

Design & Access Statement (including Heritage Statement) *Conversion of church to form an art and craft centre*

From current use classification of D1 to A1

Church of Cleator Moor, St John the Evangelist, Leconfield Street, Cleator Moor

For Miss Hui Wang



August 2021,

This report should only be used in relation to planning consent.

1. Purpose and background

1.1. Purpose

- i. This report has been prepared to support the planning application relating to the conversion of the existing St John the Evangelist Church, Cleator Moor, to form an art and craft centre where arts and crafts produced by local artists will be sold.
- ii. This document should be read in conjunction with all submitted drawings, appendices and other relevant information and documents that form part of the planning application.

1.2. Background

- i. The church is located off Leconfield Road in Cleator Moor, West Cumbria.
- ii. St John's Church was consecrated on 25th June 1872, and is Anglo-Norman in style. The building consists of a large and lofty nave, with clerestory windows, with large aisles on both sides, and a tower measuring 68 feet high.
- iii. The Church ceased to be a place of worship on 19th March 2017 and has remained redundant since that time.

iv. The meritis architecture includes snecked sandstone blocks with quoins and buttresses with chamfered plinth to chancel. In addition, there is a 3-stage, Romanesque style west tower and nave with aisles and chancel and a number of other intricacies besides. The property is grade II listed.

v. The building was designed by Messrs John Augustus Cory (1819-1887) and Charles John Ferguson (1840-1904) of Carlisle and planned to seat 900 people. The completed church was consecrated in 1872 as recorded by a brass plaque. The church was redecorated in 1899 at the expense of John Stirling (of Montreal mine) when the brick nave arches were covered in concrete. ICBS records also show an approved grant for repairs in 1953-5 under the instruction of architects F G Jackson and C B Martindale. In 1972 a new high altar was introduced and the altar rail repositioned to enlarge the sanctuary and new windows at the E end. Choir stalls were moved to the W end and a Lady Chapel created in the S aisle. A screen was inserted across the base of the tower in 2008.

2. Design

2.1. Design

The proposed design seeks to make use of, and retain, the existing structure as it stands, with no alterations being carried out to existing structural elements.

Whilst the existing windows are of no real architectural significance they are an essential part of the building's character.

The pews within the building are to be repositioned to gain space for the retail use. The proposed internal layout requires that the floor is taken back to the original stone floor with the existing timber raised platforms / staging being removed. This approach allows the building to retain its open form. The pews will remain in the building and will be used should additional seating be needed.

The organ will be removed to make room for the new WC/washroom.

Free standing screens will be used to create 6no. Stalls and to barrier off the pew storage.

The window in the south-west end of the south aisle is currently damaged. As part of the proposed works this window will be restored using same material as the West end of North aisle window.

To retain the existing volume and openness the whole building is to be kept full height.

To the front elevation a new access ramp is to be constructed. The ramp will be formed from dressed sandstone (walls and paving). A metal handrail (painted black) will be mounted on top of the sandstone walls forming the ramp. (See drawing 0821-003-013A) The design of the new access ramp will see the ramp start from the west. The ramp will then lead east and finish with a landing outside the main entrance.

Stepped access to the main entrance will be moved outward (north) to allow space for the landing.

2.2. Use

Currently, the building is redundant, previously used as a place of worship. This application is for change of use to form a retail space where arts and crafts can be sold.

2.3. Amount

The existing building has a gross internal area 380m².

2.4. Layout

The proposed layout is as existing with minor alterations.

2.5. Scale

The proposed building has an external footprint of approximately 540m².

The proposed site has an overall area of 3483m².

2.6. Landscaping

No major landscaping is proposed.

2.7. Appearance

The external fabric is to remain as existing with the exception of the addition of a new Sand Stone ramp which is to be constructed at the main entrance. The ramp and new stepped access will be flanked with dwarf Sand Stone walls with a handrail mounted on top of the wall. Similar to that shown in the image below.

The surface of the ramp, landing and steps will be finished with sand stone paving.

The windows are to be as existing – with 1no. Window to the South West elevation being repaired / restored such that the window is returned to its original state. This includes repairs to the frame and glazing.

3. Access

Vehicular access is through stone gate piers to the NE of the church off Leconfield Street, with a tarmac path continuing along the N boundary

There is access from Crossfield Road to the SE which provides access through stone gate piers and modern metal gates.

The pedestrian access will remain available to the public from Leconfield Street to the second world war memorial and to tend plots in the Garden of Remembrance.

Pedestrian access is to the NW of the church into the car park of the adjacent supermarket, down several steps.

Parking in area to W by hall and in supermarket car park to N

1no. Designated disabled parking space is to be provided north of the main entrance door.

In order to provide easy access to the building for all, the proposal includes the addition of a new access ramp to the main entrance. The design of the new access ramp will see the ramp start from west. The ramp will then lead east and finish with a landing outside the main entrance.

Stepped access to the main entrance will be move outward (north)

The proposed new ramp will be of masonry construction with stonework to match the main building with steps, landings and ramps being paved.

Consideration had been give to the installation of a temporary steel access ramp and stair. While this design would have limited any harm to the building, following consultation and after being directed to the Historic England '*Easy Access to Historic Buildings*' publication, it was determined that the access ramp should complement the existing building while also providing a permanent solution.

4. Heritage Statement

Designation:

NY 01 NW CLEATOR MOOR LECONFIELD STREET (South side) Cleator Moor 5/13 Church of St John Evangelist
II

Parish Church. 1872 by Cory and Ferguson (Carlisle); restored 1900. Snecked sandstone blocks with quoins and buttresses; chamfered plinth to chancel. Graduated slate roofs with chapel outshut to either side of chancel; stone copings and kneelers. Romanesque style; west tower, nave with aisles, chancel. 3-stage tower has paired belfry opening under containing arch with trellis decoration to spandrel; blind recess on either side similarly decorated. Tower stair turret projects on south side at junction with nave; external door. Main door on north side of nave has 4 semicircular orders; 3 outer are decoratively carved, carried between waterleaf capitals on en-delit shafts. Single aisle and clerestory window to each bay of nave; chancel has 3 stepped windows to east end. All windows round-headed under hoodmoulds. Whitewashed brick interior. 4-bay nave arcade of semicircular arches carried between waterleaf capitals on quatrefoil piers. Quadrant vaults to aisles and pointed barrel vault to main vessel, both with transverse arches. Intersecting rib vault to chancel. Polygonal carved wood pulpit to left of chancel arch in nave, matching vicar's stall to right. Carved stone font, on 5 marble shafts, in baptistry to ground floor of tower.

Further Details:

The Church of England Heritage Record 607277 provides the following descriptions:

The tall square tower of St John's ensures its presence on approach. The church was built in one phase and Romanesque or Neo-Norman Theme is continued throughout with every arch and window opening having a round-head. Lean-to aisles above the nave with a clerestory above. The 3-stage W tower has in its base a round-headed window on each side and in the upper level paired belfry openings under a containing arch with blind recesses either side. A door on the S side provides access to the belfry. The main door to the church is on the N side of the N aisle, raised by 5 steps, with handrails to either side. The door is positioned within a decorative carved opening of 3 orders with chevron and floral details, and attached columns with waterleaf columns. It fills a whole bay. The nave is of 4-bays marked by single round-headed windows at aisle and clerestory level, each beneath a hoodmold. Buttresses are positioned between each bay. The lower windows are all protected by rusting grills. The clerestory windows have been replaced with Perspex. The E wall is pierced by 3 round-headed lancets, the central being the tallest, and with a continuous hoodmold over the windows and a sill beneath. The chancel roof is lower and more steeply pitched than the nave.

The interior is huge and lofty, ceiled by a continuous, high, vault-a pointed barrel vault with transverse arches in the nave [Pevsner explains that this was of yellow brick and pink stone but these have been hidden by rendering and painting white]. The combination of clerestory windows and only a little stained glass ensures there is plenty of natural light. The 4-bay nave is articulated by N and S arcades carrying round brick arches on sandstone columns (clusters of 4 with carved acanthus capitals). The original construction was in brick and sandstone and the brick is visible though the render and paint around the arches. The columns, arches, and corbels remain as exposed stone, the rest is painted white. A dog-tooth/chevron-style detail runs continuously at still level beneath the clerestory and round the arcades.

Carpet extends up the main aisle with pews either side, fixed on raised wood boarded pew platforms. Other areas of floor are paved in stone flags. Decoratively carved choir stalls have been relocated to the W end, in front of the base of the tower. A round moulded tower arch is screened by a wood partition and curtain at ground level. The space at the base of the tower is ceiled by a domed vault and doubles as a baptistery and vestry. The aisles are ceiled by quadrant vaults. At the W end of the N aisle is a simple tea point. At the E end are 3 steps leading to a door, concealed behind a curtain, which accesses a space to the N side of the chancel (former organ chamber). The S aisle has the organ in the W bay, and a Lady Chapel altar in the E bay. Ribs rest on carved stone corbels. At the E end, 2 steps (with inserted handrails) lead up to the chancel beneath a high round moulded chancel arch. The chancel area is simple since furniture has been moved out and the area has been carpeted. A 2 bay opening to the N side, with a central round pier, is screened at the lower level by a curtain beneath a wood rail. This area was once occupied by the organ and is now used for storage. The curtain continues around to the E wall where it forms a backdrop to the high altar which is raised on another step. The roof is formed differently to the nave, with intersecting ribs, and is painted dark blue with gold text and stars. The walls of the chancel have exposed stone around the base. A small round-arched door in the S wall leads to the former vestries.

Conversion of the church to form an art and craft centre.

The leaded window on the west end of south aisle will be repaired / restored such that the window is returned to its original state. This includes repairs to the frame and glazing.

The supported free standing timber stud partitioning wall forming the new WC will tie in between the buttresses and the wall by way of an interference fit. A ceiling will be installed to separate the space from the nave of the church.

The pews will be repositioned or removed as required to make the necessary space for the proposed use. The timber staging / deck that the pews currently sit on will be removed so as not to create a trip hazard within the new open space.

The organ was manual, originally by Gray and Davisson in 1877. Rebuilt by Jardine and Co Ltd in 1924 to commemorate the Jubilee of the church in 1922 as recorded by a plaque.

The main parts of the organ have been dismantled and removed at the time of viewing the property in 2020.

The keyboard – and the actual musical instrument part of the Organ had gone at this time, with the only remaining parts being the wood and steel frame work to support the internal bellows and the external organ pipes.

Due to wood worm being present and as the remaining parts of the organ serving no useful purpose and not practicable to keep, and so the non-functional parts of the organ will be removed to create space for the new WC.

Consideration had been given to retaining the facade of the organ and creating partition walls behind the facade to form the new WC. However following discussions with the joinery contractor, the complexity of doing this does not make it a feasible proposal.

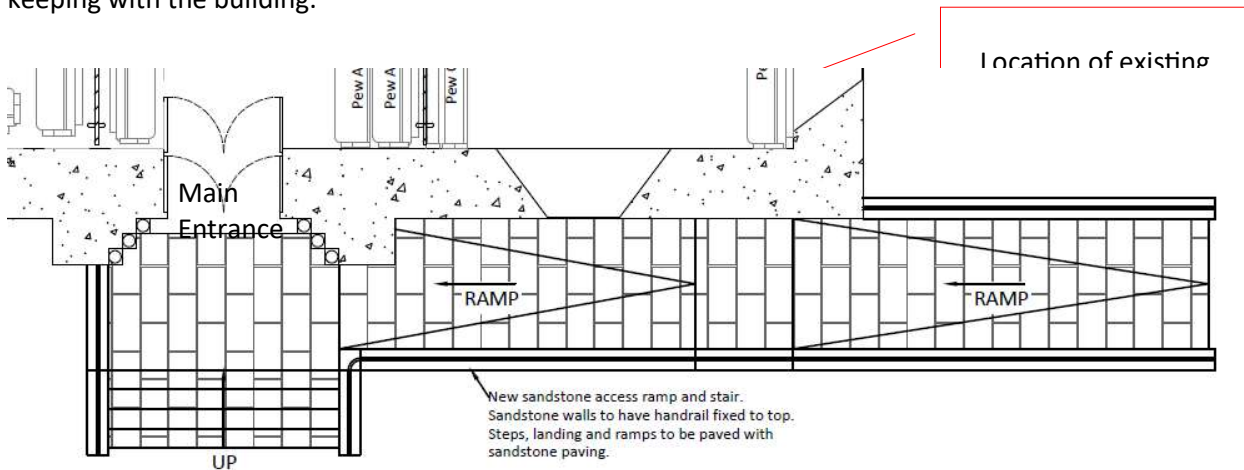
The Design intent is to give visitors to the building whilst looking in both directions the impression that it gives at the present time with an open layout.

Externally the new access ramp to the main entrance will allow people of all abilities to use the building for the foreseeable future. The addition of the access ramp will mean that the existing original sandstone steps will need to be removed, however the removed sandstone will be used to form the new steps. (See

fig. 6 on page 11) The impact of removing the existing steps to the main entrance is believed to be minor. The existing steps are chipped, cracked and uneven and could present a hazard to members of the public using the building.

Consideration had been given to providing a removable ramp that would not require the removal of the existing steps or the addition of a permanent structure. However this option was dismissed as it would not provide independent access to the building as required by the The Equality Act 2010.

Consideration was also give to the installation of a steel semi permanent access ramp that would have minimal impact on the existing building. This option was dismissed as its appearance would not be in keeping with the building.



To the right of the main entrance there is an existing rainwater downpipe. The addition of the ramp will raise the ground level in the location of this rainwater downpipe and a result the gully will need to be raised to the new level.

Impact on the Buildings Heritage

The prominent feature of the building is the square tower. This feature remains untouched as part of the proposed scheme.

The main door to the church on the North side is raised by 5 steps. The proposed scheme includes the removal of some of these steps to allow the addition on a new access ramp. Only the existing steps that can be removed with use of manual tools and do not require cutting will be removed. Where steps are removed the removed material along with new material will be used in forming the new steps.

The existing steps that remain in place will be protected by adding a plastic membrane between the new ramp construction and the existing steps / building. The existing handrails either side of the main door will also be removed.

The decorative carved opening that the door is positioned within will remain untouched / as existing.

The windows throughout the building will remain untouched / as existing, with the exception of one window. The window in the south-west end of the south aisle is currently damaged. As part of the proposed works this window will be restored using same material as the West end of North aisle window. The openness created by the high ceilings is to remain as existing with no work being carried out to the ceilings.

The space is to remain undivided with no walls being erected within the nave and north arcade. The scheme will allow for stalls to be created by the use of free standing screens.

The arcade to the south is to see the addition of a disabled access toilet to the west end in the current location of the organ.

The columns, arches and corbels between the nave and the north and south arcades are to remain as existing.

The dog-tooth/chevron-style detailing running around the arcades will remain untouched / as existing.

The pews are currently fixed on a raised wood boarded platforms. The pews are to be removed from the raised platforms to allow the raised platforms to be removed to expose the stone floor below. The pews will remain within the building but unfixed so that they can be used through out the building.

The paved stone floor is to remain as existing with more of the stone floor being exposed with the removal of the pew platforms.

The decoratively carved choir stalls are to remain in their existing position. (At the west end in front of the tower base.)

The wood partition and curtain screening off the base of the tower is to remain in place with the space at the base of the tower being used as an office with no alterations being made to the layout and features within the space.

The 3 steps and external door to the east of the north aisle is to remain as existing.

The organ located at the west of the south aisle is currently partially dismantled and what remains is suffering from woodworm. The proposed scheme sees the remain organ parts removed to make space for a new disabled access toilet.

The chancel and its high ceiling is to remain as existing, however the space is to be used for the storage of pews and will be screened off from the nave using free standing screens. The screens will however be of a height that still allows visitors to see the feature ceiling of intersecting ribs and artwork.

The exposed stone walls around the chancel and the small arched door in the south wall (to the former vestries) are to remain as existing.

Summary

St John the Evangelist Church in Cleator Moor is currently unused and is falling into a state of disrepair and is no longer water / weather tight as a result and risks becoming a victim to vandals and rot. While the proposed works see some features removed or altered, including the removal of the existing organ and the addition of a new access ramp, the proposed work will see the building occupied again and maintained.

The proposal will see the building repurposed in a way that requires minimal alteration to the building layout and appearance that are believed to result in 'less than substantial harm to its significance'.

Relevant Policies:

NPPF para 189. with regards to Heritage assets states:

'These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'

The proposed work will see repairs carried out that will extend the life of the building, prevent vandalism and allow people of all abilities use the building.

NPPF para 199. states;

'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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'



Figure 1: Nave looking towards to the base of tower.



Figure 2: Nave looking towards to the chancel.



Figure 3: Internal detailing to be retained.



Figure 4: Bell tower



Figure 5: the remains of the organ

Fig.6 - Existing Stepped Entrance.



Fig. 7 - Existing stepped entrance. Existing steps to be removed. New access ramp to be constructed. Material removed from existing steps to be re-cycled in the construction of the new ramp and steps. To the right of the above image an existing rainwater downpipe can be seen. The addition of the ramp will raise the ground level in the location of this rainwater downpipe and as a result the gully will need to be raised to the new level.

