

# Heritage and Design and access statement. Chipping Congregational Church.

Listed building consent to attach a cross to the front of the church, and replace two wooden doors with new hardwood dark stained timber doors in timber frames



December 2020

## **Background and listing details**

Chipping Congregational Church is a Grade II listed (22 November 1983) chapel of 1838 prominently sited within Chipping Conservation Area. The list description does not refer to the building's interior but identifies:

*Each wall is of 2 bays, having windows with glazing bars, plain stone surrounds with semi-circular heads, keystones and radiating glazing bars. The south-west wall has a door with plain stone surround beneath each window. Between the windows is a plaque: 'PROVIDENCE CHAPEL ERECTED BY SUBSCRIPTION MDCCCXXXVIII'. The north-west (gable) wall has a one-storey porch at its left-hand side, now extended. Its right-hand return wall has a door with plain stone surround and a small window with plain stone surround, semi-circular head and keystone to its left.*

Chipping Congregational Church was brought into Chipping Conservation Area by the extension of 3 April 2007. Chipping Conservation Area Appraisal (The Conservation Studio consultants, 2005; adopted by the Borough Council following public consultation, 3 April 2007) identifies the church as a 'Focal Building' (one of four in village), its curtilage open space as a 'Significant Open Space' and a tree (now removed) at the roadside as an 'Important Tree'.

RW Brunskill in 'Traditional Buildings of Britain' (2002, pg75) identifies that:

*'The religious fervour of the nineteenth century saw the construction of huge numbers of church buildings for Anglicans, Non-Conformists and Roman Catholics and these... are generally accepted as works of polite architecture though of varying standards. But there was a period from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century in which most Non-Conformists and some Anglicans worshipped in humble, unpretentious buildings fully deserving to be classified as examples of vernacular architecture ... Their use of local materials and adaption of traditional forms meant that the buildings were unobtrusive in communities which might be suspicious of the new forms of worship; architecturally the buildings took their place among the cottages and farmhouses of the village and did not compete with the church on the hill... The outward appearance of the chapel or meeting-house reflects its internal organisation as closely as that of a farmhouse or barn ...Chapels for Unitarians or Congregationalists were little more complicated: there was a single tall meeting room dominated by a pulpit on one long side and with galleries at both ends, sometimes joined opposite the pulpit; externally the long entrance side had two doors, two tall windows and two staircases outside or two windows lighting internal staircases ... building materials were those of the locality and the time ... gritstone in the Pennines'.*

'Chipping Congregational Church 1838-1988' identifies that "in the 1950's alterations and improvements were made to the interior of the chapel. The original pews and choir seats, which all had doors on them were removed and some of the wood from them was used to make the partition which now separates the Sunday school from the church (page 7) ... in 1961 the boiler house was replaced with a new building and toilets were added ... in 1975 the kitchen was extended into the disused boiler house by the removal of the dividing wall, a new window was added where the door had been (page 8) ... in 1976 the car park was made with steps up into the chapel grounds and a wrought iron gate made to match the existing one"

## **Guidance**

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment' (English Heritage, 2008)

New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if: a. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place; b. the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed; c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future; d. the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

Changes which would harm the heritage values of a significant place should be unacceptable unless: a. the changes are demonstrably necessary either to make the place sustainable, or to meet an overriding public policy objective or need; b. there is no reasonably practicable alternative means of doing so without harm; c. that harm has been reduced to the minimum consistent with achieving the objective; d. it has been demonstrated that the predicted public benefit decisively outweighs the harm to the values of the place, considering: • its comparative significance, • the impact on that significance, and • the benefits to the place itself and/or the wider community or society as a whole.

Each generation should therefore shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.

### **The Proposal**

The proposal is to attach a timber cross to the front elevation of the church, which will be up lit. This will be a form of ecclesiastical confirmation of the use of the building, in a simple organic material, in keeping with the simple form of the historic building. A statement by the church, of its purpose and function in the community.

In addition, it is proposed to replace two worn out timber doors on the south west side of the church.

Existing doors to be replaced



The existing doors are old and becoming problematic, in that they let in rain, they are draughty, and very narrow in that they are in two parts.

The church (in normal times) has two services on a Sunday, with a congregation of about 50.

In addition, monthly “meet and eat” gatherings are held in the church, providing hot meals for the community at large, not just regular church goers.

The church feels that the replacement of the old timber doors, with new hardwood doors will remove the draught and ingress of rain water. This problem would ultimately have further implications by water damage within the church, and ongoing discomfort for the worshippers /guests when the cold winds blow through the existing ill-fitting doors.

Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people’s responses to social, economic and technological change.

The doors will fit within the stone quoins and door jambs, and will be simple in form. In addition to replacing the worn-out doors.

### **Conclusion**

The proposal can only be viewed as a positive way to ensure that a listed building remains in good order providing the function that it was originally designed for. The proposals do not materially harm the values of the building.

The proposals, by supporting the current generation and attracting the younger generation will ensure that the building is around for future generations to use and enjoy in comfort and commitment to their faith.

The building is a place of worship, and a cross, the symbol of Christian religion is not an incongruous feature on a place of worship

The cross is the most significant symbol of the Christian faith and should be clear and visible to all around. Suggestions that it might be sited at ground floor level, either in the garden at the front of the church, or on the wall of the single storey extension are not acceptable to the applicants. For reasons of safety, when children are playing on the grassed area and the lack of significance it would have in either of these low-level locations.

A revision to the up lighting is to place the light on the single storey extension, pointing upwards to the cross (shown on the plans). This would not be visible to passers-by, and would only be used at night.

A signed petition in support of the cross that was left in the farm shop for about 3 weeks was signed by 92 local people in support of the project. We have not submitted this information due to data protection laws.

## **Appendix**

Letter from, Chipping Parish Council

Dear Mr Kelsall

Chipping Parish Council appreciated your email and subsequent pictures. Having reviewed the illustrative pictures regarding your planning application for a cross on your church, we have no problem in supporting your request for an upright cross of that size and scale.

Kind regards,

Nicky Donnelly  
Chair Chipping Parish Council

Letter from Chipping Village Hall Manager

Good afternoon Kevin

Thank you for making us aware of your planning application for a wooden cross on the Congregational Church, facing us here at Chipping & District Memorial Hall. I have now had chance to forward your email to all of the Trustees here. Of the replies I've received, none are negative and the general response is that no one has any objections to your proposal. On a personal note, I too, do not have any objections. I can't imagine that it would affect any of our clientele here either. I feel that a wooden cross would be in keeping with your church, and cause no offense in any way.

Kind Regards

Lisa Cookson  
Hall Manager

Additional letters of support are attached to this application, from the Vicar of Chipping Parish Church and a Joiner confirming the poor state of the existing doors.

A mock-up of the proposed Cross, at night and day

