Project:	**Proposed Accessible Entrance to St Edward's Church, LEEK**
Title:	**Heritage Statement**
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Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany the Full Planning application for the proposed external alterations to create an accessible entrance into the South Porch entrance of St Edward's Church, Church Street, Leek.

St Edward's Church is Listed Grade II*, rendering the building of *particular importance and of more than special interest*.

The Church lies within Leek Conservation Area, positioned on the northern boundary.

St Edward's Church holds an imposing and prominent position in the town. It is located on the hilltop and is approached from all sides by Ball Lane to the north, Mill Street to the east, Stockwell Street to the west and St Edwards Street to the south side.

Description of Heritage Value and Significance

The Parish of Leek dates back to early medieval times, although the present Church has origins dating back to only 1297. The building is a complex collection of different styles, but perhaps the greatest impact was Street's reordering in 1865.

The exterior is impressive and dominates the hilltop, approached from all sides.

The large Tower is dated 14th-century with a perpendicular top and perpendicular western door. Transepts with rose windows are also 14th-century.

Aisles were removed from the Church in 1556 on the south side and 1593 on the north side, leaving the narrow Nave exposed at the west end. Fenestration is irregular on these exposed walls.

Internally the tall ceiling is panelled and forms the only unifying element in the Church. The ceiling dates from the 16th-century.

The South Porch was added in 1670 and the West Gallery in 1838. The North Porch was also added in 1838 against the western wall of the North Aisle.

The 16th-century Nave roof was restored in 1856 by E Christian and includes deep panels between moulded principles, purlins and a ridge beam with decorative bosses on all intersections.

Significant alterations were made by G E Street including an extension to the length of the original Chancel. The large five light east window was completed in a Decorated Gothic style.

Stained glass in the Chapel east window and a rose window on the North Aisle are attributed to Morris & Company. Most of the remainder is Clayton & Bell.

The Church has a long historical connection with the School of Needlework in Leek and there are many embroideries on permanent display around the interior.

The Church was reordered in the late 1980's with a meeting room created at first floor level in the Tower which continued below the raked gallery at the western end of the Nave. The ground floor area below is locally called the Parlour. Work also included a kitchen and toilets within the base of the Tower.

The Church has been altered, adapted, and extended to meet the needs and expectations of the congregation and the community it serves throughout the Church's history.

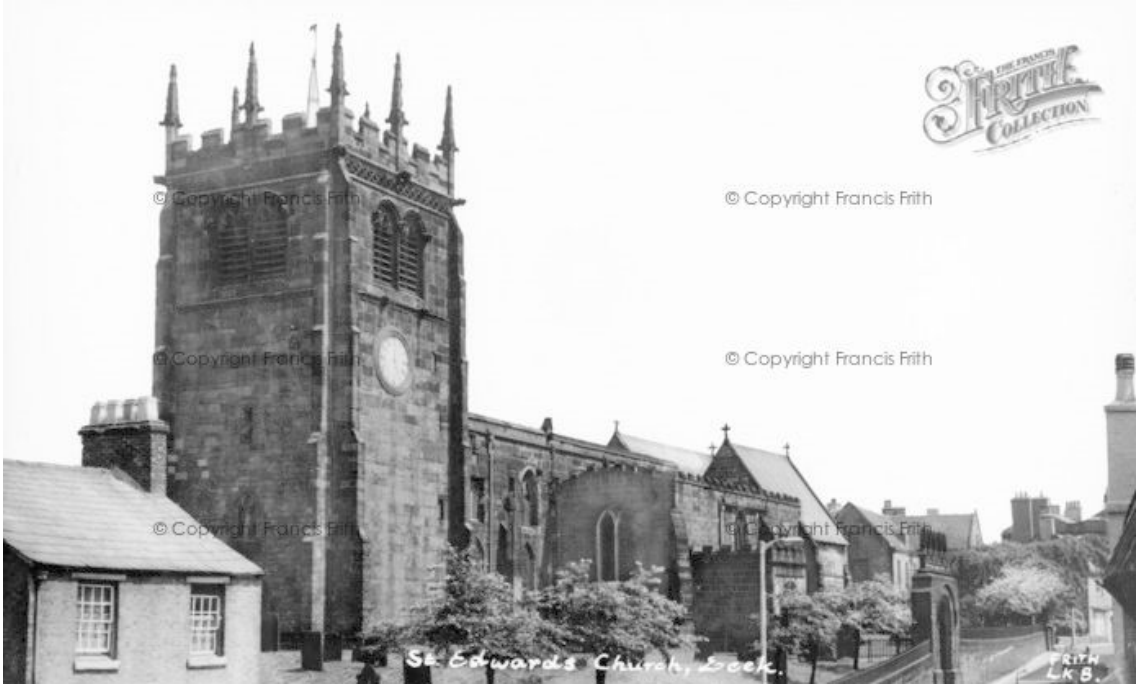


Fig. 1 St Edward's Church, Leek looking in a north easterly direction, c. 1955, *copyright Francis Firth*

Significance Summary

St Edward's Church is of significant **historic and architectural value as well as its local and social contribution.** The property is Listed Grade II* and as such renders the building of *particular importance and of more than special interest*.

The building lies within Leek Conservation Area and occupies a prominent position in the Town.

St Edward's Church is of *high heritage value* and as such we believe any alteration of the Church should be considered, well designed and be sympathetic and respectful to the host building.

Design Proposal

The following commentary is intended to be read in conjunction with the Planning drawings which have been submitted in support of this application.

It is proposed to create a level and accessible entrance to the South Porch of the Church, which comprises, inserting 2no. additional new stone steps at the head of the existing stepped access off Church Street and to alter and raise the existing Yorkstone paved pathway to create a level access into the Church.



Fig. 2 South entrance off Church Street, 2018

It is proposed to use new Hollington sandstone edging stones to from the edge of the pathway and the stepped access. The existing iron railings will be extended and adapted to accommodate the altered stepped access.

In addition, it is proposed to retain the existing steps into the South Porch entrance in situ (which will be concealed by the proposed new raised pathway). The retained building fabric will be protected with a visqueen membrane.



Fig. 3 Existing pathway leading to South Porch entrance, 2018

Summary

The survival of most historic buildings depends upon their continued, viable use. Providing easy access into St Edward's Church will allow everyone to enjoy inclusive access into the historic environment. Removing the barriers to access can allow many more people to use and benefit from the building, and if done sensitively will not compromise the ability of future generations to do the same.

The PCC of St Edward's Church are seeking to improve access into the building to ensure this important historic asset can inclusively continue to serve its Parish and community, as well as contribute towards helping to secure the building's long-term future.

Historic England encourage congregations to be generous in their approach to access where this can be achieved in a manner which is compatible with the special interest of the building.

This proposal presents a simple and innovative solution to make a lasting difference to the building's accessibility and its role within the local community.

Therefore, we believe this proposal is a balanced, considered, and provides a sensitive approach to creating accessible and inclusive access into St Edward's Church.