

**ST JAMES CHURCH
WEST HAMPSTEAD**

**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
WITH
HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**PROPOSED
ACCESS RAMP AND
EXTERNAL STEPS**



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement with Heritage Statement has been prepared by Caroe and Partners Architects as supporting information to the application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent in respect of the proposed provision of a new access ramp and steps to the north entrance door of the church of St James in West Hampstead.

2.00 GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.01 Site Location

The site of St James' Church lies on the corner of West End Lane and Sherriff Road, approximately 200m south of West Hampstead tube and railway stations. The church building occupies most of the site and is abutted at its West end by St James' House which accommodates the church hall and parish office on the ground floor and residential apartments on the floors above.

2.02 Site Ownership

The Client, the PCC of St James' Church in West Hampstead, owns the application site area.

2.03 Site Context

St James Church is a large red brick late-Victorian building which occupies a corner site and is abutted to the West by the 1960s brown brick and concrete St James House. The church building is bounded on all remaining sides by a red brick boundary wall.

2.04 Site Access

There are three access points to the grounds of the church. The most prominent of these from the busy West End Lane is the Lych-gate in the boundary wall to the north-east of the church. However, the main entrance to the church building is the door at the West end of the North elevation, and therefore the two most commonly used access points are the gate in the boundary wall directly to the north of the entrance door, and a gap in the low brick wall separating the site grounds from the forecourt of St James' House to the West.

The church itself may also be accessed directly from the adjacent St James' House, via a door which connects the lobby of the church hall with the church interior. This door currently also serves as a disabled access route, as St James' House can be accessed by wheelchair users via the forecourt which slopes up to the level of the entrance door to the building.

2.05 Historical Context and Existing Building

The foundation stone for St James the Great West Hampstead was laid in what was then a district of the parish of St Mary's, Kilburn in 1887 to cater for the expansion of population in the area resulting from the opening of the West Hampstead tube station in 1880.

The building was designed by the architect Sir Arthur Bloomfield, who was well known for the economy of his designs and the dignity of his buildings. The Church is listed in Pevsner's with the simple designation 'sound and dignified'.

St James' is a large and notable building of red London brick with Bath stone lintels and sills to window and door openings. The roofs are steeply pitched and faced with red clay tiles, and the clerestory is particularly high, with narrow lancet windows. The Church is bounded by a narrow garden and a high red brick boundary wall originally with three sets of gates.

The gardens have been re-laid in 2007 with new plantings of small trees, low shrubs and ground cover after the removal of old and large pollarded limes that blocked the view of the Church from the road.

St James has a very lofty interior with narrow and small windows in the style of its time. The nave has large and impressive bath stone columns on either side of the nave supporting a particularly fine red pine coffered ceiling.

It has a noted collection of fine stained glass by Kempe, Frampton, Butler and Baine and also Lavers and Westlake. The West and East windows are fine examples of Kempe's best work, with recent repairs to the West Window completed in 2007. Other minor repairs to the glass were undertaken in 2003, with new grills replacing older external glazing on the north aisle windows and new grills to the Lady Chapel apse windows added in 2012.

3.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

3.01 Current Situation and Design Intention

St James' Church has a large rectangular plan with a central nave and two aisles running on an east-west axis. The main entrance opens onto Sherriff Road and is close to the west end of the church's north wall. There is also a door in the west wall through which the church can be accessed directly from the adjacent church hall lobby in St James' House.

Despite its prominent position close to the commercial district and transport interchange at West Hampstead, the large church building is underused. This is partly due to its location between two larger parishes with schools. To address this situation, the PCC of St James' Church is aiming to provide a wider range of services to the local community and to this end has identified the need to improve direct access to the church building.

There is currently no disabled access to the church directly from the grounds as wheelchair, pushchair and mobility scooter users must first enter St James' House via its sloping forecourt. Furthermore, this forecourt is itself separated from the church grounds by a low wall with a gap which is currently too narrow for wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters to safely pass through. As the forecourt opens out directly onto the pavement, disabled members of the congregation currently bypass the church garden in order to gain access.

In the view of the PCC of St James' Church, the proposed upgrade to the building access route as presented in this planning application is essential as a means of ensuring building's future capacity to accommodate a wider range of services to the local community.

3.02 Proposed Solution

Immediately to the north of the existing entrance door in the north wall, it is proposed to carefully cut out and remove the existing stone steps and to form a new external landing with new stone steps aligned with the edge of the existing garden path.

It is also proposed that the new external landing will terminate a single new access ramp which will run between and parallel to the existing garden path and church wall to the east of the entrance door.

The new ramp, steps and landing will require the removal of a small area of garden hedges, the laying of new concrete foundations and slabs and the construction of new low brick walls. The colour and texture of the bricks to be used for the new wall are to match those of the existing church walls, and the new brick coping is to match the size, shape and height of the existing brick plinth detail to the lower part of the church walls. The new landing and ramp will be paved in stone to match the existing and new stone steps.

Between the new ramp and the existing church, the new low brick walls will enclose raised planted areas. Where necessary, the existing rainwater pipes and drainage gullies are to be adapted to suit the proposals with minimal disturbance. The planted areas will be tanked as required to protect the church building from damp. A new handrail is to be provided on top of the new low brick walls to the side of the new ramp and steps.

The northern half of the existing low brown-brick wall between the church garden and the adjacent forecourt to St James' House is to be carefully removed in order to form a wider, uninhibited opening between the two spaces. The floor of the forecourt and garden is to be re-graded and finished with stone paving to provide level access from the forecourt to the garden and vice versa.

4.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

4.01 History

The history of the site is described in great detail in Part 2.06 of this supporting document.

4.02 Statement of Need

The proposed alterations are intended to provide better access to St James' Church in West Hampstead, both for the congregation and other users of the building.

There is currently no disabled access to the church directly from the grounds as wheelchair, pushchair and mobility scooter users must first enter the adjacent St James' House via its sloping forecourt. Furthermore, this forecourt is separated from the church grounds by a low wall with a gap which is currently too narrow for wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters to safely pass through. As the forecourt opens out onto the pavement, disabled members of the congregation currently bypass the church garden in order to gain access.

The PCC of St James' Church is aiming to provide a wider range of services to the local community and has identified the need to improve direct access to the church building in order to achieve this objective.

The proposed response to this need is described in detail in Part 3.0 of this supporting document.

4.03 Impact Assessment

The proposals incorporate details from the existing church in order to preserve and enhance the historical significance of the building.

It is proposed to construct the new walls to the proposed ramp and steps using bricks to match the colour and texture of those of the existing church. In addition the height, shape and size of the brick coping to the new walls will match and align with the existing brick plinth detail to the lower part of the church wall.

The handrail to the proposed ramp and steps will respond to the design of other handrails in the church garden albeit in a simplified form.

By incorporating existing details into the design of the new walls and handrails, we will ensure that minimum impact will be caused to the adjacent more historical parts of the building. The structure and drainage in this area can easily be adapted with minimal disturbance.

When determining planning applications, local authorities are required to test proposals against the policies listed in paragraphs 126 – 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These include, inter alia, the following which are regarded as being particularly pertinent to this particular application:

131. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and

- the character of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- 128-129. A requirement for proposals for development on a heritage asset to be supported by an assessment of the asset's significance and for this significance to be taken into account by the local authority when determining consent for planning applications.
132. That when considering the impacts of proposals local authorities should place great weight on the asset's conservation, proportionate to the asset's importance.
134. That where a development proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
137. That Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

The proposals for the new ramp and steps aim to preserve and enhance the experience of the building by minimising the impact to the historic structure and by preserving the character of the church garden. The proposed alterations would therefore be benign as regards impact on historical fabric.

The proposals respect the character and setting of the existing asset. This is demonstrated by minimising the impact of the proposals on existing historic fabric and by retaining and incorporating the key features of the church's north wall.

An improved experience of the asset site will result by the introduction of more inclusive access routes. This is particularly relevant to the experience of disabled persons who currently have restricted access to both the church building and garden. In principle, the creation of improved access will improve directly the experience of the asset and would ensure that the building has the capacity to provide a wider range of services to the local community.

The proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future. While not aiming to create a 'statement', the proposals aim to provide a structure which is simple, clean and hard-wearing. By using good quality, durable materials long-term viability can be achieved.

The long-term consequences of the proposals can be demonstrated to be benign and the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Church of St James in West Hampstead is a highly prominent Grade II listed building in a thriving district of London with a potentially expanding user group. Given the cultural and educational value of such an asset, it is possible to predict with assurance that its popularity is set to grow, not just as a church, but also potentially as a multi-purpose venue for the local community. The proposed upgraded access routes presented in this planning application respond to this anticipated growth in popularity and, on this basis, we conclude that they will enhance the capacity of St James' Church to perform as a cultural venue of historic significance.