

## I Introduction

### I.1 St Mary's Church

I.1.1 St Mary's is a medieval church of Saxon foundation, with some fragments of Norman construction surviving. It was substantially rebuilt in the C14th and further extended by the Benedictine nuns of the adjacent Priory adding the south aisle for their use, striking for its size in comparison to the nave proper. Later alterations and additions included the spire which was added in 1710 in which to hang new bells. It is no longer used for regular worship and is in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust.

### I.1.2 Status

I.1.3 St Mary's is a grade I listed building ref. 1350225 and lies within the Church Street, Higham Conservation Area.



*St Mary's Church, Church Street, Higham from the south*

## 2 This Application

### 2.1 Change of Material

2.1.1 This application is for a change of materials to the spire. The work for which permission is sought is the renewal of the cedar shingles, introduced in the twentieth century and now having reached the end of their functioning life, with a return to oak shakes, traditional in Kent before the introduction of cedar and having greater longevity.

### 2.2 Associated Work

2.2.1 The painted louvres and weatherboarding, lead finial and weather vane etc will be repaired and repainted. Some replacement boarding is anticipated on a like for like basis. This work will be overseen by a conservation accredited architect.

2.2.2 Within the structure of the spire there are localised places where timber has decayed or joints become loose. These will be reinforced either by piecing in sections of new oak or by applied straps or brackets detailed by a CARE accredited structural engineer.



*Spire of St Mary's church as viewed from the central valley gutter*



*Detail of condition and loss of cedar shingles at St Mary's*

### 2.2.3 Example of a spire covered in oak shakes



*Oak shakes as laid new at another Kent church summer 2018*



*The same spire two years later (summer 2020), the oak having weathered to a typical silver-grey colour*

## 3 Summary

- 3.1.1 The proposed change of material will preserve the fabric of St Mary's for the longer term and return a detail to its historic character. There are no other changes to the character or to access to the church.