It has a peal of five bells which are regularly rung. The earliest parts of the present building date from the 14th century and are the east wall of the nave and south aisle and the eastern part of its south wall. The nave, west tower and the remainder of the south aisle date from the second half of the 15th century. The north wall of the nave, the south wall of the south aisle, the north porch and most of the chancel were all rebuilt in 1864 when the church was extensively restored by William Slater. The roofs of the chancel, nave and tower were also renewed, a gallery at the west end of the south aisle was removed (per Hutchins (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1815)), and a new ringing floor fitted to the tower, while the church interior was repaved, re-floored and the pews fitted by cutting down earlier box-pews

The main architectural features are steps to a long-removed rood-loft; blind panelling on the tower arch which is identical to work in Sherborne Abbey; an 18th-century burial vault topped by an external table-tomb on the north of the chancel; a 15<sup>th</sup> century Font and the Royal Arms of Charles 11 on the south wall of the Nave adjacent to the tower

There is a conventional Victorian choir, with one stall on each side, and an altar rail. The chancel has been elevated and the sanctuary elevated again, most probably during the 1864 work. The result is that the piscina and sanctuary windows are set very low down. The roofs have timber barrel-vaults. The fine 19th-century reredos was probably carved by the well-known artist James Forsyth (1827-1910).

Unlike most churches, Bishops Caundle Church does not have any dedication and is known simply as "Bishops Caundle Church"

Due to its long history the church is an eclectic mix of architectural designs and furniture demonstrating its varying periods of development over many centuries.

The Church has an active role in the local primary school which is a church maintained school

The churchyard is a closed churchyard and is maintained by the local authority on a regular basis.

**Section 2: The significance of the church (including its contents and churchyard) in terms of:**

**i) Its special architectural and historical interest**

**ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest**

The church is on the main road through the village and stands proudly in the Conservation area as a beacon to all who pass through. There is only one access which is directly from the main road and which is not easily accessible for people who are not ambulant. The building is an undisputed part of our heritage. The site is small, probably reflecting the size of the community it was built to serve centuries ago. As the population of the village has increased an additional plot of land across the main road, diametrically opposite the church was acquired for burials.

Two cottages opposite the church are the oldest reported dwellings in the village and it is fair to assume that, when built, it was the centre of the community.

It has over the centuries played a significant role in the community and bears the memorial to those from the village who died in the 1914-18 war. There is no other monument in the village; the church is the lasting monument to these young men and their Head Teacher.

There are a number of historically important memorial plaques on the walls which recognise the long history of the church and which will be maintained to continue that recognition and the importance of the church to the history of the village and its ancient connections going back in part to Norman times. Some of these may have to be relocated as a consequence of the internal changes.

We are uncertain about what we are likely to find beneath the floor which it may affect the detailed design so we will be looking to employ an Archaeologist to undertake documentary research and, if deemed useful, to dig a trial hole.

**Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance defined in Section 2**

The opinion of the Parochial Church Council, clergy and official architect is that our proposals will not have an impact on the external appearance of the building but will improve the internal functioning to enable us to bring the building into wider community and ministry use. However, external works are necessary to repair the roof of the south aisle and its valley with the nave. Our objective is to provide a welcoming environment for worship and wider community use thus preserving the heritage of the original building.

Structurally the Internal alterations proposed are relatively minor and are designed to open up the church to give us greater flexibility to meet the growing needs of the village for worship and community involvement. However, the internal appearance of the church will be radically changed. Removal of the rows of dark pews will create a lighter, more spacious feeling

The west of the church will, in particular, benefit from the plans which move the organ to a more focal point in the south aisle and thus allow space for a WC and access to the ringing floor in the area vacated by the organ in the tower. These moves will open up the currently closed view of the west window and allow light to

stream into the nave.

By repositioning the Grade 2 Listed organ to the south aisle we will tidy up a rather neglected corner, make space for a Vestry and provide a servery etc for the church and communal use. It is planned to replace an existing clear glazed south nave window with the glazing from the decorated window which will be obscured by the re-positioned organ.

The present seating capacity of the church is between 100 to 120 on Victorian pews which were cut down from earlier box pews. As was the practice all pews face the chancel. Many have restricted views because of the structural piers and are riddled with woodworm. All are positioned on wooden plinths above an uneven stone flagged floor. Fixed pews severely restrict any flexible use of the church whether for worship or other communal use.

Flexibility of use is essential to allow the Church to be available for more extensive service to the community so we are proposing the removal of the pews, levelling the floor and providing moveable, stacking chairs. The heating and lighting will be improved together with the installation of a loop and audio visual system. It will be essential if we are to open the building up for wider community use that it is warm and well lit with an adequate number of power points.