



# ST.ANN'S GATE ARCHITECTS

The Close · Salisbury · Wiltshire · SP1 2EB

*principals:* Michael Drury RIBA GradDiplConsAA AABC

Antony Feltham-King RIBA GradDiplConsAA AABC

*partner:* Louise Rendell RIBA DipConsHistEnvRICS

*consultant:* Helen Martin BAHons DiplArch MScCons AABC

Limited Liability Partnership · reg. no: OC344334 · VAT: GB 188 085 427

t: 01722 555200

e: admin@stannsgate.com

f: 01722 555201

w: www.stannsgate.com

1233-03:ACFK

August 5<sup>th</sup> 2021

## The Church of the Holy Cross, Binsted, near Alton, Hampshire

### **New wcs:** Options analysis

It is generally agreed that the church building at Holy Cross should be equipped with a wc or wcs, to provide essential facilities for ablutions, for the use of congregants at church services, and to extend the use of the building for other events, such as concerts, village gatherings etc.

Numerous options exist and these are identified as follows, and as shown on the associated plan drawing (1233-03-01).

- A. inside the current vestry
- B. inside the Westcote chapel
- C. outside the Westcote chapel
- D. outside the north-western corner of the church building
- E. at the western end of the nave
- F. in the bell tower at ground level
- G. inside the south-western corner
- H. outside the south-western corner

These are discussed below. Locations with very little scope for the wc provision are briefly described but discounted. Other more promising positions are considered in more detail. It is also assumed that the required provision is for two wcs, one fully accessible, meeting current part-M building regulations requirements.

#### **Location A: Within the current vestry**

The vestry is located to the north of the chancel, accessed via a narrow door immediately in front of the sanctuary steps. This location is not considered viable as the access is narrow and difficult to negotiate, and wcs in this location would be very obtrusive to access if needed during a church service or other event. This option is not considered further here.

#### **Location B: Inside the Westcote Chapel**

As it currently stands, the pipe organ and a rudimentary screen divides the Westcote Chapel space from the remainder of the interior of the church building. This is currently something of

a 'back-of-house' area, and this might be an advantage when thinking about wc provision. There is a water supply within this space and drainage externally to the west.

On the negative side, the split floor level in this space creates difficulties for access and limits the available space. The presence of the important recess and medieval effigy of Sir Richard de la Bere de Westcote places further limits on the placement of wcs.

As a result of its position towards the eastern end of the building, access to wcs along the north aisle during a church service would be unsubtle.

### **Location C: Outside the Westcote Chapel**

A potential location exists outside the Westcote Chapel, in the angle between the western wall of the chapel and the north wall of the north aisle. In this position there is sufficient space to create a new entrance lobby outside the existing doorway leading into the Westcote Chapel, which would also provide access to an inner lobby, in turn providing access to an accessible wc and a smaller 'ambulant' wc space. Existing designs for this option propose a 'lean-to' building, with a pitched roof abutting the western wall of the Westcote Chapel just below the existing eaves.

An initial design for this option proposed making use of the existing doorway leading into the Westcote Chapel. However, this doorway is very narrow and precludes full accessibility into and out of the Chapel space. Consequently, a revised design proposes making a new opening in the northern wall of the north aisle, creating a doorway of sufficient width to comply with best practice for accessibility.

This option provides ample space for the new wcs in the new building and forms a new 'porch' providing access into the north aisle. This is also located conveniently close to the existing drainage run.

On the downside, the location of the new doorway at the eastern end of the north aisle again makes access to the wcs during a church service somewhat noticeable. In terms of impact on historic fabric, the new walls and roof will require attachment to the medieval west wall of the Westcote Chapel. Further, the proposed new doorway into the north aisle will require a completely new aperture to be cut through a historic wall, which might be contentious in some quarters.

### **Location D: Outside the north-western corner of the church building**

This potential position is found in the angle between the west wall of the north aisle and the north wall of the tower. In this position there is space to create a new entrance 'porch' into the western end of the north aisle, and to accommodate two wcs, one of them fully accessible.

An initial design from 2018 proposed a lean-to structure pitched against the north wall of the tower - in effect echoing the pitch of the north aisle roof. A small glass roofed section separated the old from the new and provided ample daylight into the new porch space.

This design suggested the movement of the church boiler to a new position as part of the new structure, accessed from the northern side. As an alternative, the boiler plant could be

accommodated within the roofspace of this new extension, freeing up space at ground level if needed.

This position sites the new wcs in an unobtrusive location in terms of its impact on the external appearance of the church building, and also in terms of making use of the wcs from inside. The doorway connecting into the north aisle would make use of the existing window in the western wall of the aisle. This is a C19th window, with the only older fabric requiring removal being the small section below the window.

On the negative side, there would be a need to extend drainage along the north side to reach the existing drain run further east. However, this could be run below a re-surfaced pathway running parallel with the north aisle. It is also noted that the seating area at the western end of the aisle is currently used as a prayer space after services, and this important function would need to be moved to another quieter part of the building if this option is to be pursued.

### **Location E: At the western end of the nave**

It would be possible to consider creating a new structure within the nave, immediately in front of the screen leading through to the ringing space. It is (just) possible to accommodate a fully accessible wc space on one side, and another 'ambulant' wc on the other side, perhaps with a kitchenette for the serving of tea and coffee at this end of the building. Sketch drawing 1233-03-02 shows a possible layout. The space in the centre within the new enclosure would need to be as large as that shown in order to permit wheelchair access into the accessible wc compartment on the northern side.

This option would clearly entail a degree of impact on the interior of the nave. However, if designed carefully this could provide wcs in an appropriate location, without the need to construct anything externally. This could have cost benefits and would avoid the need to obtain local authority planning consent (as the local planning authority has no jurisdiction regarding this type of work within the envelope of the building).

The enclosure of the new wcs would require suitable acoustic treatment to avoid any noise breakthrough. Drainage would need to be taken through an existing below floor duct to a location outside the western end of the north aisle, before finding its way to the existing drainage further east. There may be insufficient 'fall' to achieve this, entailing an alternative drainage approach. If this option is to be pursued further then a drainage level check is needed.

A new construction in this location would obscure the ringing space from the nave, although access to the tower space would remain. In this event it is suggested that the existing glazed screen is removed as it would no longer be required, and this would free up some space.

### **Location F: In the bell tower at ground level**

The ground floor space in the tower theoretically provides sufficient space to accommodate the required number and type of wcs. This space is currently used for bell ringing. If this option were to be pursued, the ringing chamber could potentially be placed on a mezzanine level above the wcs. This would require a staircase to access this new level.

Although this is a possible solution, there are technical issues that would require further detailed checking to ensure that there is sufficient 'draught' on the bell ropes to allow for this re-positioning of the ringing floor. In addition, Holy Cross possesses one of the few ringing chambers which is at ground level, and therefore fully accessible. Losing this might prove unpopular in bell ringing circles.

#### **Location G: Inside the south-western corner**

The space available in this location does not provide sufficient space to accommodate two wcs (and the necessary lobby). For this reason, this option is not considered further.

#### **Location H: Outside the south-western corner**

At first glance this position could be seen as a simple 'mirror-image' of location D, outside the north-western corner of the church building. However, the space is a little more limited as the south aisle is somewhat narrower than the north, and the south wall of the tower is set at an acute angle to the west wall of the south aisle, further limiting space.

Having said that, a lean-to design, similar to that proposed for location D could be considered. But there is no drainage available on this side of the building, and this new addition would be much more visually intrusive when considering the church building from the west and the south.

For these reasons, this option is discounted.