



SJA3472 St Andrews Art Centre Heritage, Design and Access Statement Acoustic works

St Andrews Art Centre
Royal Pier Road,
Gravesend
DA12 2BD

Ref. SJA3472a/doc/P01 June 2026

Rev 1 – Aug 2026

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Appendix A – History of St Andrews’ Art Centre

*Front cover image taken from
Historic England’s Listed Building website*

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access statement has been prepared in support of the Listed Building Consent (LBC) application submitted by Stuart James Associates Ltd, acting as agents for the client, for proposed acoustic works to the Grade II Listed St Andrews' Art Centre building, DA12 2BD. It sets out the design rationale, heritage and access considerations underpinning the proposed works, in line with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023), and Gravesham Borough Council's Local Plan policies.

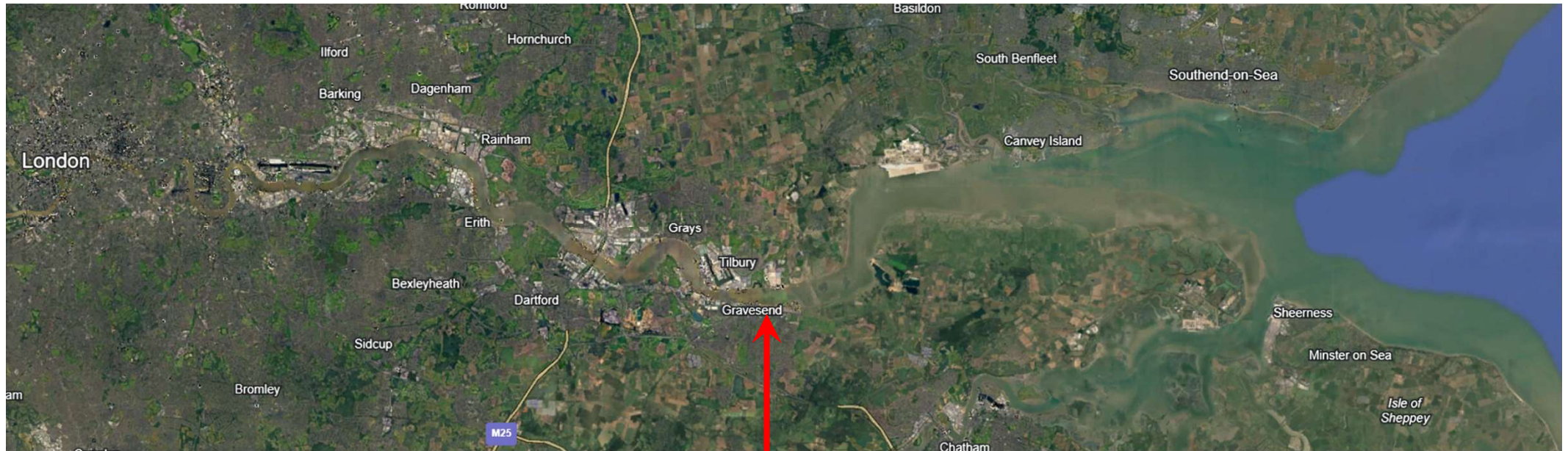
Funding has been obtained for a general refurbishment of the buildings' interior in support of the buildings' current function as a community asset. As part of this upgrade it is proposed to install acoustic baffles into the vaulted ceiling of the main hall, in order to greatly improve the halls' function as a multi-use community venue. The proposal makes no change to the footprint or size of the building, and no changes are proposed to the buildings' current function or external appearance.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and documents, submitted with this application:

Archaeological statement	Proposed ground floor plan	Existing internal elevations 1 and 3
Flood Risk Assessment	Proposed roof plan	Existing internal elevation 2
	Proposed front elevation	Existing internal elevation 4
Location plan & context photographs	Proposed rear elevation	
	Proposed side (east) elevation	Proposed internal elevation 1
Existing site plan	Proposed side (west) elevation	Proposed internal elevation 2
	Proposed Section A	Proposed internal elevation 3
Existing ground floor plan		Proposed internal elevation 4
Existing roof plan	Existing reflected ceiling plan	
Existing front elevation	Proposed reflected ceiling plan	
Existing rear elevation		
Existing side (east) elevation		
Existing side (west) elevation		
Existing Section A		

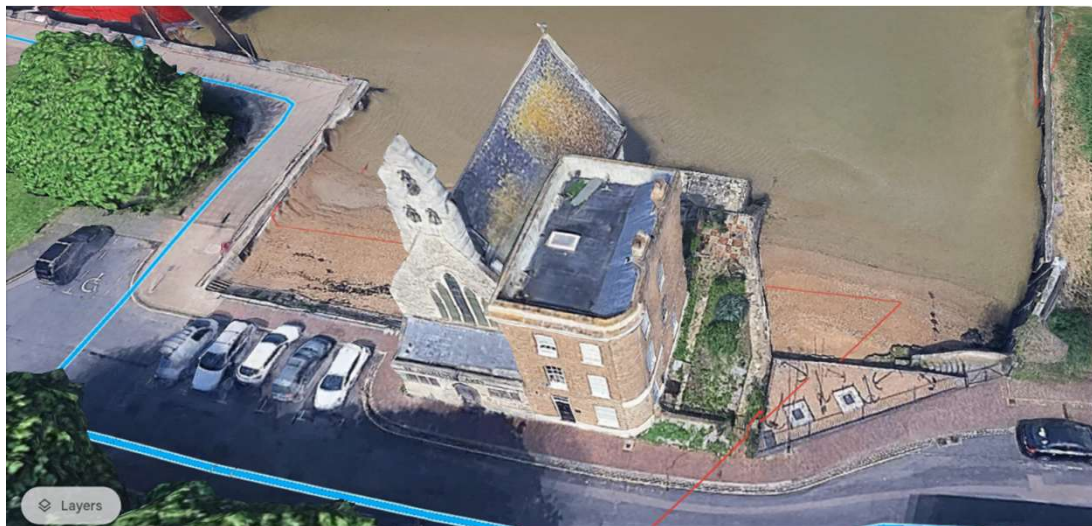
2. LOCATION

a) Context



St Andrew's

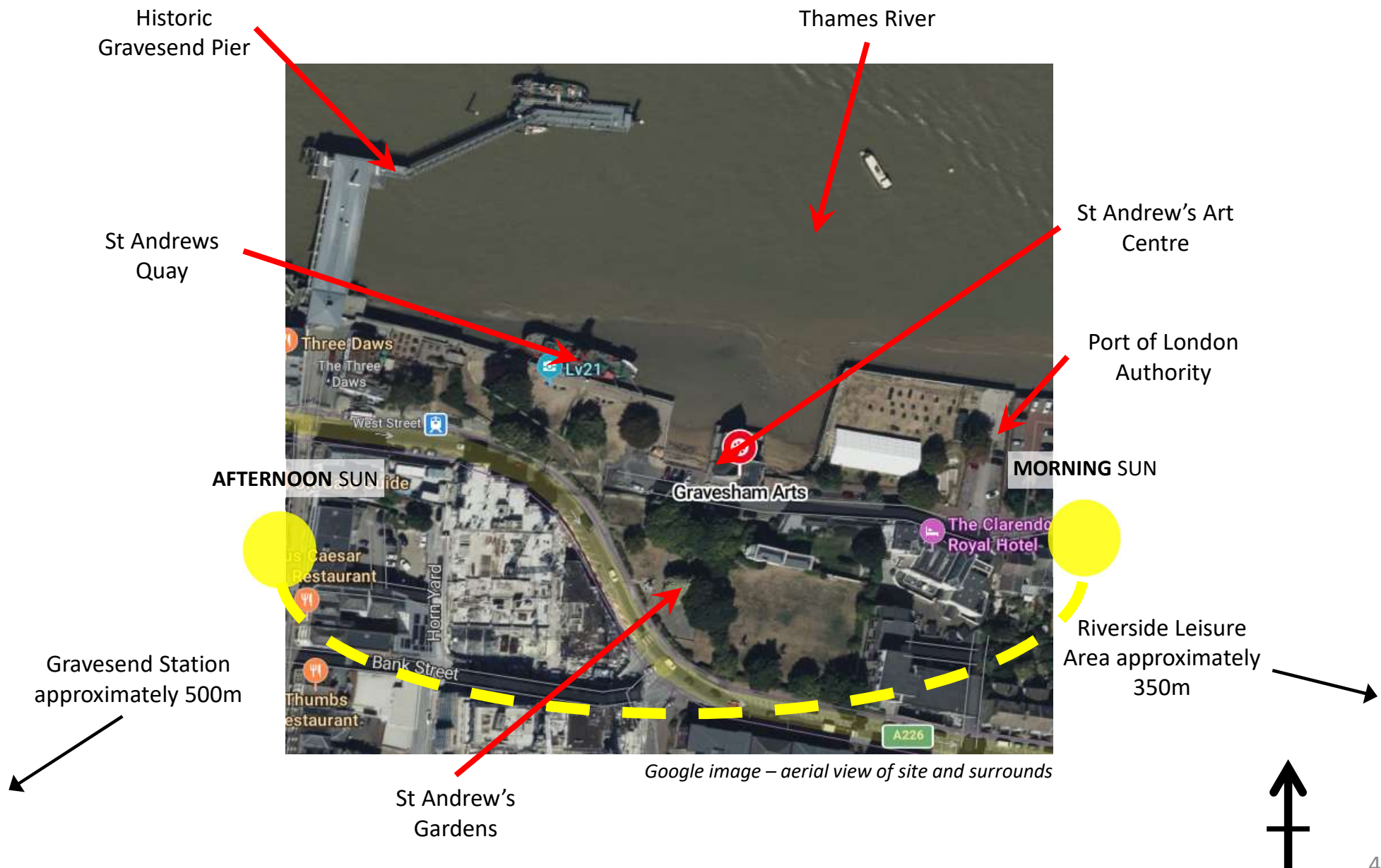
Google Earth image – aerial map showing general location



Google Earth image – aerial view of St Andrew's church and the adjoining Mission Building to the east

2. LOCATION

b) Site Analysis



2. LOCATION

c) Context Photographs

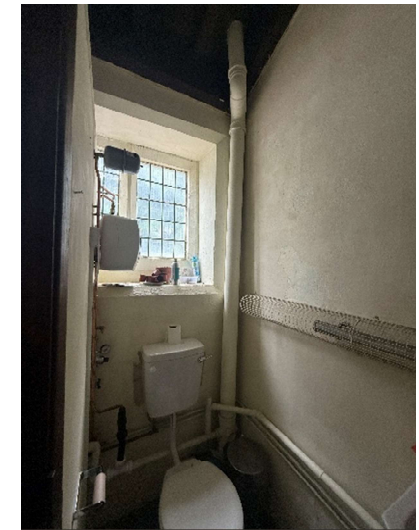
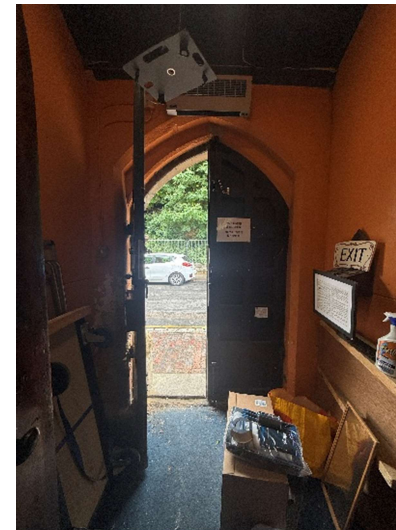
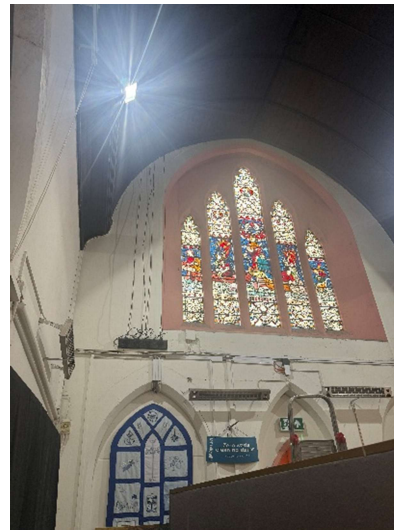
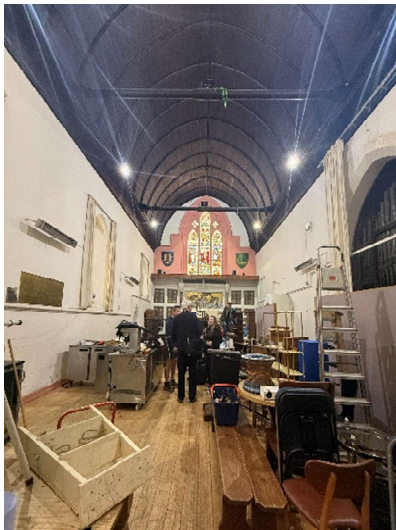


d) Existing building

The property is located in Gravesham Borough Council and is in the Riverside Conservation Area. St Andrews is a Grade II listed building under UID: 1039109. Historic England's official list entry notes the building as follows:

'ROYAL PIER ROAD (north side) St Andrew's Arts Centre (Formerly listed as St Andrew's Waterside Chapel): GV II 1870-71; G.E Street architect. Built originally as a mission chapel for seamen and known as St Andrew's Waterside Chapel. Rectangular plan. Gothic style. Built of ragstone with Bath stone dressings. Slate roof. Former carthex at west with lean-to roof behind a parapet; central doorway with segmental Gothic arch; a flat-arched three-light window to each side of door. Under the west gable are five stepped lancets; a large stone bellcote rises from the apex of the gable. Three lancet windows in side elevation. At east end there is a three-light plate traciered window. Inside vaulted roof lined with pine boarding with moulded ribs; coved cornice; stained glass windows. The former mission chapel has been converted to an Arts Centre.'

A potted history (copy attached as Appendix A to this report) of the building is fixed to one of the internal walls and confirms that the building was purchased by Gravesend Borough Council in 1975 and has been leased to the Gravesham Arts Council since 1976. Redecoration and the erection of the stage at the rear of the building dates from this time. The building is currently used for meetings, rehearsals, exhibitions and presentations, and is available for private hire.



SJA site photographs 2025 – internal views

a) Planning history

St Andrews Gardens, opposite the site, has been the subject of numerous applications including tree works, erection of a statue and various applications for development.

St Andrews Quay, to the rear of the site, has been the subject of applications relating to permanent mooring of vessels and their use as heritage/museum venues.

Application numbers 20080696 and 20120931, for redevelopment in the Heritage Quarter, do not include St Andrews Art Centre but are directly adjacent.

20211253 and 20211252 for the Mission House Conversion from dwelling to office – Permitted.

St Andrews applications:

PRE20260017 Internal and external alterations. Observations sent 05/06/2026

20251118 & 20251118 Application for Listed Building Consent; Proposed internal reconfiguration of services area, new external doors and installation of new stage. Application returned.

PRE20250159 Redevelopment to provide an improved accessibility to the building, with improved entrance door, functional accessible WC, additional WC and internal lobby with automated door. Observations sent 02/10/2025

20210997 Application for the approval of condition 3 attached to Listed Building Consent reference no 20181030 relating to rebuilding of facing brick wall. Application withdrawn

20181058 Consultation on application for a marine licence. Observations Sent 02.11.2018

20181030 Application for Listed Building Consent for the repair of river wall at north west corner. Permitted

b) Relevant planning legislation

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), including Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994

Gravesham Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Development Briefs and Riverside Conservation Area Appraisal

Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)

Management Plan – Gravesend Town Centre Conservation Areas (2009)

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

c) Planning constraints

A search of the relevant areas indicates that the following planning overlays potentially relate to this site:

- i. Area of Archaeological potential.
- ii. Agricultural Land Classification.
- iii. To note: nearby roads Crooked Lane and The Terrace are in an Air Quality Management area.
- iv. Site is directly on the border of the Thames River management zone: Urban Boundary - Gravesend, Northfleet And Ebbsfleet. Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Buffer Zone
- v. Built up area.
- vi. Site lies within the Riverside, Gravesend Conservation Area
- vii. Online flood mapping data indicates that the site is at high risk from rivers and sea flooding but at low risk from surface water flooding.
- viii. Both St Andrews and the adjoining Mission building are listed.
- ix. Local Resilience Forum.
- x. Local Authority District.
- xi. Local Planning Authority (Gravesham Borough).
- xii. Region.
- xiii. There is a scheduled monument just to the east of the site.
- xiv. Site lies within the Gravesend Town Centre - Policy CS05 (opportunity area).
- xv. Section 106 Agreement (West St Bath St Royal Pier Rd & Queen St (Heritage Quarter)

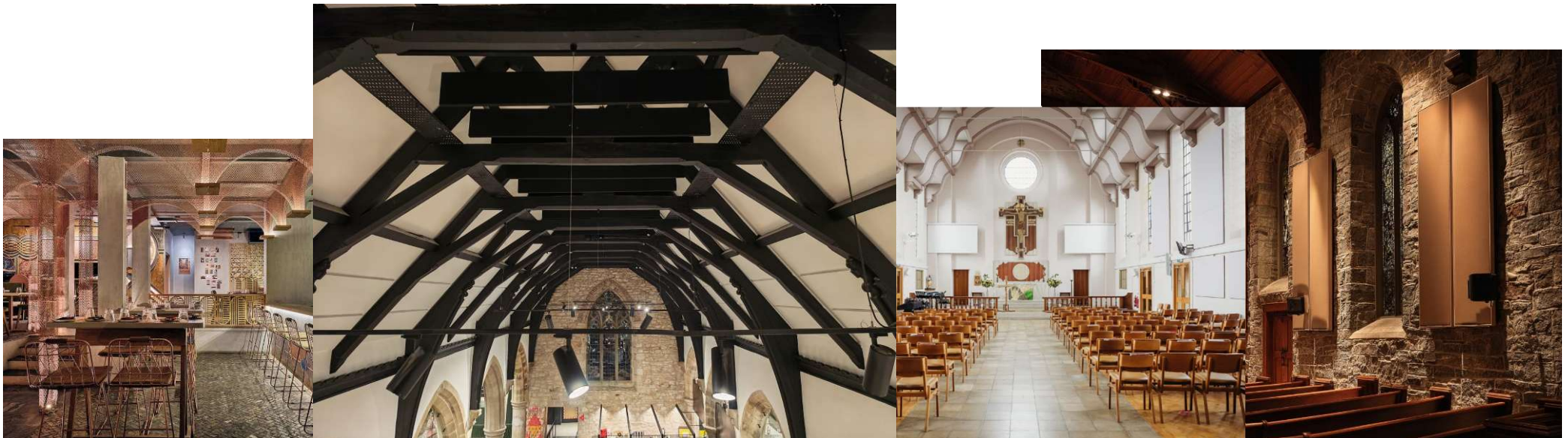
These have been considered, and the relevant guidance addressed in the planning design development of this project.

a) Inspiration

- The existing church space has inherent beauty and Architectural value: inspiration has been taken from the existing building itself.
- Similar installation types in vaulted ceiling spaces have informed the design.
- Specialist advice has been sought, and options tested in order to provide an acoustic solution that improves the current situation without overwhelming the original building fabric.

b) Design principles

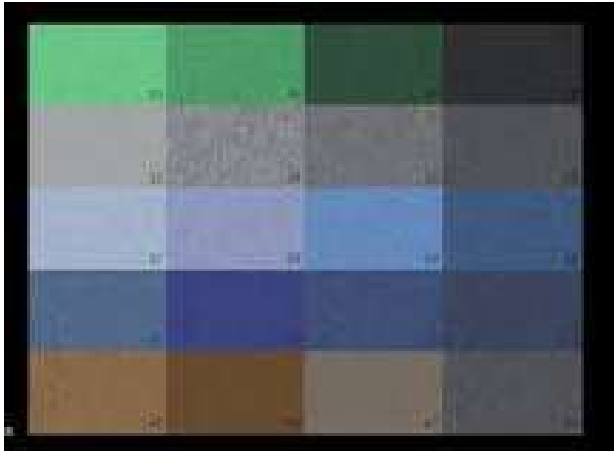
- Respect the architectural and historic significance of the listed building.
- Retain the existing ceiling form, features and finishes.
- Enhance the buildings' functional suitability for ongoing arts and community use.
- Ensure materials and detailing are sympathetic and of high quality.



Example images of church building acoustic installations, sourced from specialist installers and from Google

4. DESIGN

- Color Palette: black, to minimize visual impact against the dark wood hall ceiling
- Textures: high quality fabric look to provide acoustic baffling
- Invisible fixings to side panels and discreet cable fixings to suspended panels.
- All fixings minimized and reversible.



*Muted, dark colour palette chosen for acoustic panels:
examples from google search*

a) Use

The building was adapted for use as an Arts Centre in the late 20th century, and now functions as a community cultural venue. No change of use is proposed with this application.

b) Amount

This proposal does not include an increase in the height of any part of the existing building, nor does it propose an increase in floor area or volume. No change in overall volume, scale, function or massing is proposed with this application.

c) Design

The application proposes:

- 13 rectangular acoustic baffles hung from the ceiling and centred on the ridgeline.
- 28 square acoustic baffles fixed to the sides of the ceiling – 14 per side - located between alternate ceiling ribs.

The baffles have been chosen to be lightweight and dark/black in colour, with a matte finish: the larger panels down the centre of the ceiling will be angled at 45 degrees in order to minimise their visual impact upon those entering the hall space, and the smaller panels are located between alternate expressed ceiling ribs, thereby maintaining the rhythm and depth of the existing ceiling design and eliminating any potential impact on existing architectural features. Multiple versions of the design have been tested, with this final solution representing a stripped-back installation that balances acoustic needs against the impact on the historic fabric of the building.

The installation is lightweight, non-structural and reversible. No historic features are being removed or altered, and the panels can be removed in the future, if required, without significant impact to the building fabric.

Overall, the proposal represents a sympathetic and proportionate intervention that will improve the functionality of the centre for community use and performances whilst respecting the character and appearance of the building.

d) Access

The application proposes no change to the current access into or around the property.

e) Amenity

The proposal is for internal works to the building only, with no change to the building envelope or surrounds proposed – overshadowing, overlooking, light and noise will not be affected by this proposal.

Internally, the amenity of the Art Centre building will be greatly enhanced by the addition of the acoustic baffling, which will benefit all future users of the space.

f) Landscaping

The proposal does not include any changes to the existing landscape.

g) Neighbourhood character

The proposal does not include any changes to the buildings' external envelope and therefore does not impact on the existing neighbourhood character.

5. HERITAGE

5.1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for acoustic works at St Andrew's Arts Centre, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend.

The building is included on the National Heritage List for England as a Grade II Listed Building (List Entry No. 1039109) and is recognised for its special architectural and historic interest as a former church building. The building now functions as a community arts and performance venue and continues to serve an important role within the local community.

The proposed works have been developed to improve the building's functionality, accessibility and long-term viability whilst retaining and respecting its significance as a designated heritage asset. The proposals have been designed to minimise intervention to historic fabric and to ensure that any effect upon the special architectural and historic interest of the building is limited and proportionate.

5.2. Site and Heritage Significance

St Andrew's Arts Centre occupies a prominent location on Royal Pier Road within Gravesend. Originally constructed as a church, the building retains many features associated with its ecclesiastical origins, including the principal nave space, stained glass windows, historic joinery, external oak doors and other surviving architectural details.

The significance of the building derives principally from:

- its architectural value as a well-preserved Victorian church building;
- the survival of historic fabric and detailing associated with its original ecclesiastical function;
- its contribution to the historic townscape of Gravesend; and
- its communal value as a long-established place of worship and, subsequently, as an arts and community venue.

The principal significance is concentrated within the main nave space, stained glass windows, original joinery, historic floor finishes and surviving architectural features. The vaulted Main Hall ceiling is also an important element of the building's architectural character and contributes to the appreciation of its former ecclesiastical use.

5.3. Description of Proposed Works

The proposal is for the addition of ceiling-hung and ceiling-mounted acoustic baffles within the vaulted Main Hall ceiling space.

It is recognised that the ceiling includes original and significant architectural features and historic finishes. The intention is to preserve and protect these features by surface-fixing the acoustic panels, using the minimum number of fixings required per panel and ensuring that the fixings are fully reversible.

No historic architectural features are proposed to be removed. The intervention is lightweight and non-structural, with the acoustic treatment located within the existing volume of the Main Hall.

5.4. Assessment of Heritage Impact

The proposal has been assessed against the significance of the listed building, having regard in particular to the contribution made by the Main Hall and its vaulted ceiling to the building's architectural and historic interest.

The arts centre is used for community activities, presentations, performances and arts events. Due to the large volume of the space and the hard reflective surfaces typical of church construction, sound reflections build up within the room, creating excessive reverberation and long reverberation tails. This can reduce speech intelligibility, blur musical detail and make the space less comfortable for occupants. The proposed acoustic panels will absorb a proportion of this reflected sound energy, helping to reduce reverberation, control resonance and improve overall clarity for both speech and music. The aim is not to remove the natural acoustic character of the former church, but to create a more balanced and usable environment for its wide range of community, cultural and performance activities.

The quantity and positioning of the panels has been carefully considered to provide meaningful acoustic improvement whilst limiting their visual and physical impact. The treatment has been concentrated in key areas where it will be most effective, allowing the overall amount of acoustic treatment required to be reduced.

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the introduction of visible acoustic baffles within the vaulted Main Hall will result in some harm to the significance of the Grade II Listed Building. In particular, the presence of contemporary acoustic panels within the principal historic space will introduce a degree of visual change to the appreciation of the vaulted ceiling and the historic architectural character of the nave. This represents a change to the way in which the historic space is experienced and understood.

The level of harm is considered to be less than substantial in NPPF terms. The harm is limited by the scale and lightweight nature of the intervention, the absence of loss of significant historic fabric, the use of reversible fixings, and the careful positioning and restricted quantity of the acoustic treatment. The principal architectural features of the building, including the vaulted ceiling, stained glass, historic joinery and other significant fabric, will remain legible and substantially unaffected. The proposal therefore does not result in substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

The intervention is also reversible. The acoustic panels and their fixings can be removed in the future, allowing the visual character of the Main Hall to be restored without the need for the removal or alteration of significant historic fabric.

5.5. Public Benefits and Justification

The proposed works provide a clear public benefit through supporting the continued viable use of St Andrew's as a community arts and performance venue.

The building's current and established use makes an important contribution to the cultural and community life of Gravesend. Improving the acoustic performance of the Main Hall will make the space more effective and accessible for a range of community and cultural activities, including performances, presentations, arts events and other public gatherings. Improved speech intelligibility and acoustic comfort will benefit both performers and audiences and will support the building's ability to accommodate a wider range of activities effectively.

The works will therefore help to secure the continued use and long-term viability of the listed building, reducing the risk that its limitations as a performance and community space could constrain its use or undermine its sustainability as a community asset. This is particularly relevant to the building's communal value, which forms part of its overall heritage significance.

There is consequently a direct relationship between the proposed intervention and the continued beneficial use of the heritage asset. The acoustic treatment is not proposed as an independent enhancement, but as a practical measure required to support the established community and arts function of the building.

The public benefits arising from the proposal are considered to include:

- supporting the continued community and arts use of a Grade II Listed Building;
- improving the acoustic environment for audiences, performers, community groups and other users;
- improving speech intelligibility and the quality of musical and performance events;
- supporting the long-term viability and sustainable use of the building;
- maintaining and strengthening the building's communal value through continued public use; and
- enabling the historic building to remain an active and accessible part of the community rather than becoming constrained by the functional limitations of its existing acoustic environment.

These benefits should be weighed against the identified less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. The harm is limited in extent and effect, does not involve the loss of significant historic fabric, and arises from a reversible intervention that is necessary to support the building's established and beneficial community use.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed acoustic works will result in a limited degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II Listed Building, principally through the introduction of contemporary acoustic baffles into the visually important vaulted Main Hall. This harm is acknowledged rather than discounted.

The level of harm has been minimised through the careful selection, quantity and positioning of the acoustic panels, the use of minimal and reversible fixings, and the avoidance of removal or alteration of significant historic fabric. The principal architectural and historic features of the building will remain intact and legible.

Against this limited harm, the proposal provides significant public benefits by enabling the continued and improved use of St Andrew's Arts Centre as a community, arts and performance venue. In particular, the works will improve the functionality and acoustic quality of the principal space, benefiting the building's audiences, performers and community users, whilst supporting its long-term viable use.

On balance, the identified less than substantial harm is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of securing and enhancing the continued community and arts use of the listed building. The proposal therefore represents a proportionate and reversible intervention that enables the designated heritage asset to remain in active and beneficial use while retaining the majority of its special architectural and historic interest.

SJA Ltd have worked closely with the client and with the Gravesham Borough Councils' Planning and Conservation departments to develop a scheme that supports and enhances the community functioning of the St Andrews' Art Centre building, while retaining its architectural and heritage significance within the Gravesend neighbourhood.

The proposed acoustic installation represents a modest, carefully considered intervention that will;

- cause no lasting harm to the historic building fabric;
- have no impact on the external envelope or surrounding neighbourhood, and
- improve the buildings' current function as a community arts' centre.

The heritage value of the building, inside and out, has been at the forefront of the ongoing design development and it is our belief that the work is necessary for the buildings' function and can be carried out without detriment to the original heritage building fabric: thus, this proposal seeks to maintain and enhance the current amenity, aesthetic and functionality of the St Andrews' Art Centre and the wider Royal Pier Road streetscene, while supporting and sustaining the long-term community role of the Arts Centre in the Gravesham Borough.

HISTORY OF ST ANDREWS ARTS CENTRE.

The building first started as a church in 1871, was closed in 1970 and purchased by the Gravesend Borough Council in 1975 and leased to Gravesham Arts Council in 1976 to be opened as an Arts Centre.

CHURCH HISTORY:-

In the early 1860's the stretch of the river off Gravesend was filled with vessels of all shapes and sizes including emigrant ships anchored off-shore. The Vicar of Holy Trinity Church(now demolished) the Revd. C.R.C. Robinson looked upon this community as a parish without a church. He ministered to them and took books and other comforts and also carried out many baptisms - over 500 are recorded as being performed on the emigrant ships.

As the missionary work increased, it became necessary to have a shore-based headquarters and the building next door which was a public house (The Spread Eagle) was taken over and used. Part of the building was later used by General Gordon as a school.

About 1868, Canon Robinson wrote to a London church newspaper, putting forward a suggestion that some bereaved family might consider building a mission hall in memory of a loved one rather than a costly marble memorial. The letter was read by Miss Beaufort, daughter of Rear Admiral Francis Beaufort, KCB (late Hydrographer to the Navy). She visited Canon Robinson and offered to provide a church if the foundations of the building were brought up to road level. The offer was eagerly accepted and over £1000.00 was collected including a generous donation from Charles Dickens. Following the successful completion of the foundation, the design and erection of the church was placed in the hands of the great architect Sir G.E. Street.

On St Andrew's Day (1871) the church was consecrated by the Right Revd. Bishop Claughton, "To the Glory of God and in memory of Rear Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, KCB." Among the congregation were Miss Beaufort, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, Lord and Lady Nelson and Admiral and Lady Inglefield.

An unusual feature of the church was that due to the limitations of the site it had to be built from North to South rather than the usual East to West.

The ceiling of pitch pine is constructed to represent an up-turned boat with two cross beams representing the thwarts(seats). A special feature is the raised sanctuary and steps (now underneath the stage). Rare Italian tiles are set in panels on each side of the 'reredos' - a breath-taking piece of rare "gold-backed" Italian mosaic in the form of a picture of Our Lord stilling the Tempest. Miss Beaufort had this erected by Italian craftsmen as a memorial to the work of the Revd. J. Scarth, assistant priest to Canon Robinson. It was copied from one of his own paintings.

Above the 'reredos' is a window of three lights, in memory of Lady Sophia M.B. Palmer (elder daughter of Sir Francis Beaufort).

On the West wall are three windows and a brass tablet in memory of the crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" of the ill-fated Arctic Expedition under the famous Sir John Franklin placed there by Lady Franklin.

The other magnificent window of five lights over the entrance depicts the miracle of the onehundred and fifty three fishes and it is interesting to note that when the church was first opened, it was built to seat one hundred and fifty three people. (Now due to fire regulations the building can only seat one hundred people).

All the windows are from the studio of renowned Clayton and Bell and were covered in during the war years and for some time afterwards. Thanks to a generous donation from Gravesham Borough Council and Kent County Council, they are now protected by shatter-proof plastic.

Above this window is the bell tower, in which hangs a chime of four bells, a gift of Admiral Sir E. Inglefield. It was custom for these bells to be rung when immigrant ships were sailing. For a number of years the tower had a distinct lean towards the river and in 1948 was considered unsafe and pulled down. It was re-erected and re-dedicated on the 13th November 1949 by the Right Rev. Bishop E.W. Sara, DD. with the Mayor of Gravesend, Alderman P.E. Lines, JP. reading one of the lessons.

During the floods of 1953 the sanctuary floor, the steps and the decorations were badly damaged, but repairs were speedily effected with the aid of funds from the Commonwealth Churches. In 1965 and 1966 further work was needed on the building and then in 1967 it had to be closed for repairs due to dry rot and woodworm. Again in July 1970 it was necessary to close due to dampness. In 1971 the Diocese of Rochester proposed its final closure, but this was strongly opposed. It was estimated that some £10,000.00 was needed for repairs and this money was not available. Following a draft Pastoral Scheme to implement closure, the Diocesan Board had either to find another use for the building or the Church Commissioners would have to decide whether to preserve or demolish.

ARTS CENTRE HISTORY

In 1975 the building was purchased by Gravesend Borough Council and after considerable work including decoration and stage erection, was leased to Gravesend Arts Council and in 1976 was opened by the then Mayor of Gravesend(the late Councillor L. Hardy) as St Andrews Arts Centre.

It is used by member organisations of the Gravesend Arts Council for meetings, rehearsals, music-dance-drama presentations and exhibitions. It is also available for private hire.

On the 2nd March 1978 a plaque to commemorate the sinking of the emigrant sailing ship "Loch Ard" near Port Campbell, Victoria, Australia at the end of May 1878 by The Hon. John F. Rossiter, Agent-General for Victoria. Amongst those present at this commemoration were descendants of one family(Mitchell) who were lost and another family of one person(Eva Carmichael) who was saved. A similar plaque stands on the spot near to where the "Loch Ard" was wrecked. This ship was one of the last sailing ships to leave from Gravesend.

During the visit of HRH Princess Michael of Kent to open the St George's Centre in Gravesend in July 1983, she was invited to visit St Andrews and was very interested in its history and preservation. On her departure she was presented with a framed print of the building.

In September 1983 the building was listed as a Building of Special Architectural and Historic Interest.

Another Royal visitor to the Centre on the 16th July 1998 was HRH Prince Charles to see an exhibition by Gravesham Borough Council on the development and future plans for the borough and to meet with local representatives of The Princes Trust.

The above notes have been compiled from a Souvenir History booklet on St Andrews Waterside Church compiled by Selwyn Gummer in 1965, the local history pamphlet produced by E.C. Gunkel (Gravesend Public Library) and Gravesham Arts Council records.

SLB/July 2001.

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