

Statement of Significance

Section 1: Brief history and description of the church building(s), contents, churchyard and setting

The church is right in the middle of Cranfield village. There was probably a wooden church here back in Saxon times, but the current building, made mostly of coarse limestone, was built in the 13th century. There's an original Norman doorway in the north wall from around 1180. The churchyard walls were put up in 1845 when the churchyard was expanded to its current size. The graveyard is now closed. The bell tower, which also serves as a clock tower, has six bells.

Section 2: The significance of the church (including its contents and churchyard) in terms of i) Its special architectural and historical interest ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

The church is notable for its 900-year history and its ongoing role as a place of worship. It hosts Sunday services, weekday activities like midweek worship, junior café, home group Bible studies, music, and bell ringing practice. It's also a popular venue for weddings and funerals. Despite its age, the church building is well-maintained and in good condition. The furnishings include historical pieces, such as original Victorian servant pews and poppy heads decorating the pews in the centre aisle.

In the graveyard, you'll find the grave of Capt. William Swabey, who fought at the Battle of Waterloo, and the grave of a woman who claimed to be George Washington's niece, though there's no evidence to support this. The churchyard also contains several Commonwealth war graves.

Specific details related to the project:

The church features a bell tower with six bells. A brief history of the bell chamber is provided on the following web page: <https://www.cranfieldchurch.org/the-bells>

The bells are rung from a chamber located atop an adjoining gallery (Figure 1), accessed by a staircase. This gallery was added in 2010 during a refurbishment that also included a kitchen and meeting room. These additions have greatly enriched church life.

During worship services, the gallery offers comfortable seating for 20-30 worshippers, providing an unobstructed view of the proceedings. The meeting room serves as a crèche for young children during services. After worship, the kitchen provides refreshments, fostering fellowship among church members.

When the gallery was added, the bell chamber was fitted with half-gates, as shown in Figure 2. The current project aims to furnish the ringing chamber with a pair of doors, as detailed in the Statement of Needs. These doors will help reduce noise interference during Sunday morning bell ringing, minimize warm air drafts to lower the church's energy footprint, and enhance security by preventing unauthorized access to the bell chamber, thereby improving health and safety.



Figure 1 Church gallery with the ringing chamber in the middle.



Figure 2 Bell ringing chamber with half gates fitted in the arch.



Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance defined in Section 2

The impact on the church's significance will be minimal, as the work is minor and confined to the ringing chamber arch. There will be no effect on the historic aspects of the church. The proposed doors will replace the half-gates in the semi-enclosed ringing chamber arch, without altering the church's historic nature.

The proposed doors are to be placed over the arch where pipe organ tubes were once placed prior to the installation of the gallery. This is evident from the holes already present on the arch way and historic picture shown in Figure below. The proposed new doors will not obscure the arch like the original enclosed state.

Parish Church - West end of Nave



A set of photos showing the west end of the Nave (the opposite end to the Chancel). The doorway was installed in c1950 (Top Left) using parts of the old rood screen discovered in a barn at the end of WWII. Above it was a gallery and the church organ (Top Centre). In 1999 the organ and the gallery were removed and a new organ installed at the East end of the North Aisle. The ringing chamber was also lowered to its present level and can be seen in the upper part of the arch in the 2008 photo (Top Right), the chamber was accessed by a loft ladder from the ground floor of the tower. In 2011 a meeting room was installed at the end of the South Aisle and a kitchen & toilet in the North Aisle with stairs up to a new gallery (Bottom photos). The ringing chamber is now accessed directly from the gallery through the upper part of the arch. (Thanks to Sheila Ewan for confirming the dates of the alterations)

Top Left Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP (Bedfordshire Press) Box 4000
Top Centre Photo: Courtesy of Sheila Ewan

Top Right Photo: Courtesy of Dr Marjorie Cotton.

Bottom Photos: Chas Leslie

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

The proposed new doors will have the following positive impacts

1. **Improved Insulation:** The tower creates an updraft that draws warm air from the balcony. The new doors will help retain heat within the church, reducing heating costs and environmental impact.
2. **Noise Reduction:** On Sunday mornings, it is challenging to hear the bells over the church band's practice. The new doors will help minimize this noise interference.
3. **Health & Safety:** The partially enclosed bell chamber poses a potential danger, especially with many children now attending church. The new doors will enhance safety.
4. **Aesthetics:** The new oak doors will be more visually appealing than the current barriers, which does not match the rest of the church's interior.

Section 5. Justification

N/A