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2401-05/ELM

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ST WOOLOS CATHEDRAL, NEWPORT: FALL PROTECTION TO NORTH GULLY

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT:

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.01 This design and access statement provides details of design considerations for the installation of railings adjacent to the drainage gully on the north side of the North Aisle, adjacent to the car parking area in the grounds of St Woolos Cathedral, Stow Hill, Newport.
- 1.02 Approval for the proposal is governed by Faculty jurisdiction, which replaces the need for listed building consent. However, the works are also deemed to require planning permission, as they include a minor alteration to the external appearance of the building, from within the Cathedral grounds. The railings proposed will not be visible from outside the grounds of the Cathedral and the conservation area. This statement proves how visual impact of the proposal is minimal and will not have a negative impact on the character of the Cathedral and its grounds. The statement will also demonstrate that there is no archaeological or ecological impact of the proposal.



View of the Cathedral and north side of the North Aisle, from Clifton Road.



2.0 Site summary:

- 2.01 The Cathedral is grade I listed and set within the St Woolos Conservation Area. An application for Faculty approval has been made to the Monmouth DAC.
- 2.02 There are multiple changes in level across the Cathedral site. There are steps, retaining walls and sunken drainage channels along the northern building perimeter. There are also uneven areas of ground, including grass banks, headstones, floodlights and tombs; all of which pose significant trip hazards. The Cathedral holds events and services throughout the year, some of which are during the evening.
- 2.03 The Cathedral is positioned at the highest point in the city and is elevated above the vehicular roads of Stow Hill and Clifton Road. There are residential properties and office/retail buildings on both roads; set much lower than the Cathedral grounds, which are bounded by tall retaining stone walls. This means that low-level parts of the grounds, such as the railings being proposed, are not visible due to perspective.

3.0 DESIGN PROPOSAL:

3.1 Background to the project:

- 3.1.1 Around the perimeter of the North Aisle and Galilee Chapel is a sunken drainage channel, lined with concrete. The outer edge of the channel comprises sandstone retaining walls, topped with stone ledgers, which have been re-purposed from elsewhere. In front of the North Aisle is a car parking area, which is finished with tarmac. On the north side of the Galilee Chapel, there is a small area of grass, with a single memorial stone. The purpose of the drainage channel is to carry rainwater from the downpipes to cast iron gullies in the side of the channel, which are presumably linked to soakaways below ground.



North side of North Aisle and Galilee Chapel with temporary cordons.

- 3.1.2 Particularly in front of the North Aisle, the sunken channel poses a risk to public safety, as there is no edging or visual differentiation. This area is well trafficked, particularly when cars are parked. People sometimes try to walk behind the cars and there has been a reported incident of someone falling into the drainage channel at the NW corner of the North Aisle.

- 3.1.3 There is limited space for maneuvering vehicles within the parking area and there is a risk of cars reversing into the drainage channel, causing damage to the building as well as the vehicle.
- 3.1.4 There was an unfortunate incident of public injury in December 2023, when someone fell into the drainage channel on the north side of the North Aisle during darkness, when visiting the Cathedral for an event. Temporary cordons were immediately put in place (seen in photo on previous page). They have been effective at preventing further accidents.
- 3.1.5 Chapter wish to make this area safer for both pedestrians and drivers, by introducing a permanent physical barrier along the edge of the drainage channel. The design of the barrier must be appropriate to the setting of the historic building, as well as meeting the requirements of modern building regulations. The drainage channel is required for surface water disposal and must be retained.
- 3.1.6 This proposal should be considered holistically alongside proposals to install new external lighting within the Cathedral grounds, which was awarded planning permission on 12th Dec 2024 and due to be installed by May 2025.
- 3.1.7 Taking this opportunity; this application seeks to address several concerns associated with the sunken drainage channel in front of the North Aisle:
- Risk of injury to persons falling into the drainage channel.
 - Lack of vehicular barrier to prevent vehicles reversing into the channel.
 - Parlous condition of ledgers around the edge of the channel, including retaining wall underneath.



Example of broken ledgers at edge of drainage channel and condition of retaining wall beneath.

3.2 Summary of proposal:

- 3.2.1 The proposal seeks to lift the ledger slabs along the edge of the parking area. These ledgers are very badly broken up. They are insufficiently supported by the stone retaining wall under, in places. The retaining wall is red sandstone; as seen throughout the site. However, the wall is in parlous condition and was identified as in need of repair in the quinquennial inspection

report in November 2021. The poor condition of the fabric is a contributing factor toward the health and safety risk this area poses, as the edge ledgers are unstable.

- 3.2.2 The proposal includes lifting all the ledger slabs and forming a new concrete slab with integral vehicular upstand, consolidating the retaining walls and all drainage grilles beneath. The ledgers will be re-set in their existing positions and metal railings of simple and slender profile, will be added to the upstand, to provide pedestrian and vehicular fall protection.



Parking area separated from the North Aisle by sunken drainage channel, edged with ledger stones. Note the temporary fall protection currently in place.

- 3.2.3 To construct the concrete slab, the retaining wall will need to be partially dismantled, to approx. half of its current height, so that a concrete slab can be cast on top, to the full width of the existing ledger slabs. This will include an upstand of 375mm, to act as a kerb/ vehicular barrier, compliant with Part K. *The stone removed from the retaining walls will be set aside and used to construct small retaining walls behind 2no. new bollard lights (BB03 and BB04) along the edge of the vehicular driveway – as part of the new external lighting installation already approved (planning application ref: 24/0659).*
- 3.2.4 The concrete slab will provide a sound base for re-setting the ledgers. As many of them are broken up, they will be 'pieced back together' and bed on hydraulic lime mortar. The Architect has conducted a thorough survey of the existing ledgers, including dimensions, inscriptions and condition. All ledgers will be repaired and reinstated in their existing positions. Refer to detailed design drawings for further details.
- 3.2.5 New black painted galvanized mild steel railings will be fixed on top of the concrete upstand, without affecting the existing stone walls or comprising the integrity of the drainage channel itself. The total height of the railings will be 900mm from ground level, to provide protection from falling (Part K of Building Regs). These should offer some visual differentiation with the walling behind, to serve that purpose, whilst not detracting from the overall character of the building and its setting.



Area of grass in front of the Galilee Chapel, with gravestones and part of a memorial statue. This area will have railings positioned around the edge of the grass, clear of the ledger stones that edge the drainage channel.

- 3.2.6 The retaining wall and ledger slabs are in parlous condition in front of the north wall of the Galilee Chapel. They are to be repaired and consolidated in hydraulic lime mortar, in their existing configurations, including re-setting of the drainage grille at the west end and re-pointing some cracks in the sole of the concrete drainage gully.



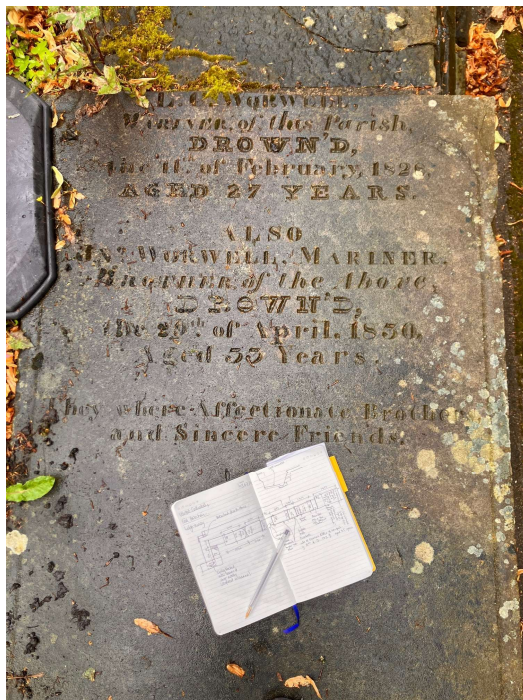
Condition of ledgers at NW corner of North Aisle.

- 3.2.7 It is not proposed to install railings around the edge of the grass to the north of the Galilee Chapel, as the risk of accidental injury is significantly less. These drainage channels are not on the route to an entrance door and there are no points of interest for which someone may be travelling without diligence across the uneven grass. Railings in this location may also encourage anti-social behaviour to occur behind and the new lighting installation will improve wayfinding and visibility generally.
- 3.2.8 The Galilee Chapel is also the oldest part of the Cathedral. The need to install railings in front of the Chapel does not outweigh their visual impact on this part of the building. The gully protection will therefore wrap around the NW corner of the Galilee Chapel, terminating at

the buttress on the west elevation of the North Aisle. This is shown on the attached drawing, ref: 2401-05-411.

4.0 Impact of proposal:

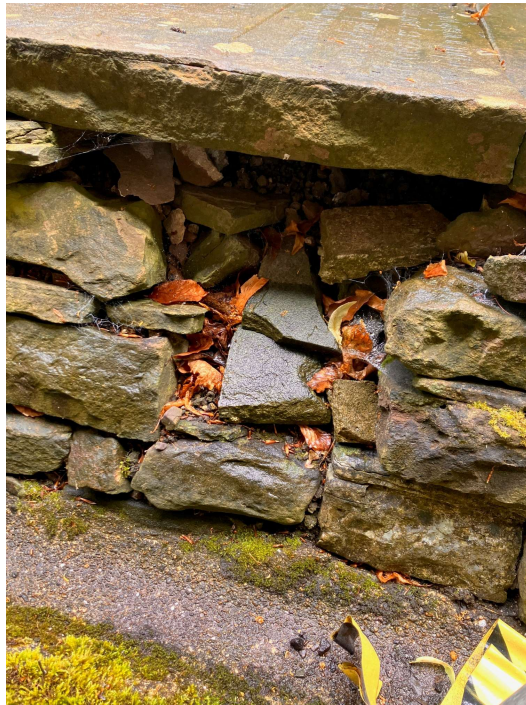
- 4.01 These works within the Cathedral grounds should be considered holistically with the installation of a new external lighting scheme, which has planning and Faculty approvals and is due to be installed by May 2025.
- 4.02 The urgency of the work is to ensure public safety and to limit the disruption of building works on the operation of the Cathedral building.
- 4.03 There are no archaeological, arboricultural or ecological implications, during the installation of this proposal.
- 4.04 Archaeological:
- 4.04.1 The works area is deliberately confined to the ledgers along the north side of the North Aisle – i.e., it will be no wider than the ledgers, so that the car park is left undisturbed.
- 4.04.2 The ledgers would have originally been headstones or ledgers within the churchyard moved here during the major re-landscaping of the grounds at the turn of the 20th Century. As such, they do not mark burial sites in this position.



Example of ledger stone surveyed.

- 4.04.3 The drainage channel is lined with concrete and is a modern intervention (C20) to deal with surface water drainage. There are outlets in the drainage channel walls to soakaways beneath the car park; none of which is to be disturbed.
- 4.04.4 A detailed survey has been made of the ledgers, their legible dates, position and condition – drawing ref: 2401-05-401 and they are all to be retained.
- 4.04.5 The car park finished with tarmac, was most likely installed in the 1960s, when it was extended at the east end, or possibly in the 1990s when the Hall was built.

- 4.04.6 The infill behind the retaining wall/ underneath the ledger is loose fill, which would have been disturbed when the car park was installed.
- 4.04.7 It is proposed to consolidate beneath the ledgers, with new fill, to ensure sufficient loadbearing capacity for the new concrete slab.
- 4.04.8 The ledgers are to be reinstated on top of the new concrete slab, repaired and re-bedded on hydraulic lime mortar so that they are saved from further deterioration or damage.



Infill behind retaining wall.

- 4.05 Arboricultural:
- 4.05.1 There are no trees within the works area. All deliveries and site operations will be via the tarmacked driveway and car park adjacent to the works area.
- 4.06 Ecological:
- 4.06.1 The works will have no impact on ecology – being at ground level and affecting hard standing only.
- 5.0 Procurement:**
- 5.01 Competitive tenders have been sought for the work, which has been valued at approx. £60,000 +vat. Recommendations have been made in the enclosed Tender Summary Report (dated Nov 2024).
- 5.02 It is proposed that the Cathedral Architect, Emma Mullen, will act as Contract Administrator, overseeing the work and final details on site.

Emma Mullen RIBA SCA BSc Hons MArch AABC
Cathedral Architect, Newport Cathedral
21st March 2025