



Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, Bassingbourn

Statement of needs – removal of hedge in churchyard

Section I: General Information

Bassingbourn, with a population of 3600, is a very pleasant south Cambridgeshire village on the north Hertfordshire border. The Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, surrounded by its well-maintained churchyard, lies in a conservation area near to the village centre.

The village has a strong sense of community, a range of social and economic well-being and a mixture of social and private housing. Bassingbourn has a Community Primary School and Village College, both of which have links with the church.

The church plays an important role in village life and this is reflected in, for example, the very large number of people who attend church over the Christmas period. Many people from the village still look to the church at times of significant life events. In particular a number of funerals have been held in the church attended by very large numbers from the village.

Normally, the church building is open during daylight hours seven days per week for private prayer and informal visits. It hosts civic services as well as services for the village primary school.

There are 65 people on the electoral roll and the church has a usual Sunday attendance of around 45 adults. The congregation is made up of all ages including a good number of families.

The usual pattern of services is:

1st Sunday 11am Holy Communion -

2nd Sunday 9am Holy Communion (said)

11am All Age Worship

3rd Sunday 11am Holy Communion

6:30pm Praise & Prayer

4th Sunday 11am Morning Praise

5th Sunday 9.30am/11am Joint Service with our sister Parish of St Mary Whaddon

We are broadly evangelical in our theology and embrace a varied pattern of services, but all our services aim to be relaxed and accessible. All principal services are from Common Worship.

We have a number of active outreach activities including:

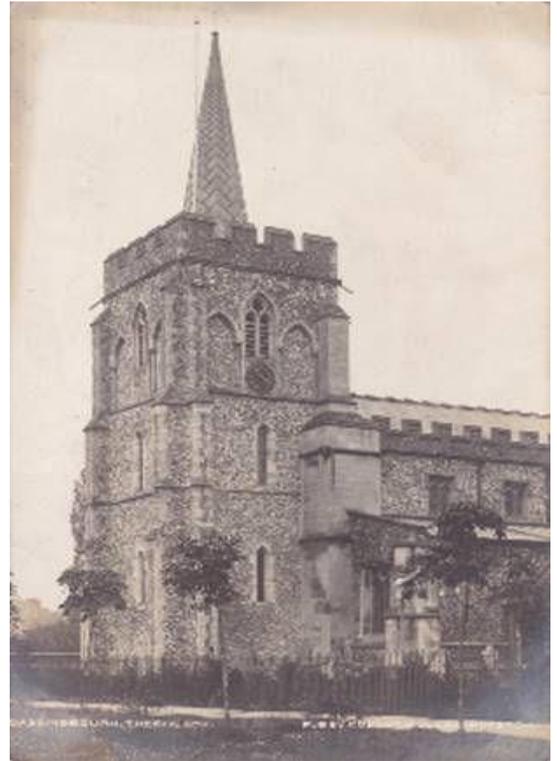
- Messy Church: overseen by a LLM co-ordinating a large team of church members, this is a real success providing support, learning and outreach; regularly attracting 30+ children and their parents/carers from outside the core church family.
- Playgroup: reaching out to very young families.

- MUMA: alternating weeks with Playgroup, MUMA is a place which is for parents, carers, and grandparents to chat over coffee, support one another, talk about scripture and how we can apply it in our lives.
- PITSTOP: our youth work for 11-14's combines socials and teaching sessions, including Youth Alpha.
- Men's work: with a mixture of regular fellowship evenings and popular open invitation pub meals.
- C3 Craft group: combining Craft, Coffee and Chat with a mixture of those from within and outside the church family.

Section 2. The Need

The hedge to the western edge of the churchyard runs along North End, one of the principal roads in the village. There is a wide footpath along the hedge which is a key pedestrian route, especially at the beginning and end of the school day. A location map is provided at the end of this document.

The main marker of the edge of the churchyard was originally wrought iron railings which allowed the church to be visible from the footpath and road. At some point a yew hedge was planted along the 63m length of the railings. The date of the hedge is not known but a postcard postmarked October 1904 shows the railings and hedge. The image appears to show the individual parts of the hedge indicating it was fairly recently planted at the time of the photo. The hedge is now over 1.6m high, above the line of top of the railings blocking the view into the churchyard and the lower parts of the church forming an unwelcoming barrier to visitors and preventing people seeing activities taking place in the churchyard.



Postcard, postmarked 1904, showing a young hedge.

The churchyard was closed in 1878 and the maintenance of the churchyard and hedge is the responsibility of the Parish Council. The hedge is cut mechanically each year by Parish Council's contractor however it is not possible to cut it lower than the top of the railings using machinery and it would be prohibitively expensive to have it cut at lower level by hand.

Large parts of the hedge are now in poor condition with large gaps (see images). These areas are mainly under the mature horse chestnut trees which line the verge of North End outside the church and which



Now over 1.6m high the hedge forms a barrier preventing people seeing activities taking place in the churchyard and feeling welcome.



The majority of the hedge is shaded by mature horse chestnuts depriving the hedge of light and water. Large sections of this part of the hedge are in poor condition.

deprive the hedge of sunlight and rain. This means that that replanting is unlikely to be successful. The hedge is against, or through, the railings along its entire length preventing any painting or maintenance of the railings.

The need is therefore to remove 63m of yew hedge along North End on the western edge of the churchyard and maintain the railings to provide a welcoming and attractive view of the church.

Section 3 The Proposal

Following discussions with the Parish Council we propose to remove the yew hedge to the western edge of the churchyard bordering North End. The existing wrought iron railings will be renovated. The work undertaken to the railings will be agreed in liaison with the Parish Council, allowing them to take on its future maintenance, but is likely to include straightening of bent railings and remedial works, removing rust, priming and painting with suitable paints.

We are aware that the remains of a stone coffin is lodged in amongst the undergrowth at the north west corner of the church yard along the railings ([CHER Number: MCB19392](#)) and great care will taken when working in this area to avoid disturbing the remains of the coffin.

The primary impact of removing the hedge will be ecological. The hedge has been inspected for nesting birds and none found. A further inspection will take place ahead of removal.

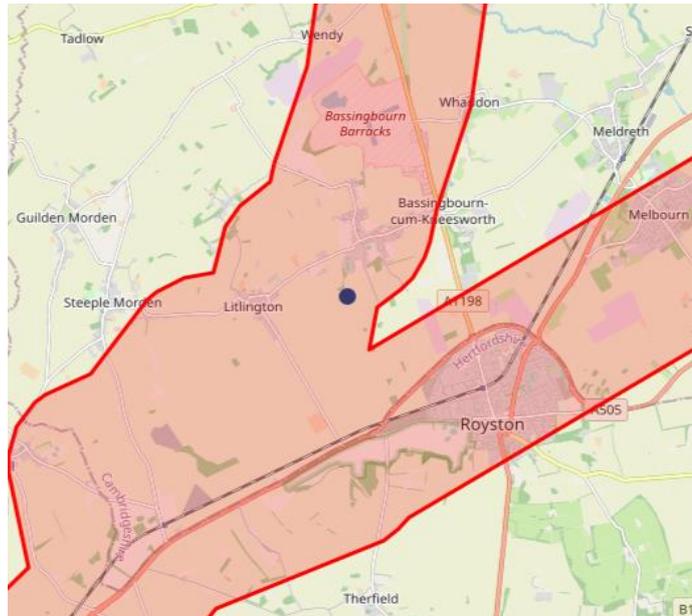
Although the hedge is monoculture and therefore only provides limited natural habitat it is still important to provide mitigating measures.

In 2018 the church, in collaboration with the Parish Council, established a nature conservation area in the east end of the churchyard. We now propose to encourage insect life in the churchyard through log piles, compost heaps and 'bug hotels'. As these will create habitat for a variety of species it is quite possible that the overall effect will be positive.

These measures are important as the churchyard is on a pollinator route (<https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>).

Muntjac deer are known to pass through the churchyard and have previously become caught in the railings. We will investigate the feasibility of introducing a gap in the railings to allow the passage of muntjac in and out of the churchyard.

We will also consult with the village through the village magazine and encourage involvement in the improvements as well as inviting suggestions for other measures.



Basingbourn is on a key pollinator route
(Source www.buglife.org.uk)

Section 4. Why do you need it and why do you need it now?

The combination of the hedge and the large horse chestnut trees reduces the visibility of the church from the footpath and the road. We would like to make the churchyard a more attractive and inviting space for the public. The removal of the hedge will provide more natural light to the footpath and create a pleasant and welcoming view of the church. It will also allow passers-by to see activities that take place in the churchyard including Christmas village market, organised picnics and youth events thereby encouraging engagement and demonstrating that the church is an active village resource.

The removal of the hedge has been a consideration of members of the PCC for a number of years but a combination of increasing concern over the deteriorating condition of parts of the hedge, and positive discussions with the Parish Council leading to its removal being discussed and agreed at the Parish Council meeting on the 19th November 2019, means that now is the correct time to apply for a Faculty.

A Hedgerow Removal Notice has been submitted and a response received from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning confirming that:

“The Council has considered the written Notice of Intention to carry out work to trees in a Conservation Area and decided not to object to the...works”

Section 5 Justification

The height of the hedge, its condition, and its prevention of maintenance of the railings means that the status quo is not an option.

The alternative options are:

- *Cutting back of the hedge to approximately one metre height with a corresponding reduction in its width (currently approximately one metre) to allow maintenance of railings.*

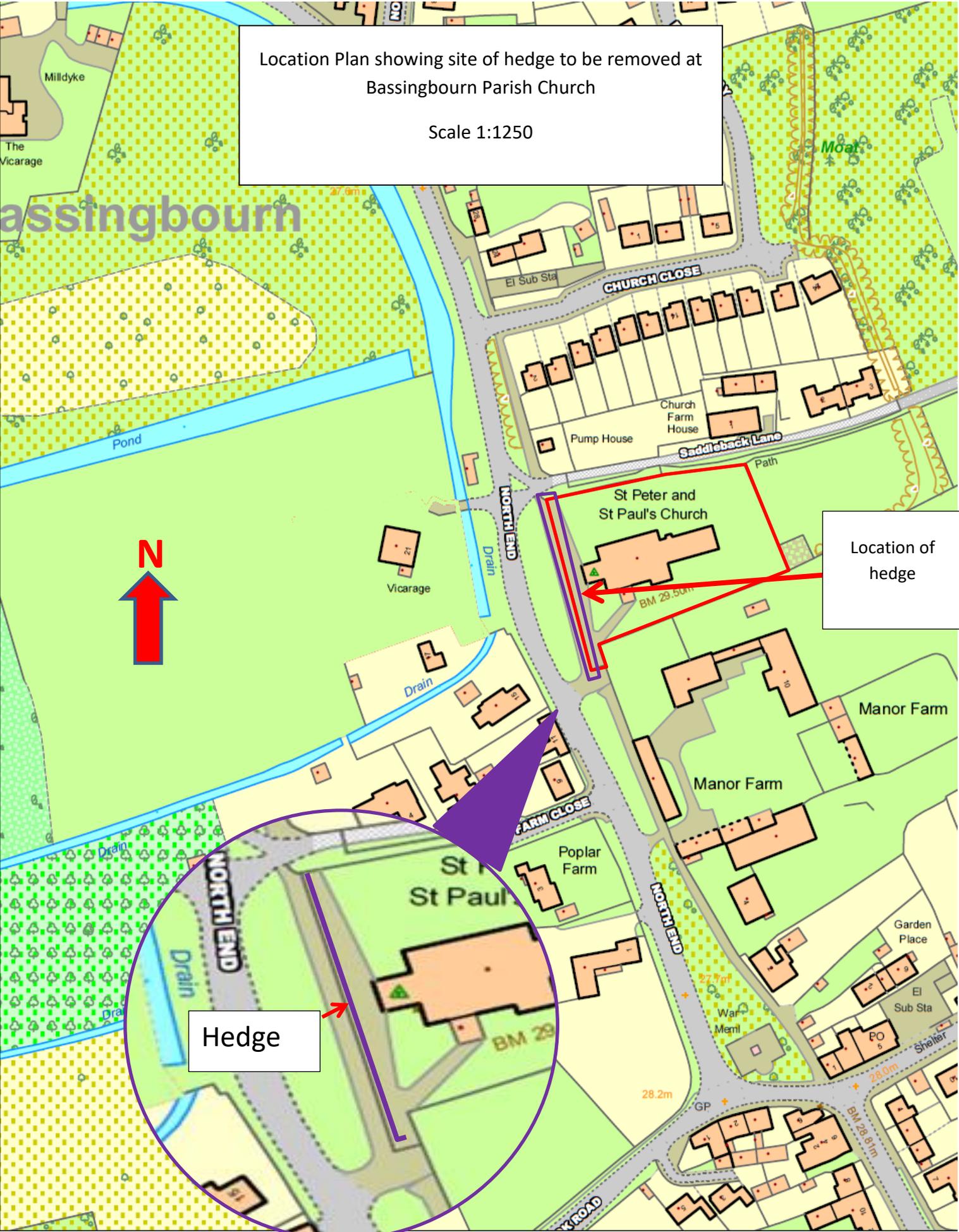
The first metre of the hedge above the ground is very poor in many places and the overhanging horse chestnuts will prevent the successful regrowing of these areas. It will be prohibitively expensive for the Parish Council contractor to maintain the hedge at the new level and it will gradually grow back up to the current level.

- *Remove of the railings allowing the hedge to be easily cut to the required height and width.* This would be an irreversible move and the parts of the hedge that are in poor condition could not be easily regrown.

Neither of these options present a viable long term solution and we believe that the removal of the hedge, along with mitigating measures is the best option.

Location Plan showing site of hedge to be removed at
Bassingbourn Parish Church

Scale 1:1250



Location of
hedge

Hedge