



Pear Tree Community Farm

Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment

July 2026

GOULD
architects

1.0 Introduction

Introduction

Gould Architects has been appointed by Freshford Community Farm Ltd. to prepare a Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment to accompany a planning application submission to create a new community farm on an area of undeveloped land between Freshford and Limpley Stoke.

The proposals for the site are to establish a community farm that will serve the local area by providing organic, affordable fruit and vegetables for the community's benefit. The proposed project will also provide volunteering opportunities, educational workshops and neighbourhood events.

The proposed planning application includes the creation of a new site access from Church Lane, on-site parking, and new ancillary structures necessary for site operations.

This Heritage Statement will:

- Identify the proposed site for the community farm and assess the significance of any heritage assets and non-designated heritage features that may be impacted by the proposals.
- Review the setting of heritage assets and how this may be impacted by the proposals.
- Assess any proposed mitigation strategies.
- Conclude with an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the heritage assets and their setting.



Aerial view showing the location of the wider extent of the proposed community farm site.

2.0 Site Location and Description

Site Location and Description

The Site is located approximately 5 miles southeast of the City of Bath, in the parishes of Limpley Stoke and Freshford.

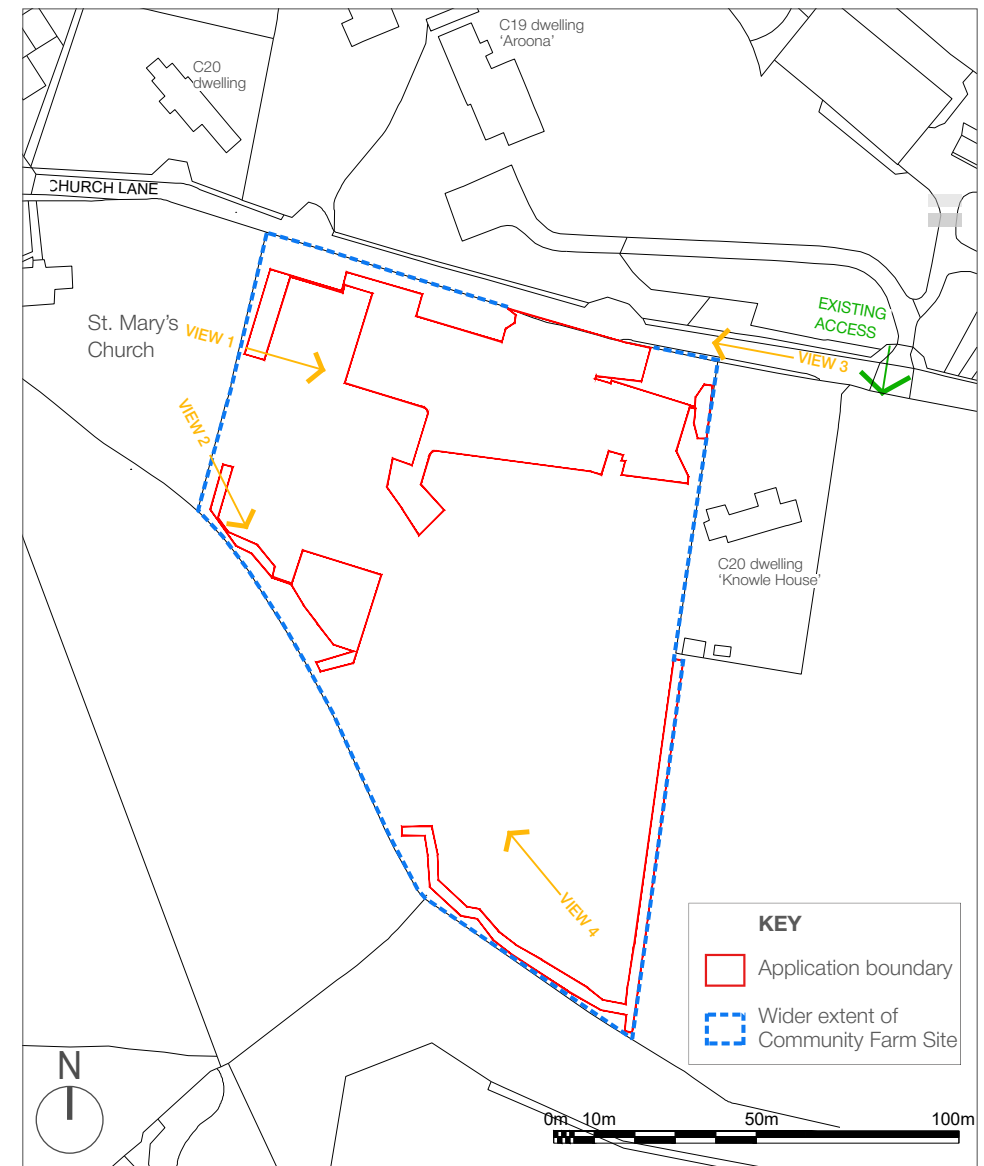
The village of Limpley Stoke lies to the north of the site, and the villages of Freshford and the adjacent hamlet of Sharpstone, which are both within a Conservation area, are located to the south of the site.

The site is part of an existing field and is bounded to the north by Church Lane, a residential road which connects Warminster Road (A36) with the village of Freshford. There is no direct access to the site from Church Road. Access to the site is currently from a field gate located in the adjoining half of the field.

There are several houses to the north of the site, including C19 villas and later C20 and C21 dwellings. The western boundary of the site is defined by the St Mary's Church (Grade II* Listed) and to the east by Knowle House, a C20 detached house and its gardens.

To the south, the site opens out onto further fields and agricultural land, with public footpaths providing a direct route down into Freshford.

The site is within the Cotswold National Landscape (AONB) and also within the Limestone Valleys of the County and District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).



Location plan showing the boundary of the application line and the wider extent of the proposed community farm. The arrows indicate views illustrated on the following page.

2.0 Site Location and Description



VIEW 1 View of the site from the churchyard looking East. The C19 dwelling 'Aroona' can be seen to the left and the distant views are interrupted by Knowle House, a later C20 dwelling located centre right of the image.



VIEW 2 View of the site from the churchyard looking southeast. This is a key view as it extends, uninterrupted, across the valley to the hills and countryside beyond.



VIEW 3 View of the site from Church Lane. To the left of the road is a deep hedge which would have once formed part of a sunken lane, and to the right the road is defined by a dry stone wall which has been modified to create a passing place.



VIEW 4 View of St Mary's Church from the site. The church tower and spire are just visible though the majority of the church is largely screened even when the trees are bare.

3.0 Pre-Application Advice and Planning Policy

Pre-Application Advice

Pre-Application Advice

A pre-application enquiry was submitted on 04 February 2026, and a response was obtained on 18 May 2026.

The submission sought advice on the proposed site plan and the proposed landscape mitigation in terms of impact on the setting of the identified heritage assets close to the site and whether the public benefits would outweigh any harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

A summary of the planning officer's view included the following;

"The scheme for a Community Farm is potentially acceptable in principle, however the development including creation of a new vehicular access would impact on the National Landscape and setting of a Grade II* listed building and these impacts weigh significantly against the acceptability in principle and social benefits which are identified and acknowledged. The determination of any formal application will therefore be assessed against the planning balance and will depend on the resolution of all technical objections, with the benefit of full surveys/reports where appropriate. This response identifies the key issues which need to be addressed in the submission of a planning application which may enable the proposal to be supported on balance, having regard to any external consultation responses and public consultation received in response to such an application."

The proximity of the proposed site to the Grade II* listed St Mary's Church and associated Grade II listed graveyard monuments were identified as a planning constraint.

Heritage Assets

Regarding the Heritage Assets close to the site and their setting, the pre-application response noted;

- The poly-tunnels are positioned closest to the boundary, and it is considered that reconsideration of the site layout is advisable since these are alien to the setting.
- Is the amount of development and associated circulation space needed, and could the consolidation of the built form and arrangement of buildings be laid out to reduce any visual harm to the setting of the church and churchyard?
- The choice of materials in the built form will also be an important consideration.

The Conservation Officer also identified the following;

- The field is located between St Mary's Church and Church Yard to the west and Knowle House to the east and forms a rural landscape edge that makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Church.
- The community-led market garden will provide fruit and vegetables for the local community as well as educational and social opportunities for individuals and local groups.
- A key issue for consideration will be the creation of a new point of vehicular access from Church Lane, as this will require the loss of existing hedgerow to achieve functional visibility splay. It suggested that the hedgerow along Church Lane should be included in the heritage impact assessment, as it is a significant historic landscape feature and part of the approach to the Church's heritage asset from the east.

- The site has been specifically selected based on accessibility to the local community, topography, orientation, sunlight, drainage and soil quality.
- Mitigation tree and hedge planting will be undertaken site-wide to reinforce existing boundaries and provide opportunities to improve biodiversity.
- The application recognises the heritage assets of St Mary's Church and Monuments and seeks Heritage advice on the proposal plan, including any landscape mitigation in terms of impact on the setting of the identified heritage assets and whether the public benefits would outweigh the extent of 'less than substantial harm' to the setting.
- Mitigation tree and hedge planting will be undertaken site-wide to reinforce existing boundaries and provide opportunities to improve biodiversity.

3.0 Pre-Application Advice and Planning Policy

Relevant Planning Policy

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 213 – 215 of the NPPF require a balanced approach, with any harm caused weighed against the potential public benefits that might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 219 Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development ... within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF;

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Historic England Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets;

A Heritage Statement will be required as part of any Planning application under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 207, which requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including Scheduled Monuments, including any contribution made by their setting.

The Heritage Statement must therefore respond to the Historic England guidance on setting and the additional requirement of the new Levelling Up Bill S.58B, which advises that the setting of the scheduled monument be considered and that the settings should be preserved or enhanced.

The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be architectural or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

4.0 Proposed Development



VIEW 5a Existing view from the churchyard, looking east towards Knowle House.
Image courtesy of Greenhalgh Landscape Architecture Ltd.



VIEW 6a Existing view from Church Lane looking west.
Image courtesy of Greenhalgh Landscape Architecture Ltd.



VIEW 5b Proposed view from the churchyard, looking east towards Knowle House (after 5 years). The poly-tunnels are just visible to the left of the image.
Image courtesy of Greenhalgh Landscape Architecture Ltd.



VIEW 6b Proposed view from Church Lane looking west (after 5 years). The access splay has been planted with 40m of native hedgerow species.
Image courtesy of Greenhalgh Landscape Architecture Ltd.

Key Viewpoints

The images above are taken from two key viewpoints (Viewpoints 14 and 16 in Greenhalgh Landscape Architecture's Landscape Design Report). These show how the site appears now and what the visual impact of the proposals would be after 5 years.

5.1 Heritage Analysis - Identification of Designated Heritage Assets

The diagram on this page shows the site in its wider context and its proximity to heritage assets and non-designated heritage features.

Due to the site's topography and existing vegetation, the site is largely screened from view and not visible from the Sharpstone and Freshford Conservation Area or the listed buildings within.

The main heritage features that will potentially be impacted by the proposals on the site are identified below;

Designated Heritage Assets

The Church of St Mary (Grade II*)

List Entry 1364104, year first listed 1962

Anglican parish church with Saxon origins. Notable periods of construction dating to the C10, early C13 and C15. Church restored and south aisle added c.1920.

Daniell Monument (Grade II)

List Entry 1285575, year first listed 1988

Mid C19, limestone chest tomb with decorative stone carving and urn finial. Francis Daniell died 1857.

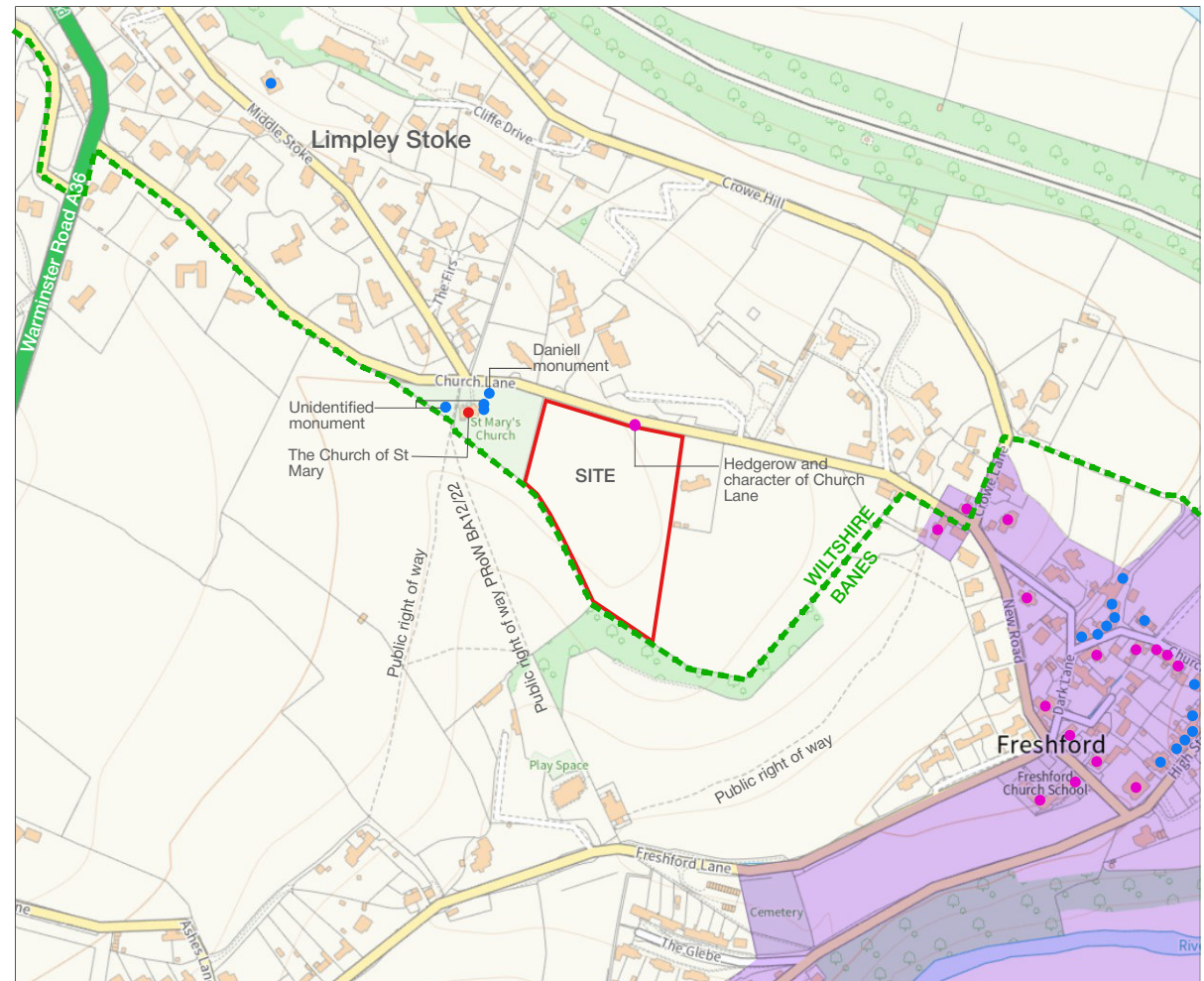
Unidentified monuments (Grade II)

Year first listed 1988

Two monuments 1-4m north east of the church porch (list entry 1021819) and third monument 5m northwest of church porch (list entry 1194655).

Historic Landscape Features

In addition to the above heritage assets, the hedgerow to Church Lane is identified as a historic landscape feature and will form part of heritage impact assessment.



Key

Site

Boundary with neighbouring authority

Freshford and Sharpstone Conservation Area

Listed Buildings Grade II*

Listed Buildings Grade II

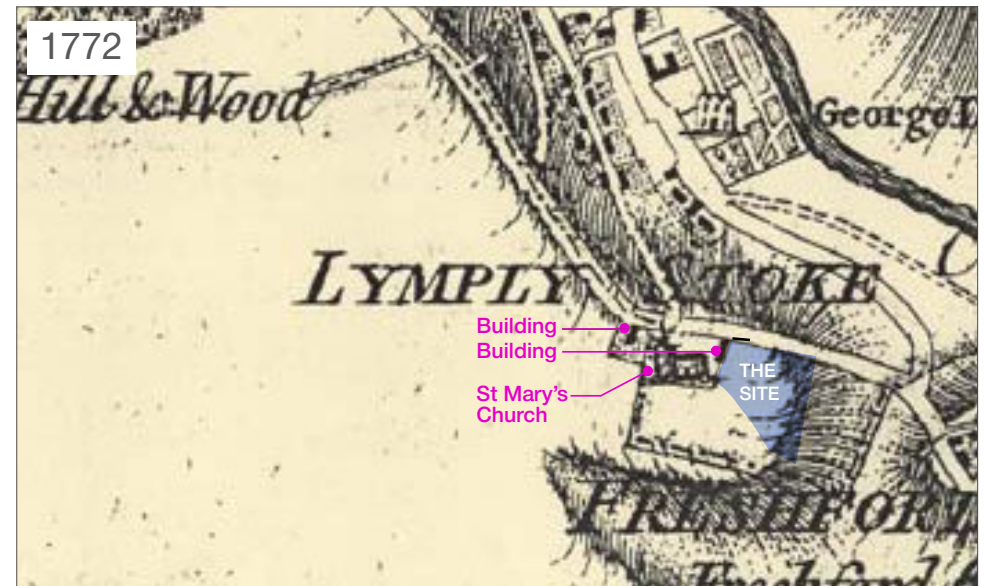
Unlisted buildings/features, which contribute to the character of the Freshford and Sharpstone Conservation Area

The entirety of this map is within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

5.2 Heritage Analysis - Historic Development of the Site



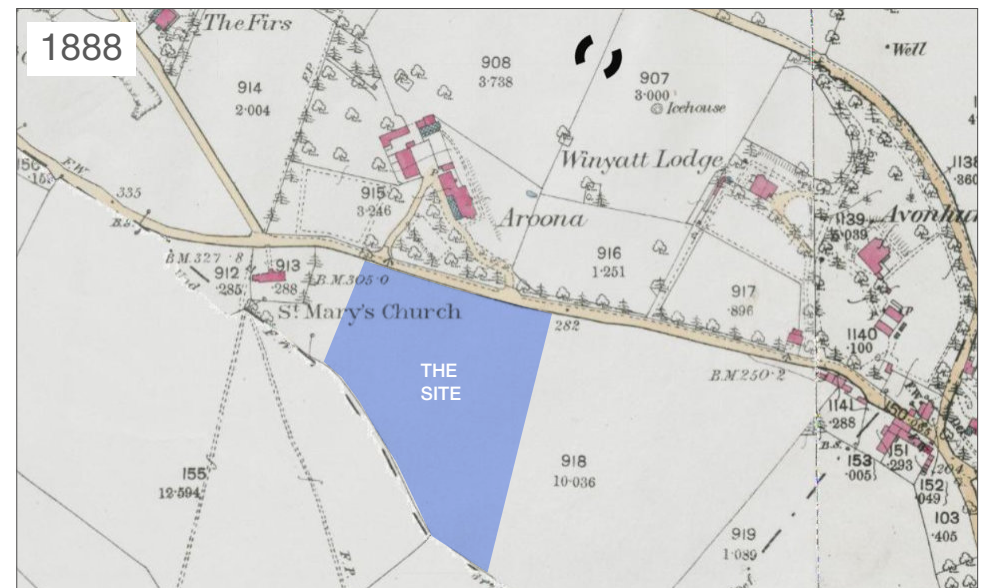
The 1742 map by Thomas Thorpe shows St Mary's church and a linear building to the east of the churchyard which could be on the periphery of the wider site boundary.



The 1772 Andrews and Dury Map shows the church with buildings to the east and west.



The 1840 Tythe Map clearly shows the subdivision of plots surrounding the church. There are two properties to the east of the church (which may have formerly been one dwelling) and the building to the west has been demolished. Today, the churchyard has expanded to incorporate these plots.



The 1844-1888 map shows that the two structures to the east demolished and the boundary of the churchyard smaller that it is today. The map shows houses built to the north of the church and the village of Freshford beginning to extend west. The footpaths linking Freshford to the church are also shown.

5.3 Heritage Analysis - Designated Heritage Assets and Their Setting

St Mary's Church

Today, the church of St Mary the Virgin is an active Anglican parish Church located on the periphery of the village of Limpley Stoke.

The church has Saxon origins and once formed part of the early medieval settlement of Hanging Stoke, which was located to the south and east of the present church, above Freshford. The church was originally dedicated to St. Edith of Wilton, who remained as its patron saint for several centuries.

The village of Hanging Stoke suffered from the Black Death of 1348-49, and the original settlement was almost totally wiped out. The church remained and became the parish church for Limpley Stoke and Middle Stoke, which were situated to the north. These settlements grew during the C15 due to the introduction of cloth weaving and quarrying.

The church's nave and chancel date back to the 10th century, and a distinctive Saxon round-headed doorway still exists in the south wall of the nave. During the 12th and early 13th centuries, the church was substantially rebuilt and the current nave, chancel and porch date from this period. In the 15th century, the west tower and spire were built, along with Perpendicular Gothic windows.



Image from www.freshford.com

Following the Reformation, the church remained in use with relatively modest changes.

In the 19th century, alterations and repairs were undertaken to the chancel, and the nave was re-roofed.

In 1921, the church underwent extensive alterations. The architect Sir Charles Nicholson designed a south aisle and vestry and incorporated the ancient Saxon doorway into a new arcade. The design also relocated one of the south-facing perpendicular windows to the new east elevation of the south aisle.

The church is constructed of local, dressed limestone, with a rendered stone nave. The building's roof is a stone-slate roof with stone-coped verges.

The Setting of St Mary's Church

The immediate setting of the church is defined by its churchyard, which is enclosed by stone boundary walls and has numerous historic gravestones that reflect centuries of local burials (Views 5a and 9).



Image from www.freshford.com website showing the church before the 1921 extension to the south. The Saxon door and two Perpendicular windows are visible on the south elevation, and there are blocked openings on the south wall of the Chancel

There are several mature trees within and around the church, which contribute significantly to the sense of enclosure and tranquillity of the setting. The trees also conceal the church when viewed from the footpaths to the southeast and the fields to the south and west (View 4).

There are views from the churchyard out towards the surrounding landscape. Directly east, there are views of the field, which is the proposed site, and Knowle House. While to the southeast, there are distant views across the valley to the countryside beyond (View 2).

A key view of St Mary's Church can be seen as you approach from Limpley Stoke along Middle Stoke. From this vantage point, the full north elevation of the church is visible and sits picturesquely in its rural setting. There are several modern houses sited close to the church, but they do not detract from the setting of the listed building (View 7).

The second key view is from Church Road when approaching from Warminster Road. Here, the church sits prominently within the countryside, marking the entrance to the settlement beyond (View 10).



Image from www.freshford.com showing the roof over the nave as a lead roll roof and not tiles with stone.

5.3 Heritage Analysis - Designated Heritage Assets and Their Setting



VIEW 7 A key view of St Mary's Church from Middle Stoke. The north elevation of the church is fully visible. The photograph shows the C12 and C13, three-bay nave, gabled north porch, and the chancel to the east. The west tower and spire are C15.



VIEW 8 View from the churchyard of the south elevation. The roof of the 1921 aisle has an inverted dormer to provide natural light to the remaining Perpendicular window that remains in situ.



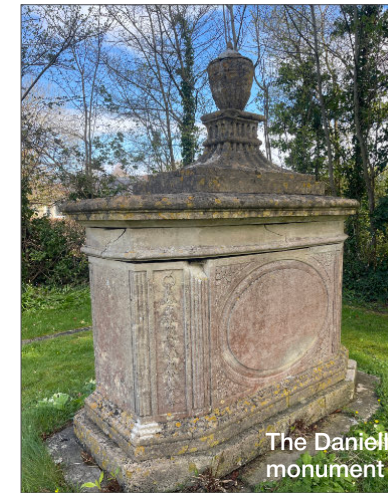
VIEW 9 View from the north east with the chancel in the foreground.



VIEW 10 A key view of St Mary's Church is seen from Church Road heading east. The church is highly visible from this direction and is an important historic feature in the setting.

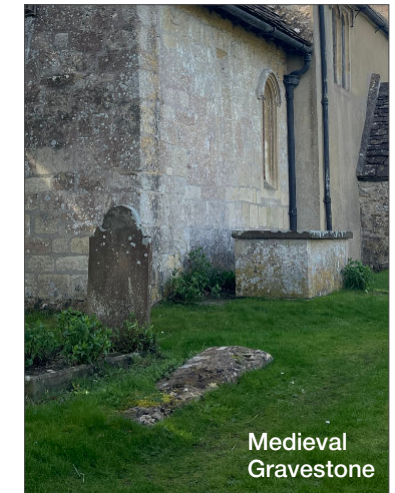


VIEW 11 A key view of the approach to St Mary's Church from the east. The raised hedge to the left was once part of a sunken lane. However the opposite boundary of the road has been modified with entrances and passing points.



VIEW 12 Four of the monuments within the churchyard are listed. The Daniell monument (left), holds the remains of Joseph Clisild Daniell, an English clothier and inventor who held several patents including one for waterproofing cloth. The remaining listed monuments are medieval ledge tombs which are noted as being exceptional by Professor P Rhaz, (How to record graveyards 1979)

The Monuments



Medieval Gravestone

5.4 Heritage Analysis - Statement of Significance

Heritage and Architectural Value

St Mary's Church is of high historic and archaeological value, dating back to the Saxon period and being the only surviving structure from the settlement of Hanging Stoke, which no longer exists.

The churchyard and ground to the east are of potential archaeological interest, as they may contain remains relating to the house that existed east of the church or to the Saxon settlement.

St Mary's Church and the associated monuments within the churchyard embody over a thousand years of ecclesiastical and community history and have local historic value.

St Mary's church has been altered through successive phases, with rebuilding in the C12th and C13 and the addition of the west tower in the C15. Later C19 and early C20 restorations and additions were undertaken in a manner that reflected conservation values of the time. The resulting building is a multi-period parish church that illustrates the evolution of architectural styles and worship over many centuries, giving it architectural and historic value.

Constructed primarily of local limestone, the church has strong aesthetic and architectural value.

Cultural and Communal Value

St Mary's Church also holds strong cultural value, having long served as the spiritual and ceremonial centre of Limpley Stoke. It remains closely associated with local identity and community life.

The church is also historically and culturally important, as it is a prominent historic landmark within the landscape setting, approached from the west along Church Road or from the north-west from Limpley Stoke.

Landscape Value

The landscape surrounding the church and its setting also has value. The mature trees and raised hedgerows are the remains of an historic sunken lane which existed between Limpley Stoke and Freshford. The hedgerow is part of the character of Church Lane and helps to create an enclosed setting when approaching the church from the east.

The eastern boundary of the former sunken lane has been modified since the C19, with walls, entrances, and passing places constructed of natural stone. This has lessened the quality of this historic feature, and there are other, more complete examples of sunken lanes and raised hedges in the locality.

The stone boundary walls to the churchyard also have historic and landscape value, as they define plot boundaries to earlier buildings and gardens that no longer exist.

Significance

St Mary's church is of high archaeological and historical significance due to its Saxon origins and its standing as the remaining visible evidence of the early medieval settlement of Hanging Stoke. It is also culturally and architecturally significant, as the building has been adapted over the centuries and continues to serve as an active parish church today.

Its prominent location makes St Mary's Church an important landmark as you leave Limpley Stoke and enter the Freshford and Sharpstone conservation area. The church has cultural and aesthetic significance as an enduring, picturesque element in the rural landscape.

The site around the church is also of potential archaeological significance as a building existed to the east of the church until the C19, and the area to the south and east of the church was once the site of a settlement dating back to the Saxon era.

6.0 Impact Assessment

Archaeological Impact

There is a possibility that archaeological remains exist on the site, as the church once served the Saxon settlement of Hanging Stoke. However, the area has been used for agriculture for several centuries and is not identified on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

There may be some archaeological evidence from the 'old house' mentioned in the Tithe apportionment dated 1840, as it existed until the C19.

As the presence of archaeology is unknown, appropriate mitigation would be to undertake trial pits with an archaeological watching brief when excavating for the access road, digging footings and laying foundations or drainage works. Also, designs for below-ground works should aim to create minimal impact.

Archaeological investigations before work starts on the site would minimise the risk of harm to any potential archaeology.

Impact on the Raised Hedgerow

The proposals require the removal of approximately 30m of the raised hedgerow to provide a new entrance to the site. The hedge is not a designated heritage asset but has been identified as a significant historic landscape feature that forms the approach setting of the Church from the east.

The proposals aim to minimise the visual impact of the new entrance, and improve the biodiversity of the hedgerow by planting 40m of native hedges on either side of the entrance. The proposals also retain existing mature trees and shrubs. The visual impact is illustrated on page 7 (**VIEW 6a and 6b**).

Alterations to the hedge will change the character of the setting near the church but will cause less-than-substantial harm (lower end) to the heritage asset's significance.

The changes will be mitigated by retaining existing mature trees within the hedgerow, minimising the entrance width, and enhancing the natural planting. The new access splay will provide public benefit by creating a safe passing place on Church Road and safe access to the community site.

Impact on the Setting

The church is located in a prominent position, and there are two key views of the church (Views 7 and 10), which are seen when approaching Freshford from the north or north-east. Neither of these views will be impacted by the proposals.

The setting of the church from the south footpaths will not be affected, as the planting and ground topography will shield the community farm from view (**VIEW 13**).



VIEW 13 View of the church from the south footpaths

The view of the church from the east will be impacted; however, the church is largely screened from this vantage point and is currently visible only to the occupants of Knowle House (**VIEW 14**).



VIEW 14 Setting of the church when viewed from the site and from Knowle House. The church is largely concealed by trees.

The buildings on the site will be agricultural in style with metal roofing and timber cladding, which will minimise their impact on the setting. Improved access to the site, resulting from the community farm's activities, will enable more people to appreciate the heritage asset from this safe location, rather than from the busy road.

The view from the church towards the east and southeast, over the open countryside, will be affected. The new structures and poly tunnels will be visible and may be considered a negative impact on the setting.

To help mitigate the visual impact of the structures when viewed from the site, the design has relocated the poly-tunnels and ancillary buildings to a lower area of ground near the new entrance. While these are visible from the churchyard, they will be visually shielded by trees and planting. This will also help direct the focus outwards, towards the more significant distant views to the southeast (**VIEW 5a and 5b**).

Impact on the Architectural and Historic Significance

The proposals will have no impact on the architectural or historic significance of the heritage assets.

Impact on the Cultural Significance

At present, the church and listed graves are in a relatively isolated location. The creation of a new community facility close to the church will help bring a wider range and number of people into the area, who may not have known about the heritage assets and their importance. The proposals will bring more people to the area, which may help improve understanding and awareness of the church and the listed graves. The impact of the proposals could therefore help enhance the cultural significance of the heritage assets.

7.0 Conclusion

Conclusion

St Mary's Church is of high architectural and historic significance, justifying its Grade II* designation. Its significance derives from its early origins, architectural fabric, archaeological potential, visual prominence, and enduring communal associations, all of which require careful consideration in assessing any proposals for change.

The proposals to create a community farm close to the church of St Mary's will not impact the church's significance, nor will they impact the key views of the church from the north and northeast. The proposals will, however, impact views to and from the east of the churchyard and the character of Church Lane where the new access is created.

To mitigate the impact on the views and character of Church Lane, the design has carefully sited the structures and planting to screen new buildings from view, while maintaining key views southeast to the wider countryside and landscape beyond.

The design also addressed the impact of the new entrance onto the site, through well-considered planting that uses native hedgerow species.

On balance, the proposals are justifiable from a heritage perspective. The changes will cause less than substantial harm to the heritage assets and the character of Church Lane, while the potential public benefit that the community farm will provide is considerable - providing affordable, organic fruit and vegetables for the community and offering volunteering opportunities, educational workshops, and neighbourhood events.