

**The Church of St Laurence, Northfield, Birmingham**

**A Statement of Significance**

**Prepared for the PCC of the Church of St Laurence**

**Prepared by Andrew Rudge**

**December 2011**

**Updated July 2016**

**To support the Statement of Need for a re-ordering scheme for the Church.  
Both documents will support future faculty applications to carry forward the  
proposals.**

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## Site Summary

<b>Site Name</b> .....	The Church of St Laurence
<b>Site Location</b> .....	Northfield, Birmingham
<b>National Grid Reference</b> .....	SP 025 794
<b>County</b> .....	<i>present</i> : West Midlands <i>traditional</i> : Worcestershire <b>pre-1911</b>
<b>Planning Authority</b> .....	Birmingham City Council
<b>Diocese</b> .....	<i>present</i> : Birmingham <i>medieval</i> : Worcester
<b>Benefice</b> .....	Northfield
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<i>present</i> : St Laurence <i>medieval</i> : not confirmed
<b>Type of Building/Monument</b> .....	Parish church

## Designation Summary

<b>Scheduled Ancient Monument</b> .....	No
<b>Listed Status</b> .....	St Laurence's Church (Grade I) ..... St Laurence's Church, Churchyard Wall (Grade II)
<b>Conservation Area</b> .....	Yes (Northfield Old Village Conservation Area)
<b>Locally Listed Building</b> .....	No
<b>Area of Archaeological Importance</b> .....	Yes
<b>Tree Preservation Orders</b> .....	None identified (within the church grounds) but tree works covered under conservation area status
<b>Other Designations</b> .....	None identified (as of December 2011)

## Report Summary

The church of St Laurence is the historic parish church of Northfield. The site has been associated with Christian worship since at least the eleventh century and today forms the focus of the Northfield Old Village Conservation Area. It is the oldest building in Northfield still in use for its original purpose and its exceptional architectural, archaeological, and historic importance is recognised in its Grade I listing.

The following document is a Statement of Significance. It was originally produced in 2011 in support of a faculty submission to undertake drainage works. It has been modified to support a Statement of Need for a re-ordering scheme proposed by the PCC in 2016 and will be used in future Faculty applications. See 1.1 for comment that the 2011 statement was a “living document”

## **1.0 Introduction**

The 2011 Statement of Significance was prepared by Andrew Rudge for the PCC of the Church of St Laurence, Northfield, in the Diocese of Birmingham. It was produced in support of a faculty application and with the kind help and great assistance of Stuart Andrew and Linda Orchard. The PCC have amended the statement in light of a proposed re-ordering scheme.

The statement comprises an overview of the proposals, the site, its setting and background; a breakdown of significance and the potential impact of the proposed works on that significance, and proposals for mitigation.

### **1.1 Aims and Requirements**

Under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991, and subsequent rules, any repairs, alterations or extension to a church building or changes to its contents or churchyard require a faculty - that is a licence authorising the work.

As part of this process the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000 require a Statement of Significance to be submitted, along with a separately prepared Statement of Need, in support of a faculty application.

The Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000 define a Statement of Significance as “a document which summarises the historical development of the church and identifies the important features that make major contributions to the character of the church”.

The purpose of the Statement of Significance is to help the parish, and its representatives, explore the strengths and potential that your church holds for worship and mission, and to help those in the Faculty system advise you and assess your plans for change.

It is intended that this Statement of Significance will be a 'living document' that should be updated as required and used as a basis for subsequent works as necessary.

### **1.2 The Proposals**

This Statement of Significance is submitted to support the Statement of Need for the proposed re-ordering scheme at St Laurence Church. A copy is attached. Both will inform Faculty submissions for future works.

## **2.0 Understanding: the Place and the Community**

### **2.1 Historical Background**

The name Northfield is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as "Nordfeld". The name is Old English and is derived from "nord" meaning north plus "feld" referring to open country or pasture; hence "north pasture".

Before the Norman Conquest Anglo-Saxon Northfield was held by Alwold son of Erngeat. It was a manor of some substance worth £8 for tax purposes during the reign of King Edward. Following the Conquest the manor went to William son of Ansculf and the Domesday Book records that Northfield (Nordfeld) had a priest as well as seven villeins, sixteen borders, six cottars, two serfs, a bondswoman and enough land for thirteen ploughs. It can be inferred from this entry that Northfield therefore had a church in existence prior to the earliest surviving part of the present building.

The church of Northfield was granted to the Priory of Dudley by Gervase Paynel when he founded the house about 1160, and from that time until the Dissolution it was held by the prior and convent. When the Priory was dissolved, its rights in the church became vested in the Crown, and on 26 March 1541 Henry VIII granted to Sir John Dudley, afterwards Duke of Northumberland, and a pension of 6s. 8d. issuing from it with all other possessions of the Priory in Northfield, this grant apparently includes the advowson. When Northumberland was attainted and executed in 1553, his property came into the hands of the Crown. In 1554 the tithes of Northfield were granted to Edward Sutton Lord Dudley, who seems to have also held the advowson, which was dealt with by his trustees in 1578–9 and in 1579–80. In 1587 the Queen presented to the living. In 1595, however, Edward Sutton, the next Lord Dudley, conveyed the advowson with the yearly rent issuing from the rectory to Richard Hammett. On 14 November 1608 Richard and Edward Hammett received from the Crown a grant of a yearly rent of £4 from the rectory and church. In 1611 the reversion of the tithes of Northfield, after the expiry of the estate of Edward Lord Dudley, was granted to George Baggeley of Dudley.

On 11 July 1615 the advowson of Northfield was granted by the king to Sir Charles Montagu and Edward Sawyer of London, gentleman. It had passed before 1621 to Edward Skinner, who died 'seised' of it in 1631, leaving a son and heir Richard, but in 1639 one Phineas White of the city of Coventry is said to have presented to the living by the grant of Thomas Jervoise of Herriard, then Lord of the Manor. Jervoise himself presented in 1660, but in 1661 and 1663 the king is said to have presented, in the first case 'to corroborate title'. In 1671 the advowson was dealt with by Edward Lord Ward of Birmingham, the successor of Lord Dudley, but from 1695 until 1799 the presentations were made by the Jervoise family. After that date Jervoise Clarke seems to have sold the advowson to George Fenwick of Sunderland, who presented in 1805, and in whose family it remained at any rate until 1877. In the following year the advowson passed to Stephen Barker, who sold or gave it in 1887–8 to Keble College, Oxford, the present patron (VCH. Vol 3).

## **2.2 Social History**

Northfield was a very large rural parish of 6000 acres covering much of what is now South Birmingham, including the Manors of Weoley and Selly Oak. The Church is strategically positioned close to the crossing point of the ancient routes from Bordesley Abbey to Halesowen Abbey and the salt route from Droitwich to

Birmingham and beyond.

The church, as its position suggests, was built as a focal point for the whole community. As well as being a place of worship it would have been used for parish meetings, storage of valuables, a community hall and a meeting hall for decisions about farming in the area. From the Reformation to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it remained at the heart of a rural community. The parish, with its vestry, churchwardens, constable and overseers, was also responsible for local roads, bridges, policing and poor relief.

The parish had a Chapel of Ease, St Michael's in Cofton Hacket, which had served the people to the south for over 600 years. A further chapel was added in 1840, St Michael and All Angels in Bartley Green.

In 1911, Northfield was incorporated into the City of Birmingham, through the Greater Birmingham Act. Formerly it had been in Worcestershire and was part of the Diocese of Worcester.

The Victoria County History of the area, published in 1913, succinctly summarises the situation:

*“ Until the 19th century Northfield was an agricultural parish, but by the rapid expansion of Birmingham it has become part of the city, and in the ten years between 1891 and 1901 its population has increased from 9 907 to 20 767. This increase is partly due to the influx of a suburban population and partly to the erection of works in the neighbourhood. The change is manifested most strongly in the northern part of the parish, where Selly Oak, lying between Northfield and Birmingham, has sprung into such importance as to dwarf the ancient village of Northfield.”*

With the rapidly expanding population in the second part of 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, the parish church and two chapels had become inadequate and the parish was gradually broken up. Today, where there was once one vast parish we have others in Bartley Green, Weoley Castle, Selly Oak, Selly Park, Bournville, West Heath, Allen's Cross and Shenley Green.

Today the special character and interest of the area surrounding St Laurence's is recognised in its designation as a Conservation Area. The Northfield Old Village Conservation Area as it is now, consists of: the church and churchyard; a very elegant green, bounded by 18th century nail makers cottages and the former St Laurence Church School of 1838; the 18th century Great Stone Inn; a 17th century village pound; the former rectory, now the Pastoral Centre, and an adjacent Grade 2 listed 17th century barn.

### **2.3 Site Location**

Northfield is a predominantly residential area on the south-western outskirts of the

City of Birmingham. Prior to 1919 it was part of north Worcestershire. Geologically, Northfield is built on a well - drained stretch of gravel and sand that has been enriched by sediments from ice age glaciers and forms part of the *Northfield—Dudley Plateau*, which in turn constitutes part of the South Staffordshire Uplands.

The church of St Laurence lies at the heart of the historic settlement of Northfield in what is now the Northfield Old Village Conservation Area. It is situated along the brow of a south- west - north- east running ridge above the valley of the river Rea. The site of the church itself is composed of the historic church and churchyard on the northern most part of the site and a churchyard extension which runs down hill from the north- eastern end of the historic churchyard, though a narrow neck of land before widening out at its southern extent. Together the site forms a reverse flathead C-shaped plot of land with the northern arm of the 'C' containing the church and historic churchyard.

## **2.4 Site Boundaries**

On its western and north-western side the church's boundary is defined by the northern part of Church Hill Road as it rises to the summit of the ridge and then curves east and meets Church Road and Rectory Road. The northern boundary is defined by both the north-eastern arm of Church Hill Road and Rectory Road, which together run south- west – north- east along the church's northern boundary. The eastern boundary is defined by the rear gardens to properties of Old Moat Drive and the end of Pine Walk. To the south the churchyard is bounded by Pamela Road, and beyond, the rear gardens of properties running along Woodland Road. To the west the churchyard's southern extent is contained behind the rear gardens of properties running south to north up Church Hill, before arching around the rear of Bishop's Walk, rejoining the historic church yard and extending back to meet Church Hill.

## **2.5 Setting of the Church**

The immediate setting of St Laurence's retains much of its rural, village, character. Fundamental to this are the relationships formed between church, churchyard, and the surrounding historic properties that give a sense of gentle containment to the setting of the church. Intrusive urban forms are held back by the surrounding properties that line the western and northern side of Church Hill and the wall to the former Rectory that runs parallel to Rectory Road. The surrounding properties in the immediate vicinity of the church, with the exception of those on Bishop's Court, all add significantly to the quality of the church's setting. These properties are both proportionate in scale and form to each other and the church, whilst the material and textural palette used adds to the coherence of the visual and emotional character of the area. The spatial relationships created between built and organic forms within the conservation area are also of significance. Of particular note is the view south along Church Road where the view of the church's west tower and treed background is framed by the Great Stone Inn and the 18th century Rectory walling.

Of particular importance to the setting of the churchyard, and conservation area, is

the Grade II listed boundary wall. This wall, mostly of pink sandstone, is up to 9 feet tall where it encloses the churchyard on its lower western side before reducing in height as it follows Church Hill up and around the churchyard's north-western corner. As the height of the churchyard reduces in relation to the road level the wall too reduces in size before being largely replaced by a dwarf brick wall along Rectory Road. One of the most striking elements of the wall is the fact that it retains the level of the churchyard at a height above road level along the course of Church Hill up until it meets the Lychgate and main entrance to the Churchyard where the road level and level of the western section of the churchyard equalise. This is also the point at which Church Road meets Church Hill. This play in levels results in two distinctive phenomena. Firstly the visual presence of the churchyard and grave markers are heightened in relation to their surroundings as they are raised above road level opposite the Great Stone Inn and adjacent properties as the road turns down Church Hill. Secondly, as the road descends down Church Hill the height and presence of the wall itself takes precedence – changing the character of the boundary from open and soft/ planted to a more enclosed hard boundary as the road moves down between the churchyard and the neighbouring properties. This momentary sense of enclosure is then alleviated by views opening up across the valley of the Rea and 'village green'.

## **2.6 Views and Vistas**

St Laurence's sits at the meeting point of three roads, Church Road, Church Hill, and Rectory Road. Each approach provided by these roads results in a distinct view of the church and its setting.

### *Church Road*

Church Road approaches St Laurence's from the north and provides one of the most significant views of the church. On first appearance the road appears to be relatively straight but subtle changes in direction result in a continually evolving perspective. Before the Pastoral Centre, views are contained by soft boundaries, trees and hedging, that enclose and blurs views to the south. As a result it is not the presence of St Laurence's but the old Great Stone Inn, greenery and open sky to the horizon that take the eye. As you approach the entrance to the Pastoral Centre visual focus bleeds away and the eye drifts into the Centre and across its single storey extension. On the opposite side of the road however the charm of the conservation area is restored by the presence of Rose Cottage and the Great Stone Inn.

Moving forward the road again turns subtly and once past the entrance to the Pastoral Centre you are presented with a quintessential village view. In the foreground the Lychgate sits at the centre of the picture whilst behind it the full height of St Laurence's West Tower takes centre stage. Open sky and trees hold the background whilst the picture is framed on either side by planting and the brick wall to the old rectory on the left and the Great Stone Inn on the right. Church Road itself terminates in front of the lychgate and turns west to become Church Hill Road, while Rectory Road appears almost unnoticed from the east to terminate in front of the west tower. This view is only undermined by the visual intrusion of poor highways signage.

### *Church Hill*

As you turn into Church Hill Road from Church Road, the previous sense of enclosure gives way to a more open aspect. The height of the surrounding buildings is limited to two stories on the northern side of the road, while the churchyard opens out before you on the south side. You see the road slowly dropping in height as you move towards No 6 Church Hill which holds the corner where the road turns left to drop downhill to the south. The importance of the church wall, which maintains the level of the churchyard as the road descends, also becomes apparent. As a consequence the height of the wall increases as the road descends, so that the level of the churchyard gradually rises as you continue downhill. As a result the perspective and the relationships created between walker, the churchyard, its wall, planting and grave markers change and you find yourself yet again in a more enclosed space, this time between the church wall and the properties and boundaries at the northern end of Church Hill. This significant change in character is only short lived before the sense of enclosure is lost as the view opens up across the village green and down Church Hill.

Following this route in reverse the mass of planting to the churchyard's south-western boundary largely masks the church itself. As you move towards the upper part of Church Hill the importance of the church wall here becomes even more apparent, as it is the presence of this wall, its mass, character and its association with a yew tree that is the first sign that you are approaching a church, and a place of deep history. As you continue uphill and turn the corner of the road the view is contained by the properties on your left so your eye is drawn into the space below the canopy of the churchyard trees. At this point it is the gravestones that attract your attention as the full view of the church is still taking shape amongst the planting. Only as you move up towards the Great Stone Inn does the full presence of the church take shape with the view again dominated by the west tower and gable to the north aisle. Turning away from the church to look east you see the corner of the old rectory wall taking your eye left, to follow Church Road or ahead and along Rectory Road.

### *Rectory Road*

Leaving Church Hill Road at the lychgate you join the west end of Rectory Road. On your left is the approx 6ft old rectory wall; to the right the church's north boundary wall, now made of brick/ brick and stone, which runs parallel to its taller northern neighbour. Behind the church wall a clear view of the west tower, gable end and side elevation of the northern aisle and the vestry can be seen, before being lost behind the north vestry wall as you move past it. Continuing east, the churchyard opens out once more and you can see the full extent of the north-eastern portion of the graveyard with planting to the far end and leading south into the lower and later churchyard extension.

The most significant views of the church are however to be gained as you turn into Rectory Road from its eastern end. At first a direct view of the church is partly

obscured by planting within the church yard's north-eastern corner so the eye follows the low church yard wall to the south and high brick wall of the old rectory to the north. But as you move west along Rectory Road the view of the church unfolds, and with it the historic narrative of the church's development in physical form - the vestry, north aisle and tower; the nave roof, and the full expanse of the chancel. In one view you have a physical reflection of the majority of the evolutionary history of the church. For this reason, and because at this point the wider setting of the church appears almost untouched by negative intrusive elements, this view becomes one of the most significant views of St Laurence's.

### *Distant Views*

The most noteworthy views of the church tower are largely to be found looking north from the south where the tower forms an important local landmark.

## **2.7 Notable Monuments and Grave Stones**

The majority of the churchyard contains closely packed graves and graveyard markers surrounded by grass. There has been a lot of grave infill and there are areas dedicated to ashes burials in the Northern and Southern plots.

The churchyard has been the burial ground for the parish for centuries. However, few monuments of note are contained within the churchyard. The oldest headstones are to the south of the church and date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, while the most prominent memorial is to Rev. Henry Clarke. Reverend Clark was rector of the parish from 1836 to 1880 and his memorial was designed by noted architect J.L. Pearson and was erected in 1884.

There is one World War 1 grave and fifteen World War 2 graves. A plan of burials is maintained.

## **2.8 The Living Churchyard**

The churchyard can be divided into three character areas: a northern plot that forms the north arm of the reversed C- shaped site; a neck, or narrow linking plot of land, that forms the side of the C- shaped site, and a southern extension that forms the southern arm of the reversed C-shaped site. There are no protected trees or rare or unusual species associated with the churchyard.

### *The Northern Plot or Old Churchyard*

This section of the churchyard is where the church sits and due to the relative isolation of the two other plots provides the essential setting to the church. It has paths on three sides of the church, to the west, south and east; and contains the oldest monuments – these are of late 18th century in date and are mostly found south of the church.

Entering through the lychgate and turning right and moving around the boundary,

there is a lime tree, a holly tree and, following the boundary as Church Hill Road turns and drops down the hill, some yews and sycamores. Among the graves are self-seeded laurels and leylandi. Some of the latter are very tall trees and multi stemmed. Along the boundary with Bishops Court are self-seeded sycamores. Just past the church's South Porch is a line of cherry trees. This line of trees is still being added to. If you walk across to where the churchyard abuts with the footpath from Rectory Road you see more self-seeded laurels, a large holly and in the corner by the Lister gate onto the lane there is a yew, a beech and an oak tree.

### *The Neck or Narrow Linking Plot*

This narrow section slopes downhill to the south to form a link with the southern extension. It has two parallel grass paths that lead downhill where it meets the more rectangular plot of land that forms the southern, and newest, extension to the churchyard. Its boundaries to the west are defined by the back of Bishops Court and houses on Church Hill, and to the east by the rear/ side gardens of properties on Old Moat Drive and Pine Walk. This section is very dark and the majority of trees and bushes are self-seeded. Sycamore and leylandi predominate. There is a line of 4 tall scots pines towards the left hand bottom corner and a horizontal line of 4 stubby yew trees approximately halfway down. Grass is very sparse here.

### *The Southern Extension*

This section is much wider than the narrow linking section and like the old churchyard is less densely planted and open to the sun. Such paths as there are grass only. There are generally fewer trees and bushes than the other two sections of the churchyard, though there are a number of self-seeded bushes and trees. The bottom of the churchyard abuts onto a footpath and is marked by a line of sycamores. There are also 2 cherry trees halfway down this section of the churchyard, either side of the main grass path. The ground here is very uneven. It is believed that this section of the churchyard was once a field added to the churchyard in the early 20th century.

Although no protected species are found within the church grounds, the churchyard itself forms an important green heart to the historic centre of Northfield. Trees and hedging along boundaries, although not always planned or of particular merit, do, in important areas, act to hold back the impact of intrusive or poor quality development. Of particular note in this regard is the southern boundary to the northern plot where planting helps mitigate the negative impact of Bishops Court on the setting of the church. The trees in the north-eastern corner of the northern plot are again important factors in containing the coherence of the setting and reducing the impact of surrounding development.

## **2.9 Description of the church today**

The church of *St Laurence* consists of a chancel 35½ ft. by 20½ ft., nave 51½ ft. by 23 ft., north and south aisles, south porch, and west tower 15½ ft. by 15ft. These

measurements are all internal (confirm dimensions?). The church is mostly sandstone built, with a stone and timber porch and a tiled roof.

The earliest part of the existing building is the north doorway, of about 1170, which with two carved heads inserted in the south face of the tower, formed part of a 12th century church.

Of the building which succeeded this there are ample remains in the complete 13th century chancel, the south aisle added at the end of that century and the lower stage of the tower. In the 15th century the upper portion of the tower was rebuilt, and, at some later date the south arcade of the nave, perhaps owing to the failure of the walls. The north aisle with its arcade is a modern addition of 1900 in a 14th century style by G F Bodley.

#### *The Chancel (C13th)*

The east window of the chancel consists of three grouped lancets, with moulded heads and shafted jambs, enclosed by an outer arch having shafted jambs and a moulded label. In the north wall are three groups of three lancets, each lancet having shafts to the jambs, with moulded capitals and arches, and outside these a blank half-arch. Each group is enclosed under a segmental pointed arch springing from circular shafts. In the south wall are two similar sets of lancets and a third containing a lancet light without shafts.

#### *The North Aisle (C20th)*

The north aisle of the nave, with an arcade of four bays, was added in 1900 in the style of the 14th century by G F Bodley. It is a fine example of work from this period by a distinguished church architect. It also includes the retained round-headed north door that dates from about 1170 and has been reset in the modern aisle wall. The inner of the two orders has chevron ornament and the outer a row of beak-heads. The jamb shafts are masked by chevron work.

#### *The South Aisle (late C13th and C14th)*

The south aisle dates from late in the 13th century and has an arcade of four bays, with octagonal columns. The east window has three lights with intersecting mullions in the head, and in the south wall are three windows, and one at the west end, of similar type but of two lights each. At the south-east is a contemporary trefoiled piscina, grooved for a shelf. The south door is pointed with large crowned half-figure stops to the moulded label.

#### *The Porch (late C14th/ C15th)*

The porch is of good late 14<sup>th</sup> / 15th-century woodwork on a stone base. The sides are panelled, the wall-plates embattled, and the roof has a braced tie beam with moulded collars and wind-braces. On the wall above the doorway are traces of the position of a previous porch.

### *The Tower (C13th and 15th)*

The tower arch is of three orders, springing from chamfered abaci, continued on as a moulded stringcourse. The first and part of the second stage of the tower are of 13th-century date, though the greater part of the west wall has been rebuilt. In the north and south walls are two-light windows, with a stair at the south-east angle and a west door. In the south wall is a wide-arched doorway, now blocked.

The exterior of the tower is in three stages, the upper of grey, the lower two of red sandstone. On each side of the west door is a niche, about 6 ft. high, with a pointed head. In the second stage on the north and south faces are plain lights with carved animal heads, apparently of the 12th century, inserted on either side. The upper stage has two-light belfry windows and an embattled parapet, on the west side of which a diminutive portcullis is cut in relief.

### *The Vestries (C20th)*

The vestry was designed by A.J. Charwin and added in 1959-60. It stands largely as an independent structure connected to the North Aisle.

### *The Roof*

This roof structure is probably a late C15 alteration of the C13 chancel roof contemporary with the replacement of the nave roof.

### *The Fixtures and Fittings*

The internal fittings of the church are largely Victorian and a result of the Oxford movement. The exceptions to this are some 15th century carved woodwork, from a screen, re-used in the pulpit, and a bench end. On the south chancel wall is a monument to John Hinckley, rector, 1660–95, and his two wives, and, on the opposite wall, another to Isabella, wife of Stanford Wolferstan, minister of Wootton Wawen.

### *The Exterior*

On the exterior there are traces of a building against the south chancel wall, opening from the south aisle by an arch, of which the northern springing remains. There are also traces of the bonding of the eastern wall; and, as this chamber must have been contemporary with the chancel, it proves the existence of an earlier south aisle, which, at the end of the 13th century, was replaced by the present one. The south chancel door has a flattened trefoiled head with the moulding continued on the jambs. The roofs are of steep pitch and covered externally with tiles.

## **3.0 SIGNIFICANCE**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The following assessment of significance is based on guidance produced by English Heritage (Clarke, 2001; 2006 and cf. Suddard and Hargreaves 1996) and is predicated on the assumption that land, as well as the layout and fabric of an historic building,

can contain interpretable data, the potential and significance of which is dependent on the quantity, quality and completeness of that data within the building and its site; the relative scarcity of any one data type within the locality and its relationship to established historical themes.

### 3.2 Assessment of significance

Significance is taken to mean ‘importance’ and the ‘ability to convey meaning’ and is assessed with reference to the architectural, social and economic history of this part of England. The degree of significance is defined, here, using a hierarchical terminology based on the following:

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Justification</b>
<b>Exceptional</b>	Fulfils criteria for statutory designation and is of importance at national to international levels.	Rare or outstanding element directly contributing to an item’s national and international significance.
<b>High</b>	Fulfils criteria for local or statutory designation and is important at a regional level or sometimes higher.	High degree of original fabric. Demonstrates a key element of the item’s significance. Alterations do not detract from significance.
<b>Moderate</b>	Fulfils criteria for local or statutory designation, is of local value but of regional significance for group or other value.	Altered or modified elements. Elements with little heritage value, but which contribute to the overall significance of the item.
<b>Low</b>	Does not fulfil criteria for local or statutory designation but is of local value.	Alterations detract from significance. Difficult to interpret, of local interest but no more.
<b>Intrusive</b>	Does not fulfil criteria for local or statutory designation and adds little or nothing to the value of a site or actively detracts from it.	Adds nothing to an item’s significance or is damaging to its significance.

#### *Note on the assessment of significance*

Different components of a place may make a different relative contribution to its overall significance. It is recognised that that significance may itself contain varying levels of significance within the various aspects that can make up a defined component. For example: the North Aisle as a Victorian addition to the medieval church maybe deemed of less 'historical' significance. However, the quality of its architectural composition and association with a pre-eminent architect (G.F.Bodley) means it has particular 'architectural' significance. This combined with the quality of its glazing is considered to give this area of the church a higher relative level of significance compared with other areas that may be older.

### 3.3 Significance: The church building in detail

Phase or area	Significance
<p><b>North Doorway</b> The current church shows evidence of being built around the middle of the 12th century, as shown by the north doorway (1170), moved to the aisle built between 1898 and 1900. It has faded, but has fine beak head and chevron designs from this period.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>
<p><b>Chancel.</b> There is a claim that the buttresses to the east end of the chancel also dates from the mid 12th century. The chancel was rebuilt in the early 13th century (1230). Sir Nikolaus Pevsner wrote, “The glory of the church is the complete and unspoilt 13th century chancel.” There are triple lancet windows, with moulded heads and flanking arches set under segmental pointed arches. It is of the Early English Decorated style. There is a low sided window, now blocked, on the north wall and a single lancet window on the south which may have communicated with a demolished Norman chapel. There is also a long unused Priest’s doorway with rolled moulding shaped into a trefoil head. The roof was restored in 1843, with three bays, divided by arched braces and collars and linked by a ridge beam.</p>	<p><b>Exceptional</b></p>
<p><b>Nave.</b> There is little evidence of the original nave. The octagonal pillars to the south aisle date from the 14th century. The pillars to the north aisle (1898-1900) are of elaborate quatrefoil design, with elaborately moulded arches. The roof is medieval, of similar design to the chancel. There is a step down from the doorway to the nave floor, which is below the 14th century level as seen by the base of the columns. It is uncertain when this happened, although it was a Victorian practice to lower nave floors to emphasise the greater holiness of the chancel. It could simply be a return to an original level which had been raised in the middle ages.</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>
<p><b>Tower.</b> The current tower dates from the early 13th century, as evidenced by the west doorway, lancet windows, and clasping buttresses. There are figures set into the north and south faces that may have been re set from an earlier structure. There are niches to either side of the doorway which probably once housed statuary. The belfry stage can be dated by its windows to the 15th century. There is a Victorian clock and a weathervane (1984), replacing the Georgian original.</p> <p>Internally, the tower is accessed by a huge arch. The left side is blocked by a buttress, but the right side is intact with three chamfered arches and a hood moulding terminating in a fine medieval head. Remains of a demolished tower stairway can be seen in the south east corner, probably removed when the upper tower was added in the 15th century.</p>	<p><b>Moderate</b></p>
<p><b>North Aisle.</b> This was added in the 14th century style between 1898 and 1900 by the architect G.F.Bodley.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>

Great care was taken to preserve key elements of the 14th century nave. The Norman doorway and the three original north windows were moved stone by stone and rebuilt in the new aisle wall. The windows at the ends of the aisle are new but in complimentary style. The arcade between the north aisle and nave is more elaborate, with quatrefoil pillars and elaborate moulded arches.	
<b>South Aisle.</b> The south aisle was rebuilt or enlarged in the late C13th/ early 14th century, as evidenced by the Y- shaped tracery of the windows. There is evidence of an arch of green sandstone where the east end meets the chancel, indicating an earlier aisle and probably a long lost chapel. The stone is typical regionally of the Norman period. The walls between the nave and the aisle are from the early 14th century, with octagonal pillars carrying an arcade of double chamfered arches. The south aisle clearly leans outwards, and three additional buttresses have been added to the original two. There is still a piscine and what was probably an aumbry set into the wall. The aisle has a medieval timber roof with tie beams and arched braces alternating with tie beams and queen posts.	<b>Moderate</b>
<b>Porch.</b> The south door has always been the principal entrance for laypeople. It was protected by a porch in the late 14th or early 15th centuries. The base is of sandstone; the remainder is of oak barge boarding, solid timber side beams and struts. Inside the porch are mediaeval stone benches. The two-centred arched doorway leading into the interior has a dripstone moulding culminating in two fine stone heads. Medieval wooden porches are uncommon, the only other two in the area being at Romsley and Yardley. The heavy, vertically planked oak door with horizontal battens to the interior is also of particular note along with the attached weighted opening mechanism.	<b>High</b>
<b>Vestries.</b> The choir and clergy vestries were added in 1959-60, designed by A.J. Charwin and made of harder Hollingston stone.	<b>Low</b>

### 3.4 Significance: Contents of the Church

St Laurence is a medieval church with mostly 19th and 20th century furnishings and fitting. They represent the changes to worship and church decoration brought about by The Oxford Movement, from around 1840. The driving force was the Rev. Henry Clarke who served the church for almost 50 years as both curate and rector.

Items or Groups of Items	Significance
<i>Layout and composition:</i> the layout, composition and furniture of the church are a fine example of the changes brought about in the early Victorian period through the Oxford Movement.	<b>Moderate</b>

<i>Pulpit.</i> Six panels of 15th century traceried woodwork have been reset into the Victorian pulpit (1843). They are believed to have been rescued from the original chancel screen.	<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Tympanum (Medieval).</i> Restoration work undertaken identified traces of a medieval Doom painting of the Last Judgement. This can still be faintly seen.	<b>High</b>
<i>Stained Glass.</i> The Victorian and Edwardian stained glass are undoubtedly the finest fittings within the church. The majority are by Hardmans of Birmingham, with one set of triple lancets in the Chancel designed by Pugin. Perhaps the finest artistic works are the two windows at the ends of the North Aisle, both by Charles E. Kempe, installed after the completion of the north aisle 1898-1900. They show the firm's trademark wheatsheaf signature. A full description can be found in the Terrier and Inventory.	<b>High</b>
<i>Bells.</i> In 1552 three bells are known to have been in the tower. It is believed that two more bells were added in 1637 when the existing wooden frame was installed. This was followed by recasting in 1730 when it was decided to increase the number of bells to six. Of note are the resulting inscriptions found on the bells that chart the debate on the number of bells to be included. The work was carried out by JOSEPH SMITH of EDGBASTON. Adaptations to the frame were also made at this time. In 1923 it was decided to recast the bells again and add two more. This time TAYLORS of LOUGHBOROUGH were given the contract. Again, the frame was adapted to take the additional bells and the original inscriptions on the bells were retained, with additions to bring them up to date. The wooden frame of 1637 (as adapted) remains in situ but is no longer in use. In <b>1999</b> it was replaced by a new metal frame and a further two bells added to the ring. The two additional bells were again made by TAYLORS of LOUGHBOROUGH.	<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Clock:</i> the tower clock is Victorian. The date of installation is unknown but the face was renovated and a self winding mechanism was added in 1999 by Joyce's of Whitchurch who may well be the original makers.	<b>Low</b>
<i>Chancel screen:</i> of 1861 produced in response to the Oxford Movement	<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Choir stalls:</i> of 1843 produced in response to the Oxford Movement	<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Nave pews:</i> of 1868-71 produced in response to the Oxford Movement	<b>Low</b>
<i>The Font:</i> Victorian, now located at the west end of the Nave	<b>Low/ Moderate?</b>
<i>The Organ:</i> this was donated to the church in 1937 and was rebuilt in 1983 using parts from an organ taken from the redundant church	<b>Low</b>

of St Jude, Hanley, Stoke on Trent. The organ was donated by Lord and Lady Austin in memory of their only son, who was killed in the First World War, and replaced an earlier barrel and chamber organ.	
Panelling in the North Aisle: the oak panelling to the north wall of the aisle dates from 1905-1915, oak panelling to the east end of the aisle dates from 1928.	<b>Low</b>
Flooring Nave/ Aisle: the flooring to the nave and aisles is of wood block and dates from a major refurbishment in 1952.	<b>Low</b>
Flooring, Sanctuary: the flooring to the sanctuary is of encaustic floor tiles	<b>Moderate?</b>
Georgian Royal Coat of Arms: above the south door is a Royal coat of arms painted on canvas bearing the monogram GR, but containing no Irish harp. This is believed to date from between 1714 and 1801.	<b>Moderate</b>
First World War memorial	<b>Low</b>
Furnishings: sanctuary lamps (1894 and re-sited in the mid 1990's), brass eagle lectern (1895), brass cross and candlesticks on high altar (1993), pavement candlesticks (date unknown), figures of Christ, St Mary and St John on the tympanum (1956) and the statue of St Laurence (1905) are all of a traditional and complimentary design and are in keeping with an Anglo Catholic style of worship.	<b>Low</b>
Lighting: the majority of the lighting and the flooring to the nave and aisles dates from major refurbishment in 1952.	<b>Low</b>

**Note:** A full description of all contents can be found in the Terrier and Inventory.

### 3.5 Significance: the Setting of the Church (Monuments and Views)

<b>Items or Groups of Items</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<i>Monuments</i>	
The Grade II Churchyard wall	<b>High</b>
The Lychgate: this is the principal entrance to the church yard. It is of timber with a roof of machine tiles, donated by Thomas Stock and Edward Pritchett, Churchwardens, 1863.	<b>Low</b>
Memorial to Rev. Henry Clarke	<b>Low</b>
Historic gravestones: grave markers to west of church of particular note to its setting	<b>Moderate</b>
<i>Views and Vistas</i>	
Church Road: view south of west tower as framed by rectory old wall and Old Stone Inn	<b>High</b>
Rectory Road: view south-west towards church	<b>High</b>

Distance views: views to church tower from the south	<b>Moderate</b>
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**Note:** significance of the setting and attributes related to setting are relative. What makes a landscape worthy of designation regionally or nationally may not be applicable at a local level, but this should not be seen to denote lesser importance. The assessment of significance above, with regard to setting, is therefore based on the relative contribution made at a local level.

### 3.6 Significance: the Living Churchyard

There are no protected trees or rare or unusual species associated with the churchyard. The quality and mix of tree species is variable, both in terms of habitat quality and appropriateness to setting, however, the combined impact of this green space makes a significance contribution to setting and local habitat.

Items or Groups of Items	Significance
The Northern Plot or Old Churchyard	<b>High</b>
The Neck or Narrow Linking Plot	<b>Low</b>
The Southern Extension	<b>Moderate</b>

### 3.7 Significance: the Social History

The Church of St Laurence is one of only four medieval churches within the City of Birmingham.

*The level of social significance is: Moderate*

### 3.8 Significance: the Mission

**What are the strengths of the building as it is for worship and mission? What potential for adapted and new uses does the church and its setting already have with little or no change?**

### 3.8 Significance: the Mission

**What are the strengths of the building as it is for worship and mission? What potential for adapted and new uses does the church and its setting already have with little or no change.**

St Laurence church holds significance for a very large number of parishioners through the Occasional Offices, not least because the churchyard is still open for burials. Many pass it daily walking children to the St Laurence schools or driving to the main road. The building itself is striking to look at from the outside and the inside and it is often remarked that the building has encourages prayer and reflection. As a liturgical space the church is ideal for use of the Book of Common Prayer but for modern liturgy there are real limitations. The chancel screen limits or obscures the

view of the altar for the majority of the congregation. The extended chancel step allows for occasional use of a nave altar but does not provide a space large enough for the reception of Holy Communion not is it adequate as a focus for non-eucharistic worship. Although every effort is made to encourage participation from the whole congregation using the present configuration it militates against anything other than the congregation acting as spectator – with a very restricted view - to the activity of the clergy, servers and choir.

The normal pattern of worship is a said Eucharist at 8.30am and a Eucharist with hymns at 10am.

### ***The level of significance to the mission:***

The Sunday morning worship at St Laurence is firmly based in the Eucharist as a gathering of the people of God to focus, support and promote their Christian life. The nature of the worship is inclusive and invites active participation from the whole congregation; it is understood to be the basis of the mission in the parish. The liturgical ordering of the church has a huge relevance at a conscious or unconscious level for all who attend. As it stands there is a significant dislocation between what is being proclaimed and lived out and what is able to be portrayed because of the limitations imposed by the current ordering within the building.

### **3.9 Significance: the Archaeology**

The site of St Laurence's lies at the heart of Northfield Medieval village which is an Area of Archaeological Importance (area no'139). Known settlement dates back to at least the Anglo-Saxon period from which point onwards there has been continual and evolving settlement in and around the area of the church. The only recorded archaeological work to have been undertaken on site has been a watching brief, undertaken on the digging of a trench to lay electric cables to power two spotlights. This trench cut either soil which had been disturbed by the provision of other services or featureless topsoil. No archaeological features were observed except for a small section of modern brickwork which cut across the trench just beyond the north end of the tower (HER report).

The only other recorded archaeological work in the vicinity of the church took place in 1995 on Rose Cottage. This watching brief identified worked flint, medieval pottery, ridge and furrow and possible structures (HER report).

***The level of potential archaeological significance is: Moderate to High***

#### **4.0 Assessment of Impact: the current proposals**

The proposed works are restricted to the interior of the church and will have no impact on the churchyard and wider location. The points below are the key proposals of the Statement of need with comment on their impact.

##### **1.1 Focus for worship on a nave altar**

- Retain the rood screen, chancel and high altar for small scale and other services where its use is more appropriate.
- Extend the chancel step into the nave to provide a dais for a new moveable altar, so bringing worship closer to the congregation, but still allowing access to the high altar. This dais would also provide a space for occasional performance and other activities.

##### **Impact:**

**The proposal does not alter the significance of the chancel and chancel screen as worship will still take place there on a weekly basis and no alterations are planned other than an extended chancel step. The greater emphasis on a nave altar would enhance the participation of the congregation. The limitations of the current liturgical ordering were expressed strongly in Section 3.8 . Mission significance would be enhanced**

##### **1.2 A new baptistry and a simplified liturgical order**

- Re-siting the font; removal of some north aisle pews; removal of south and north aisle altars.
- Remove the altar from the south aisle and site the font there, so giving a better focus for baptism.
- Retain the option of nave or chancel altars for other occasional services.
- Remove the north aisle table altar giving clearer focus on the nave and chancel altars.
- Replace the pews in the north aisle with loose seats that could be arranged in more flexible ways for different patterns of worship or study groups.
- Re-site the front row of choir stalls in the north aisle, bringing the choir closer to the congregation and better able to support worship.
- Remove the overpowering organ from the north aisle and replace it with an organ more suited to the scale and layout of the church, with great care being taken over the location of the new instrument and other equipment, such as amplifiers and speakers.

##### **Impact:**

**The north and south aisle chapels are not used for services. The north aisle altar could be removed without detracting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century wall panelling. The south aisle altar could become a nave altar in the short term**

**and its removal would provide space for a new baptistry. The congregation would have a forward facing view of the ceremony. Currently the majority have to stand ad turn round. Removing a number of pews, of low significance, would provide a more flexible space. Mission significance would be enhanced by a simpler liturgical ordering and greater scope for other forms of worship.**

### **2.1 Re-configuring the north aisle**

- Re-site the front row of choir stalls in the north aisle, bringing the choir closer to the congregation and better able to support worship.
- Remove the overpowering organ from the north aisle and replace it with an organ more suited to the scale and layout of the church, with great care being taken over the location of the new instrument and other equipment, such as amplifiers and speakers.

#### **Impact:**

**The north aisle is a sympathetic Victorian extension to the church, rated as highly significant. However, that significance is compromised by an overpowering organ, rebuilt in its current site in the 1980s. Removing it and replacing it with an instrument of more appropriate size would allow a greater appreciation of the aisle and its dimensions. This, along with the re-siting of two choir stalls would add to the significance of mission.**

### **3.1 Enhancing community provision**

- The provision of a servery at the west end of the south aisle, with harmonious storage, tables, chairs, notice and information boards.
- See 1.2 point four.
- Modifications to the choir and priests vestries which would allow a disabled toilet and a larger choir/vestry/Sunday school meeting room with a small kitchen at each end, while retaining a smaller private office for the clergy.
- The current toilet to be turned into a store room.

#### **Impact:**

**Provision of a new servery at the rear of the south aisle would enhance the area, as the current facility consists of uncoordinated furniture. The 1950s vestries are of low significance and any alterations could only add to community provision.**

### **4.1 Attempt to reduce energy costs ad lower carbon footprint**

- Install a draft porch in the south aisle, with double doors forward into the church for occasions such as funerals and weddings and a right hand door for general use. This would require a re-siting of the book chest and the space for meeting and greeting within the south aisle and the re-arrangement of pews.

4.2 and 4.3

- Replace the old and inefficient heating and lighting systems. This would require specialist services to survey the church and provide a range of options to best suit our needs.

**Impact:**

**A new lighting scheme would enhance our worship mission by providing a better focus and would highlight our architectural features. It is hoped that any new heating system would be less intrusive than the current one. The provision of an inner vestibule would cut heat loss while retaining the mediaeval door. Access and egress would be more comfortable.**

**4.4 Restore the wall surfaces and other finishes in a more sympathetic manner.**

- Re-paint the plasterwork in the south aisle and chancel, seeking specialist advice about the possibility of returning the stonework to its more traditional finish.

**4.5**

- Complete the issues reported in the Quinquennial Inspection Report of 2013.
- Regularly inspect and attend to any repairs to the fabric of the building

**Impact:**

**The decoration of the chancel in particular is unsympathetic and in poor repair. Any specialist renovation could only enhance a feature which is graded exceptional. All other repair work would be in keeping with our Grade 1 listing.**

## **5.0 Mitigation Strategy**

The PCC and working groups closely referred to the Statement of Significance drawn up in 2011. The Diocesan Advisory Committee and the Victorian Society were consulted on draft proposals and amendments were made base on their advice. The DAC will continue to be consulted through Faculty submissions. Our architect, Nick Joyce, has a good deal of experience in this field and we have followed his best advice. In addition, our appointed diocesan architect, Richard Crook, is now involved in the process.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The church of St Laurence is one of the most significant historic buildings in Birmingham. It is also at the heart of the Parish of Northfield and is fundamental to the success of the Church's mission and retaining quality in the local environment. The works proposed under this faculty application have been assessed in light of their potential impact on the church's significance. This assessment concludes that there will be no loss of 'known significance'.

## **7.0 Sources consulted**

Direct and indirect:

The Parish Church of St Laurence, Northfield. D. M. Pallister. (1986)

The Parish Church of St Laurence, Northfield. R.H.Hall. Northfield Society. (1978)

Discovering Northfield. R.P.Hastings. Northfield Society. (1966 and 1987)

Collections for a history of Worcestershire (1782). T.R.Nash. (1782)

The Victoria County History of Worcestershire. Ed C.Pears (1913)

The Buildings of England, Warwickshire. N.Pevsner and A. Wedgewood. ( 1966)

Chronicles from the Parish Chest St Laurence, Northfield. Northfield Survey Group (1958)

Historic Environment Record (HER)

English Heritage national heritage list for England

Caring for God's Acre

Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland

## **8.0 Appendices. Available on request.**

Historic Environment Record 300m Radial report

Historic Environment Record 300m radius search map

Historic Environment Record Listed Building PDF

Listed Building Entry for the Church of St Laurence, Northfield

Listed Building Entry for the Church Wall of St Laurence, Northfield

Area Plan showing Regional Setting

Site Location Plan

Plates 1 and 2 View looking south to tower; view of church wall looking north east

Plates 3 and 4 View looking south west showing chancel and north aisle; chancel and south aisle from the east

Plate 5 View of churchyard southern extension

Bibliography

Glossary

Diocesan De Minimis List