

Internal Reordering & External Repairs Christ Church Hampstead



Proposed Alterations

Richard Griffiths Architects

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Richard Griffiths Architects is the trading name of Richard Griffiths Architects Ltd

5 Maidstone Mews, 72-76 Borough High Street, London SE1 1GN

T +44 (0)20 7357 8788 | F +44 (0)20 7403 7887

E admin@rgarchitects.com | www.rgarchitects.com

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Statement of Significance

Christ Church is listed grade II and lies in the Hampstead Conservation Area in the Borough of Camden. The church was built in 1852 to the neo-Gothic designs of SW Dawkes. Built out of necessity for a growing population of Hampstead that had become too large for St John's, Church Row. The parish was subsequently sub-divided. It is located at the top of Christchurch Hill. It is most notable for the tall tower and steeple which rises to a height of 185ft, visible for miles around.

The church grounds are limited to a perimeter path, a yard to the north and a car park to the north. The boundary to the north is bounded by railings and contains a number of mature trees. Road access is only available to the North West. There is a pedestrian footpath to the east, also providing key access to Christ Church School that is adjacent. To the south and west the perimeter path bounds private residential land.

The church is built of load-bearing rubble masonry walls faced with Kentish ragstone with limestone dressings and were repaired in 1968, with some repointing in cement. The roofs are covered with slate with blue tile ridges and lead cover flashings, over an exposed timber structure of trusses, purlins, rafters and boarding. The gutters are asphalt or lead. The rainwater goods are lead, cast iron and upvc. The windows are of leaded lights and iron ferramenta.

The church building has evolved in detail over its lifetime. The west porch was added by GG Scott Junior in 1876. He also added a west gallery which has since been removed. A new north porch and outer north aisle of three gabled roofs was added by Ewan Christian in 1882. This area was partitioned off from the church in 1970 and converted for use as a nursery. The nursery also occupies the room at the base of the tower and the adjacent kitchen. The church interior was reordered in 1972-4 with a new nave altar platform, and a raised nave to coincide with the top of the pew platforms. The chancel contains a mosaic reredos of 1912 by Powell's and an unusual spire-like tabernacle moved from Grove Park in 2003.

The present lively congregation is growing rapidly, and a number of events are put on each year to focus on the communal and strong social aspect of the church's life. There is, and always has been, a close association with the Church of England Primary School which is adjacent to the church. A private nursery occupies part of the church during the week. This space is occupied by the flourishing Sunday school at the weekend. In addition, the acclaimed Christ Church Choir, a professional body, which sings most Sundays, has acquired for the church a high musical reputation.

| Statement of Need

The church is in reasonable condition but the weathered appearance is detracting from the constructive efforts made by the PCC and congregation in maintaining the significance of the church. The roofs have problems with slipped slates, inadequate gutters and downpipes and have suffered leakage. The elevation stone is decayed and cracked with missing pointing. The church would benefit from an overhaul of the roofs, elevations and rainwater goods. By repairing and cleaning the whole façade the church will be inviting and safer at street level. Repairs to the roof will be visible from the approach to the church which is seen by people as they move up the hill of Hampstead. This will encourage more people to come in to the church. They will see that it is as cared for, open and hospitable from its external appearance as well as its interior.

Internally the church was remodelled in the 1970's and produces a rather unsuitable movement of people. There is a congestion of people at the entrance to the nave on arrival and at the chancel steps whilst taking communion. The current location of the font is positioned to one side of the nave and views from the pews are restricted by columns. In addition to the views and movement of people there is a need to reorder the pews to accommodate the growing congregation.

The present lively congregation is growing rapidly, and a number of events are put on each year to focus on the communal and strong social aspect of the church's life. There is, and always has been, a close association with the Church of England Primary School which is adjacent to the church. A private nursery occupies part of the church during the week. This space is occupied by the flourishing Sunday school at the weekend. In addition, the acclaimed Christ Church Choir, a professional body, which sings most Sundays, has acquired for the church a high musical reputation.

There is the need to maintain and improve the level of accessibility that currently exists for people in wheelchairs or with children in buggies. The existing 1:6 access ramp from the west porch is currently too steep for an aided wheelchair user. The timber flooring throughout the nave and aisles are damaged and badly cut. The flooring has not been sanded or sealed for some time. As such there is worn carpet to the aisles, intended to prevent further damage, but itself a trip hazard. There is also a worn carpet to the chancel steps and chancel floor. In addition there is damage to some of the mosaic flooring to the sanctuary, from the previous removal of an altar rail, creating an uneven surface.

The need to improve the flooring coincides with the need to maintain the underfloor services. There are heating pipes and electrical services running below the flooring at present. This creates a problem for ongoing maintenance and future adaptability.

The proposals seek to improve movement within the church, whilst retaining and improving the needs of the future congregation.

Architect's Statement

The external proposals are to repair the existing external fabric of the stone elevations, the windows, the roofs and the rainwater goods.

1. External repairs - roof

At roof level the projecting details are eroding and at risk of falling. There are also two missing finial crosses. The roofs have problems with slipped slates, inadequate gutters and downpipes and have suffered leakage. A closer inspection is required to ascertain the extent of repairs required or whether a full re-roofing is necessary with new valley gutters laid to improved falls. The addition for two high level roof ladders are proposed to allow for regular maintenance of the roof and rainwater goods. They are located as close to the tower as possible to limit visible impact from one aspect.

2. External repairs - elevations

The elevations are of Kentish ragstone and were repaired in 1968, with some repointing in cement. There are significant cracks, eroded stones, missing stones and missing pointing throughout. The pointing needs replacing and the friable and dirty face cleaning and repairing. In addition, the south elevation has evident cracks in the buttresses, effected by prevailing driving wind and rain. A deterioration of rainwater goods and possible structural movement have contributed to this. A structural engineer is appointed to investigate and propose any structural remedial repairs.

3. External Repairs - windows

The east, west and five windows on the south are stained glass, the others leaded with coloured plain glass. The stained glass is dirty, bowed and in poor condition with many broken quarries. The plain glazing has many broken quarries. The discoloured polycarbonate protection to the windows of the south elevation is taking away light from the interior and is proposed to be replaced with individual stainless steel grilles.

The internal reordering aims to adapt the existing pews, realign the chancel steps, realign the entrance ramp from the west porch and the flooring throughout.

1. Reordering the pews

The intention is to retain the existing pews but reuse them in a more suitable way, including bringing the front row forward, relocating a row from the back, and moving forward the back pew. The rear and front pews are designed as such, so it is important they remain in their intended positions. The pews are made of good quality, solid timber they are very durable and will potentially last for centuries if properly maintained. The pews are built into wooden platforms visible at the edge of the pews. These will be dropped to be flush with the new flooring where the pews are retained. Where any pews are relocated, they will be dropped or cut back and new flooring laid on top.

The reordering proposals for the pews include bring the front row forward, relocating a row from the back, and moving forward the back pew. The rear and front pews are

Architect's Statement

designed as such, so it is important they remain in their intended positions. The rear pew has detailed carving to the rear. The front pew has detailed carving to the front and a seat form unique from the rest. We believe the proposal frees up plenty of useful space for circulation, without any adverse visual impact because it leaves intact a 'critical mass' that means that the overall appearance of the interior is largely unchanged.

2. Realigning the chancel steps

The proposed internal reordering includes realigning the 1970s altar steps. The current chancel is rather deep and creates a large distance between the congregation and altar, with limited movement around. The realigning is intended to bring the congregation closer to the altar and at the same time improve the movement around the chancel, particularly during communion.

3. Realigning the entrance ramp from the west porch

The access ramp is proposed to be improved from a 1:6 ramp to a less than 1:12. The landing at the top of the ramp and movement around the font and pews is increased to accommodate a minimum of a 1500mm and 1800mm routes where possible.

4. New flooring throughout the nave, aisles and chancel

The proposed realigning will be made good with new timber flooring throughout the nave and aisles, and new stone and pavement tiles to the altar and chancel. The proposal includes collating the below floor services and locate them in a manageable and more serviceable route for the future. This will include a shallow trench that can be accessed below a floor board, on the south length of the pews. For the radiators in the chancel there is also the opportunity to relocate the pipes above finished floor.

5. Repositioning of the Pulpit, Lectern and Font

Additional reordering works include the relocating of the plinth and font to the arrival point at the top of the ramp from the west porch. A location that will increase the congregations view. The font has needed earlier repairs, which were not successful. There is a concrete base and some mortar repairs. These will be renewed. The plinth will be relocated and incorporated to lay flush with the new timber flooring and the font repaired and secured in place.

The pulpit is relocated to the other side of the nave where it can sit closer to the column, to increase movement around the chancel. The lectern will be relocated and fixed to a raised timber base, with a step. This will allow speakers to be elevated to the same level as the altar. Both the pulpit and lectern will be fitted with permanent microphone.

Existing Photographs

Outer north aisle and north porch roof: The roof is of slate with blue tile ridges and lead cover flashings. The valleys between the gabled roofs of the outer north aisle are of lead laid in excessively long lengths and there is evidence of a build-up of sediment vegetation at the top of the gutters and at the outlets behind the gables.

Action: Carry out a closer inspection to ascertain whether a full re-roofing is necessary with new valley gutters laid to improved falls.



Nave, north and south aisle roof: The roof is of slate with blue tile ridges and lead cover flashings. The gutter between the south aisle and the nave is of lead in excessively long lengths, between nave and north aisle in asphalt in one run, apparently not in very good condition. The clerestory windows are also clad in lead.

Action: Replacement of the missing finial cross to the west apex of the south aisle. A closer inspection will be undertaken to identify loose slates/battens/underlay/flashings and ascertain whether a full re-roofing is necessary.



Chancel and vestry roof: The roof is of slate with blue tile ridges and lead cover flashings. The valley gutter is of lead with a stepped base. A closer inspection would be desirable to identify loose or damaged slates in need of repair.

Action: Replacement of the missing finial cross to the east apex of the chancel gable. A closer inspection will be undertaken to identify loose slates/battens/underlay/flashings and ascertain whether a full re-roofing is necessary.



Existing Photographs

Elevations General: The walls are coursed Kentish ragstone with ashlar dressings. Cleaning is required of the superficial dirt and of the friable stone surface. High level projecting details are eroding and at risk of falling.

Action: Clean moss and algae from the ragstone walls and remove the friable surface. Re-evaluate constrained drainage once roof inspected. Repair/replace missing stones and remove/repoint were required.



Elevations of outer north aisle porch and gables: The walls are coursed Kentish ragstone with ashlar dressings. Washed out joints and algae present on elevation due to restricted rainwater goods. Stone deterioration and loss along elevation. Buttress to west elevation of west gable has stone missing.

Action: Clean moss and algae from the ragstone walls and remove the friable surface. Re-evaluate constrained drainage once roof inspected. Repair/replace missing stones and remove/repoint were required.



South Elevation: The walls are coursed Kentish ragstone with ashlar dressings. The pointing is in poor condition, the face is friable and dirty. Large crack to south east porch wall and lintel. Cracks in the buttresses.

Engineer to investigate evidence of subsidence on the south elevation

Action: Clean moss and algae from the ragstone walls and remove the friable surface. Repair/replace missing stones and remove/repoint were required. Investigate and repair crack to south east porch and to buttresses.



Existing Photographs

Nave floor: Plain pine boarding. Some damaged and badly cut. It has not been sanded or sealed for some time.

Action: Replace timber flooring throughout to suit realigned entrance ramp and chancel steps. Retain historic pew edging and lay new flooring to accommodate.

Pews: Pews in good condition, will incorporate ways to maximize use.

Action: Some pews will be relocated and adapted as part of the reordering.



Chancel floor: Carpet to chancel steps and chancel floor. Mosaic flooring to sanctuary, some damaged.

Action: Remove carpet. Re align chancel steps to allow for a greater useable space. Re make with stone steps and pammet tiles. Repair any existing damaged mosaic tiles in sanctuary.



Entrance ramp from West Porch: Red, buff and black patterned tiles, in good condition. Tiles also laid in doorway to nave, at bottom of boarded ramp. Boarded ramp does not suit DDA requirements of 1:12.

Action: Remove nave tiles and stop under door. Remake ramp to 1:12 angle, in new timber flooring by extending it to doorway. Rehang door to suit.

