

Planning Statement

St Peter's Church, Berkshire, The Warren, Reading, RG4 7TH

Full Planning Application for Repairs to Roofs 1, 7 and 8

April 2026

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This planning statement has been produced on behalf of the applicant, St Peter's Church.
- 1.2 This statement supports a planning application for the repairs to roofs 1, 7 and 8 including replacing the felt, battens, tiles, and lead flashing at St Peters Church, Caversham.
- 1.3 This planning statement discusses the background to the application and provides the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the local planning authority, when read in conjunction with the other supporting information detailed below. This statement sets out the proposals in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that the proposals accord with the objectives of both national and local planning policy, and that there are no material considerations which justify departing from a determination in support of granting planning permission.
- 1.4 Additionally, please note Diocesan Faculty consent for the proposed works is being undertaken separately to this application (known as 'Ecclesiastical Exemption').
- 1.5 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by a set of planning application forms and an ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, together with the following documents:
 - Application Forms and certificate of ownership, signed and dated
 - Planning Drawings:
 - Location Plan
 - Existing Topographical Survey – CAV 002
 - Existing Ground Floor Plan – CAV 19 101
 - Existing Roof Plan – CAV 19 102
 - Existing Elevations – CAV 19 200
 - Existing Sections AA & BB – CAV 19 300
 - Existing Sections CC & DD – CAV 19 301
 - Existing Sections EE & FF – CAV 19 302
 - Existing Sections GG – CAV 19 303
 - Existing Sections HH & II – CAV 19 304
 - Roof Demolition Plan – CAV 19 401

- Contractors Compound – CAV 20 001
- Proposed Roof Plan – CAV 21 001
- Proposed Elevations – CAV 22 001
- Vestry Roof Section Sheet 1 – CAV 23 010
- Vestry Roof Section Sheet 2 – CAV 23 011
- Proposed Roof Section & Details Roof 1 – CAV 23 012
- Vestry beam remedial works – 2311398-ACS-XX-01-D-S-2000-A4-C01
- Statement of Significance
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment
- Dusk Emergence Surveys (to be provided at a later date)

1.6 The relevant application fee will be paid by the applicant separately through the Planning Portal.

2 THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The wider site measures approximately 0.5 ha and is comprised of the Grade II* Listed Church. The church is set within a triangular churchyard that is set back from the main road to the northeast and separated from Caversham Court Listed Garden to the south by a crinkle crankle wall with views looking onto the River Thames.
- 2.2 The church itself is noted to have a high significance for its architectural interest, whilst the surviving elements of the medieval church are of high significance for their architectural, artistic and historical interest.
- 2.3 A full description of the significance of the church is given in the Statement of Significance that accompanies this application.
- 2.4 The site is located within Caversham, a District Centre within the northern area of Reading Borough. The area is primarily residential the north and west with the District Centre extending east along Church Road.
- 2.5 The Church is located within St Peter's Conservation Area (designated 1988); an extract of the Conservation Area Appraisal Map is shown at figure 1 below.

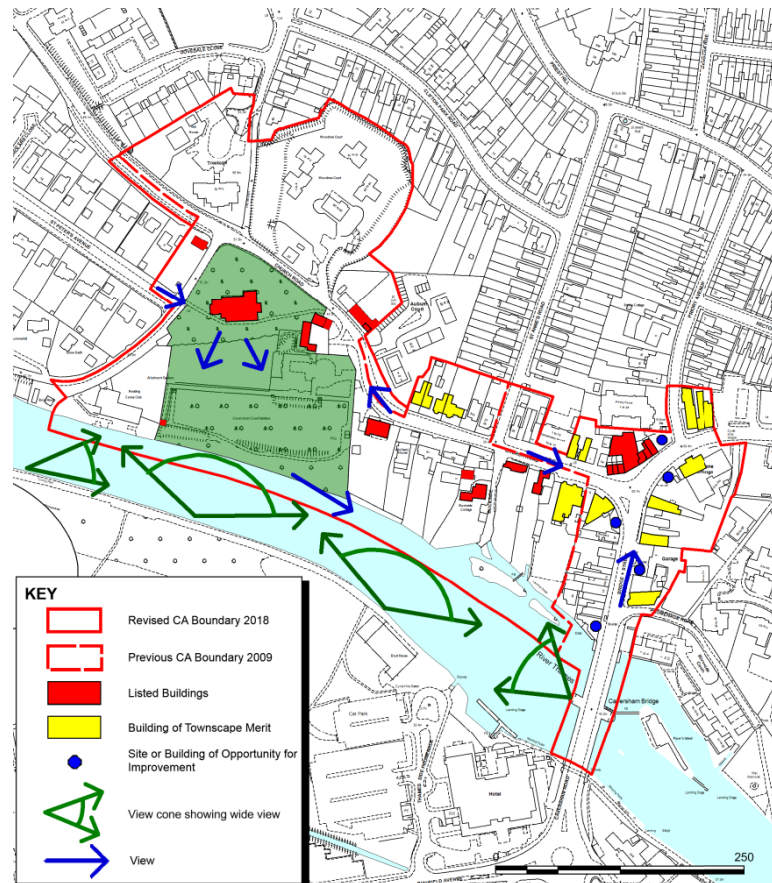


Figure 1. Extract from St Peter's Conservation Area Appraisal Map

- 2.6 It is located within Flood Zone 1 and is not shown to be at risk of river or surface water flooding, according to the Government's online flood risk mapping (see Figures 2 and 3).

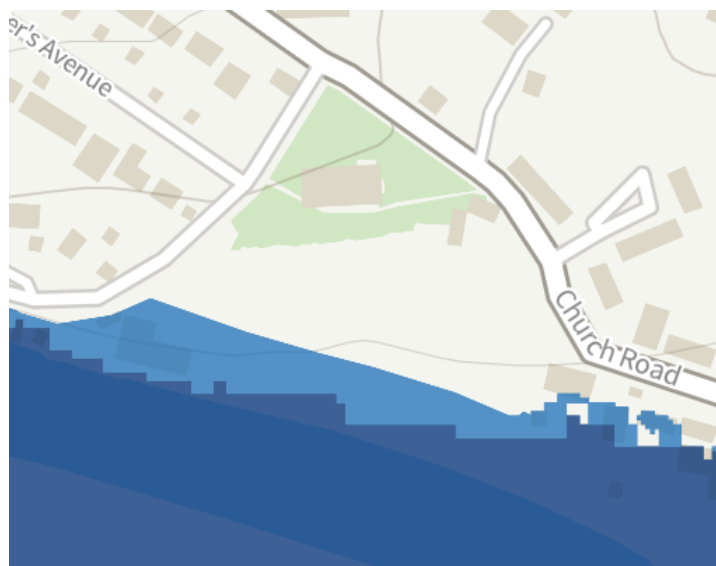


Figure 2. Flood Zones (EA Mapping) accessed 02.04.2026



Figure 3. Surface Water Flooding (EA Mapping) accessed 02.04.2026

2.7 The site is not within a National Landscape area and is not a Registered Park or Garden.

3 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The relevant planning history that is available online is as follows:

- PL/09/0952 – Crown lift Liquidambar, Tulip tree, Beech and Yew. Remove self sown Sycamore and Ash seedlings. Remove ivy where damaging gravestones and other structures. Remove suckers from Lime in poor health (tree may need to be removed). Remove Buddleia and Creeper from Crinkle Crankle wall. Reduce / tidy Forsythia, Pyracantha, Chaenomeles and Garrya. Remove poor conifers in south west corner and remove dead wood from Yew – *Exempt 27/10/2009*
- PL/19/0211 – Reduce one Irish Yew to 7 feet – *Approve 13/03/2019*
- PL/23/1218 – 1. Conifer – remove two east facing lateral boughs, leaving the vertical remaining central trunk. 2. Lime – remove one, high, upper branch overhanging the path. 3. 2x Holly trees – fell. 4. Elm – Fell. 5. Conifer – Fell. 6. Ivy and Yew hedge – prune – *Agree 13/10/2023*

4 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 A roofing report was carried out in September 2025, prompted by roof tiles falling onto the public footpath below the south wall. The report highlighted that many of the nails holding the tiles had rusted, requiring repairs to roof 1. Furthermore, a structural survey was carried out on the Vestry, noting that structural repairs are required and the roof to be replaced.
- 4.2 This application seeks planning permission for the repairs to roofs 1, 7 and 8 including the replacement of the felt, battens, tiles and lead flashing. In addition, a Faculty is being sought for these works and for the remedial works to the Vestry beam.
- 4.3 The proposed works will be a like-for-like replacement with material specification as follows (further details can be found within the Proposed Roof Plan Drawing):
- Tiles from Tudor Roof tiles (same size as existing)
 - 50% Sussex Brown
 - 30% Medium Antique
 - 10% Red Antique
 - 10% Sussex Red
 - John Brash Roofing Battens
 - Hogs Back Ridge Tile (Medium Antique)
 - Lime Mortar (colour to match ridge tiles)

5 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The Government's policy on planning matters is primarily contained in the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF') the revised version of which was published in December 2024 and further amended February 2025.
- 5.2 Running through the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The key sections of relevance to this planning application include: -
- Paragraph 8 – Achieving sustainable development
 - Paragraph 88 – Retention and development of local services
 - Paragraph 98 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
 - Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
 - Paragraphs 203-215 – Historic environment

Faith Groups and the Planning System Policy Briefing

- 5.3 The 'Faith Groups and the Planning System Policy Briefing' (October 2015) makes a number of recommendations including urging local planning authorities to develop greater understanding of how faith groups use space, which includes recognition of the differences between and within faith groups themselves.
- 5.4 To facilitate this, specific guidance on how faith groups use space needs to be made available, the briefing explains, e.g., through supplementary planning documents that reflect the contemporary religious landscape. Generating such guidance may benefit from collaboration with the relevant professional bodies and faith groups it goes on to explain.
- 5.5 Page 7 of the briefing paper examines the interaction of the planning system with faith and religion:

"As well as addressing how planning in its current form might be applied more flexibly, the FPN noted a number of areas of planning law and policy that might be reviewed, with a view to easing the difficulties faced by faith groups when dealing with the planning system. Where not detrimental to the wider public interest, we recommend the following:

- Given the scarcity of non-residential premises (i.e. D1 use class) in many of our towns and cities, local planning authorities should prioritise protecting space for social infrastructure, including places of worship. This should also be a consideration in any future review of use classes.....*
- Local planning authorities should assess the social infrastructure needs arising from new developments, including provision for places of worship. Such an approach will further enable local planning authorities to move towards a proactive mode of needs provision. For example, this might be achieved through a minimum space allocation per population beyond a certain trigger point, as has been seen in creative practice case studies (e.g. Cambridgeshire Horizons, 2008), and as is the case in other types of land use."*

- 5.6 The proposals are considered to be consistent with these ambitions.

Local Planning Policy

- 5.7 The application site is situated within Reading Borough Council area. The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and sets out the Council's vision and strategy until 2036. It will provide the basis for decisions on planning applications. There is no 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for this area.
- 5.8 A review of the Local Plan was carried out in March 2023. A Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan Partial Update was submitted for examination in May 2025 but has not yet been adopted (at the time of writing).

Reading Borough Local Plan

5.9 The following policies from the adopted LDP are relevant to this proposal: -

- CC2 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN12 – Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN18 – Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems
- OU1 – New and Existing Community Facilities

Local Plan Partial Update Submission Draft May 2025

5.10 The following draft policies from the draft LPPU are relevant to this proposal: -

- CC2 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN12 – Biodiversity
- EN18 – Flooding and Drainage
- OU1 – New and Existing Community Facilities

5.11 The following documents are relevant to this application:

- St Peters Conservation Area – Conservation Area Appraisal

6 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the starting point in the process of determining a planning application is the Local Plan (LP) as identified above.

6.2 Policy OU1 states that '*proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable*'. The proposal will provide much need repairs to three of the roofs in order to keep the building in use.

6.3 In this context it can be concluded that the proposal will provide an improvement to an existing community facility. It therefore accords with policy OU1 of the LP and the core policies outlined in the plan.

6.4 **Heritage Impact Assessment – Listed Building Considerations:** Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) states the

local planning authorities shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special historic interest which they possess when considering whether to grant planning permission.

- 6.5 The following paragraphs assess the heritage balance, having considered any harm arising from the proposals and weighing that harm against the benefits of the proposals.
- 6.6 The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010 exempts churches and those buildings in their curtilage from requiring listed building consent, because this aspect of a development is considered separately via a Faculty. Accordingly, the following assessment will focus only on the external works and not the internal works (remedial works to Vestry beam) which would otherwise usually be covered by Listed Building consent procedures.
- 6.7 The Statement of Significance, prepared by Oxford Heritage Partnership, details the significance of the Church and its surroundings.
- 6.8 Policy EN1 of the LP states that *'proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located.'* The proposal seeks to replace the tiles, battens, felt, and flashing of three of the existing roofs with a like-for-like replacement. The like-for-like replacement will lead to less than substantial harm.
- 6.9 NPPF paragraph 215 states that *"where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."*
- 6.10 In accordance with the above, it is considered there is an identified need for the proposed works as the existing roof on the Vestry is collapsing and the tiles on roof 1 are failing. The repairs will ensure the church is able to remain in use as a community facility and a heritage asset. The harm to the listed building has been reduced through the use of the same materials to create a like-for-like replacement.
- 6.11 In view of this it is clear that the anticipated public benefits to the Church through the repairs, making it fit for the next generation to use, will outweigh the less than substantial harm arising from the proposed external works. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposals will accord with policies EN1 of the LP and relevant paragraphs within the NPPF. Therefore overall, the heritage balance weighs in favour of the proposals.

- 6.12 Finally, there will be no conflict with the statutory duty in section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).
- 6.13 **Heritage Impact Assessment - Character and Appearance of the Area:** Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas when considering matters affecting land or buildings within those Areas under the Planning Acts.
- 6.14 Policy EN3 of the LP states that '*the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced*'. The following information is taken from the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) with regard to St Peters Conservation Area:
- "St Peters church and its tower, together with Caversham Court, dominate the Conservation Area, both historically and in the present day...St Peters church and its tower, together with Caversham Court and the associated boundary walls, form the character of the western end of the Conservation Area. The use of red brick and flint for boundary walls down St Peters Hill and into Church Road serves to unify the area... With the exception of some rendered and half-timbered cottages, and St Peters church itself, the buildings in the Conservation Area are generally of brick."*
- 6.15 The CAA highlights the importance of St Peter's Church within the wider conservation Area. The materials proposed will be a like-for-like replacement of the existing so as to maintain the existing character. The specifications of these materials are provided within the 'Proposed Roof Plan' drawing.
- 6.16 Therefore, overall the heritage balance is considered to weigh in favour of the proposals, and there will be no conflict with the statutory duty in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).
- 6.17 **Ecology and Biodiversity:** A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken in March 2026. Roosting bats were found in at least one location inside the church and numerous spaces found where bats may roost. Details of licensing and mitigation are provided in paragraphs 4.9-4.21 of the PRA.
- 6.18 Further dusk emergence surveys are being undertaken and the reports will be provided upon receipt.
- 6.19 The proposed tiles are curved and bat friendly roofing felt will be used to allow bats spaces to roost.

- 6.20 Policy EN12 of the LP highlights that '*development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.*' The proposed works will result in no net loss of existing biodiversity of the site and meet the '*de minimis*' exemption in terms of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
- 6.21 **Flooding:** Policy EN18 states that the sequential approach to development will be applied to all proposals and development should be designed to reduce flood risk. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 with no risk of flooding from rivers, surface water or small watercourses; the proposal would therefore not give rise to increased flood risk and will therefore accord with development plan policy.
- 6.22 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** Reading Borough Council states that any development where the Gross Internal Area (GIA) exceeds 100sqm the development will be CIL liable. There is no additional GIA proposed, therefore the proposal is not liable to CIL.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle, with regard to impacts on the listed Church itself, and the wider Conservation Area. The proposal would provide much needed repairs to the roofs with a like-for-like replacement.
- 7.2 The repairs to the roof, providing public benefits by allowing the Church to remain in use, will decisively outweigh any harm to the listed Church.
- 7.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Local Plan Policies CC2, EN1, EN3, EN12, EN18, and OU1 and it is further supported by National Planning Policy, and the emerging policies in the Local Plan Partial Update Submission Draft.
- 7.4 The planning balance weighs clearly in favour of granting permission for the proposals, and therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.
- 7.5 Should the application be permitted, the applicant is aware that suitably worded conditions may be attached to the decision, which meet the relevant tests. The applicant is happy to discuss these with the local planning authority during the processing of this application should that be necessary, so as to ensure that the wording of the suggested

conditions is appropriate and does not unnecessarily delay works on site through front-loading of details via pre-commencement conditions.