



Architects

**St Mildred's Church
Nurstead, Kent
DA13 9AD**

**DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
AND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

23 August 2022

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

According to the Historic England website this church building with its walls of oblong flints dates back to 1349.

The Listing for this building refers to it being "15th Century perhaps earlier with later windows, West tower 15th century. Chancel and nave without division. Vestry and north porch added 19th century".

St Mildreds stands in grounds of just over three quarters of an acre. The site is rectangular in plan and the church building is located in the southern part of the site. Nurstead Church Lane runs along the northern boundary and there are well established trees and hedges along all four boundaries.

Burials are spread out around the site, including some which are close to the church building but no burials are believed to have taken place in the south west corner where it is proposed to locate the new wc building.

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 building is Grade 2* Listed. According to Guy (Story of Gravesham, Tempus publishing 2007) the church is of Saxon origin. The Meopham Parish Council website states that the first mention of St Mildred's Church, Nurstead was in 1115 but the source is not given. Today much of the church is medieval. The church was built/rebuilt not long after the nearby Nurstead Court (Grade 1 Listed) which is described on the Meopham Parish Council website as "one of the most famous small medieval houses in the country".

Guy describes Nurstead as a 'shrunk village' and the village has certainly had a tiny population for at least 200 years with numbers never getting above 64 and the population of 39 people taken from the 2011 census would be close to the average population for the whole period (Census tables in Victoria County History of Kent Vol 3, 1932).

This probably explains why the church building has only rarely been altered since medieval times and the land around it has not been encroached by more recent development.

Returning to the building itself the Historic England website states that the "large east window is of particular interest showing St Mildred with her stag, St George, Christ, St Anselm and St Alban".

The only obvious alteration from recent times, the 19th century vestry and north porch were an early work of local architect Sir Herbert Baker. Baker went on to design architecturally significant buildings in India and South Africa and the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing, Zonnebeke, Ypres Salient Battlefields, Belgium. The extension itself is in keeping with the rest of the church building using similar materials and detailing and it is located on the south side leaving the main north elevation unaltered. This extension is shown on the photograph on the next page.



The significance of this church is that, for the reasons noted above it has not been greatly altered and is therefore a good example of a medieval village church. Its historic connections with the nearby Nurstead Court add to its significance. Overall the church may be considered to be of moderate-high significance.

It is considered that the 19th century extensions took the significance of the church into account by using matching materials and detailing and by the location of the extension.



Fig 1 North elevation



Fig 2 North elevation: A watercolour from 1807 (Petrie H, FSA) showing how little the north side of the church has changed



Fig 3 19th century extension



Fig 4 Interior showing east window

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

The plans show a wc as a small external and detached prefabricated module accommodating a waterless composting toilet. Other options have been considered.

If the wc was created within the existing building it would also require a lobby for privacy and hygiene reasons. This combined wc and lobby would represent a significant intrusion within the very simple planning of the existing building. It would also limit the number of people that can be accommodated. Although this may not affect the weekly services it would have a significant impact on weddings and at Christmas, both of which have been identified by the PCC as important events in their statement of need.

Another option would be an extension attached to the existing building. This has the advantage of following the precedent of the Herbert Baker alterations. Set against this is the fact that a lobby would still be needed, increasing the size of the addition. Space around the perimeter of the existing building is very restricted as graves come close on all sides and there is also the relocation of drains to consider. It is not practical to extend the Herbert Baker extension without compromising the layout and thus making it necessary to make the new extension even bigger. It would therefore be necessary to break through the existing medieval fabric of the building. This would result in greater harm to the significance of the building than that caused by a small detached building.

The proposed cabin has been located to the rear south boundary of the site. This is clear of any recorded burials. A topographic survey has been commissioned to ensure that the location can be accommodated and no adverse impacts on burials or the existing buildings are expected.

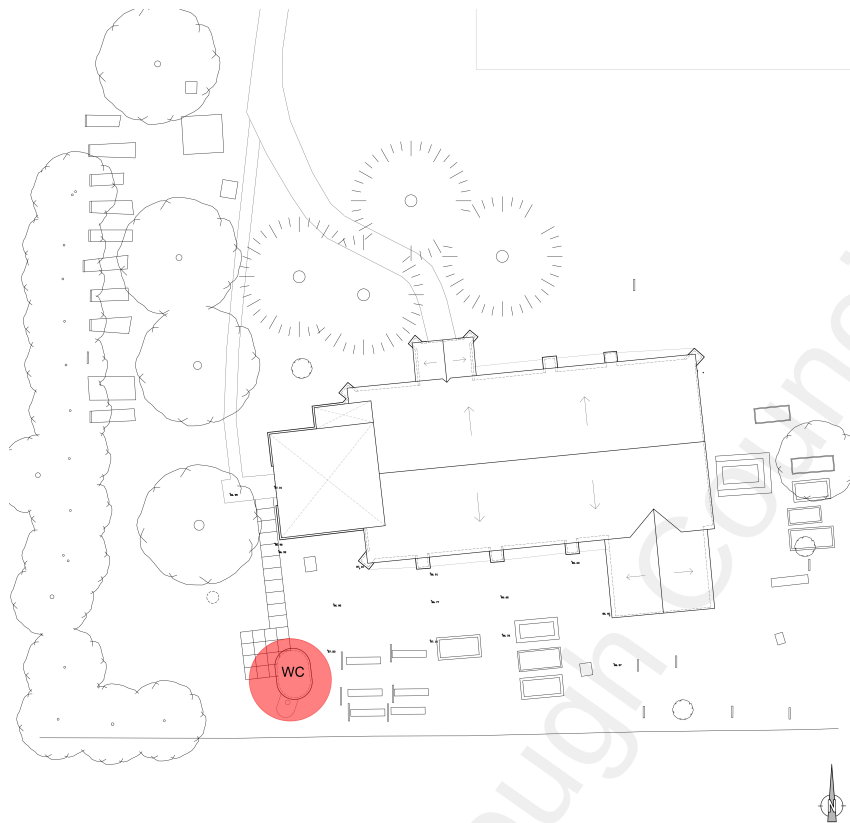
The proposed location being to the south of the building is on the same side as the 19th century extension and leaves the main north elevation unchanged. The proposed building is detached from the church building, separated by a distance of about 6m.

The toilet module was initially to be located in the south west corner of the site but was changed to the current location due to the following reasons:

- The visual impact of the toilet will be reduced by the toilet being 'behind' the church when viewed from the approach rather than to the side of the church.
- This will be assisted by the toilet being located behind tree ref T2 which is a holly providing year round cover
- The manufacturer has confirmed that the installation would work very well in the originally proposed location but existing shrub growth along the south west corner of the site may in the long term impact the performance and/or require more regular pruning. The new location moves the toilet further away from the corner of the site to a location close to the rear boundary and absent of trees & shrubs.
- The new location makes for a more straightforward access route from the church.

The new location can be seen in the images below:

St Mildred's Church, Nurstead DA13 9AD



Appearance

An original proposal for an external detached lavatory building was submitted to the Local Planning Authority and obtained Granted Permission and Listed Building Consent in July 2019 .

The proposal put forward a building whose materials and detailing were selected to match the main church in the same manner as the 19th century extension, including a plain clay tile covered pitched roof and walls constructed using individual knapped flints.

Unfortunately tenders for this building were far higher than can ever be afforded by the PCC with its stable but small congregation. Cost savings were considered but even a greatly watered down scheme would still have been greater than the available funds and it is felt that a building which appears a greatly cheapened version of the original would not be appropriate.

For this reason a completely new proposal is being put forward. The services aspect of the new proposal will be considered in the next section.

The new building will be far less substantial in appearance than the original proposal. It consists of a simple non insulated timber clad light gauge steel framed enclosure with a flat roof covered with dark grey single ply flat roofing membrane. The new proposal features a grp funnel design but this is on the rear elevation & not visible from the church, it is the timber cladding which will be the most visible feature as shown on the photographs below:





The external walls are to be in pine “thermowood” left to the weather and the door in powder coated in black.

Services

Due to its rather secluded rural location lack of access to mains services will have to be addressed.

There is no suitable water supply in this part of Nurstead Church Lane and at present the nearest water mains is located in Wrotham Road nearly 200 metres away. The possibility of laying a new water main across the side of the fields to the south of the church was investigated at some length and the technical aspects agreed in principle with Southern Water but the land owner has at present refused to give consent.

The possibility of a sub mains from the adjacent houses was also looked into but the owners reluctantly declined as they were advised that this could create legal issues when they come to sell.

A greywater recycling option was also considered with a holding tank close to the rear of the main church building where existing rainwater pipes would have to be diverted. The water would then need to be pumped to a header tank in the new building. This option has also been ruled out due to the high costs involved and the difficulty of finding space for the tank and pipework in an area which features quite a few burials.

It was then proposed to include a header tank supplied from a water bowser located to the rear of the new building. This bowser would be topped up periodically by a

hose from an adjacent house. This option has also now been rejected mainly due to the costs involved. Instead a water-less toilet option is now being proposed with a composting wc and hand wipes.

For foul-water drainage a septic tank/ treatment plant with a drainage field was considered but this would need to have been located close to the northern boundary due to the need for servicing by a waste vehicle. This would have entailed expensive and disruptive work to lay the drains & was therefore rejected.

It was then proposed to use a trench arch drainage system. The trench would be located beneath a new side access path running along an existing route to a side door. This has also been rejected due to cost and the disruption involved in forming a long drainage trench.

It is now proposed to provide a **Kazuba Ltd KL2 WooWoo** waterless toilet. This consists of a grp tank & funnel shaped ventilation to contain the waste & use a naturally vented evaporating/drying mechanism.

This system still requires periodic maintenance. Initially this involves monthly and then quarterly inspections to check levels, followed by annual or two yearly servicing to manually remove solid waste.

Diocesan Advisory Committee

An application for a faculty was made in 2018/2019 and following consultation the Diocesan Advisory Committee recommended approval for the original proposal subject to the following provisos:

1. That the hand wash basin is not installed until a mains water supply is established;
2. The submission and approval of detail drawings;
3. The submission and approval of Preliminaries, Specification & Schedule of Works;
4. That an archaeological watching brief be in place during excavation works.

A Notification of Advice was issued in May 2019 and detail drawings, Specification and a Schedule of Works were submitted in December 2019.

The Notification of Advice was revised in January 2020 and re-issued subject only to provisos 1 and 4.

Due to the high costs of the proposed lavatory the faculty application was not taken forward and the PCC requested DAC's views on an alternative scheme to install a waterless toilet.

In February 2021 the DAC encouraged to investigate the alternative proposal though required further information from the suppliers regarding the impact of trees in the churchyard and the effects on the efficacy of the fan.

Documents supporting the new proposal were issued to the Diocese in September 2021 and a new drawing was submitted where the compostable toilet was relocated away from the south west corner after consulting the supplier regarding the long term efficacy of the system. This location also had the advantage of reducing the visual impact of the toilet.

In February 2022 The Committee agreed the new location would be more favourable when accessing the church from the main door but expressed reservations about the view from the church tower corner and requested photos from the boundary. There was a request to move the location further eastwards and details of the path, the paved apron, the falls of the roof and the finishing of the external timber walls were

also requested. Suggestions to reduce visual impact were made including the use of untreated timber on the walls, a black front door and a sedum roof was proposed.

Comments and suggestions were taken into account and a new drawing was submitted in April 2022 where the unit was relocated to the east of the proposed path and within the limitations of the site, taking into account the proximity of the nearby existing burials. The sedum roof was discarded due to the unit being a lightweight structure.

In meeting held in April, the Committee recommended approval subject to the following conditions:

1. That the "thermowood" exterior be left unfinished to weather;
2. That the stainless steel door be painted a dark grey or black.
3. That an archaeological watching brief be in place during excavation works and that a report be submitted to KCC and the DAC.
4. That Planning consent be obtained.

A Faculty Proposal has been submitted and public notices displayed in the church.

Conclusion

I will conclude by considering the impact of the proposal on the significance of the building. The significance of the building has been seen to be partly as a result of the lack of development of the church and surroundings over time so any intervention at all will be assumed to cause some harm. In this case the harm has been minimised by the location and detachment of the proposed unit (and its small size) and by measures taken to minimise the impact of servicing the building. The harm can therefore be considered to be less than substantial.

Set against this is the considerable benefit of providing what for most public buildings would be considered to be an essential and expected basic facility. This will enable the church to cater for its existing users, including elderly people and to potentially attract others to the church including those with young families, helping to sustain the church in the longer term.