

## The Conservation Office

### Statement of Need Example 1

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#### Trinity, Southborough (Grade II\*)

The area has experienced many ups and downs during its history, with a boom in population in the inter-war years followed by a long slow decline from the 1960's. This process has now been reversed by the regeneration programme for this part of Southborough, which has already seen some professional people move back into the area in recent years. The overall population of the town is c.180,000 and the immediate area served by the church has c.2,000 residents. The congregation waxed and waned somewhat in line with the developments described above, but church life has remained vibrant. The current membership is 130 with attendance at the weekly morning service averaging over 100. There is a good spread of ages and a growing Sunday school. The monthly family service is particularly well-attended. There is also a monthly additional early communion attended by up to a dozen people.

The last quinquennial report was two years ago. No major issues were raised. The minor matters needing attention have been dealt with and the buildings remain in very good order with the exception of the problems identified with Sunday School building.

The main worship area is seldom used for any activity other than worship due to the retention of the majority of the fittings including the pews. Occasional choir or other concerts are held which are generally well attended. There is little desire among the congregation to make any significant alterations to the worship area because of its very high quality. Also the pews have been fitted with cushions and there are no real issues of comfort.

Part of the extensive Sunday School building has been converted to provide a crèche, coffee and community facilities. These facilities are well-used throughout the week but are now becoming rather shabby, cramped and inappropriate for the range of activities for which they are needed. In particular, disabled access is poor.

The redevelopment of this part of Southborough currently underway is expected to lead to more young families moving into the area, as a good proportion of the redeveloped land has been earmarked for low cost homes. In order to reach out to this expanded community, the church wants to offer modern, convenient facilities available to churchgoers and the community.

The planned larger crèche will provide much-needed facilities for the families in the area, and initial enquiries have shown that there will be no shortage of users. The community is supportive of our efforts, as is the local authority (who are providing a sizeable grant) as there is no other such provision in the immediate area. The alterations are largely to areas previously altered and which are of low significance. Much of the work is cosmetic, although some stud walls will be removed or repositioned. The renewal of the heating system and the introduction of a zoned control system will maximise efficiency and reduce heating bills, thus contributing to greater sustainability. The only external element is the ramp. The impact will be much less than if a ramp were to be provided to the main entrance to the

chapel. The proposed materials are of good quality and the design of the handrail is based on that of the boundary railings.

Some concerns have been expressed concerning the enlargement of the vestibule, particularly as it will alter the spatial characteristics of the main worship area and lose three rows of pews. However, we have reassured those concerned that setting the new screen behind the gallery pillars will minimise the visual impact, although the loss of the pews is acknowledged as having an impact on a feature of moderate to high significance. It is felt, however, that the need to broaden the use of this part of the building by the inclusion of a tea point and wheelchair accessible toilet justifies this loss.

The aesthetic implications of the proposals have been carefully considered in the light of comments by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and with close reference to the Statement of Significance. They have been designed to cause as little intrusion as possible into the fabric or architectural quality of the building. Because the existing screen is to be adapted and the alterations to glazing and panels will be reversible and of quality materials it is considered that the impact on significance is low. The existing vestibule is narrow, dark and unwelcoming and we think this development will be an improvement.

We believe that the alterations will extend the usefulness of the buildings to the church and wider community. One further benefit will be an increase in income through lettings which can, in part, be ploughed back into the upkeep of this splendid set of buildings.

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