

ALL HALLOWS CHURCH, GOSPEL OAK COMMUNITY ACCESS PROJECT  
Statement of Significance (Conservation Statement)

Listing: Grade II\* situated in the Mansfield Conservation Area

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Listing text:

*Church. 1889-1901 by James Brooks; chancel and chapel of the Blessed Sacrament c1913 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Ancaster stone with rusticated coursed rubble and freestone dressings. Slated roofs. French Gothic style.*

*PLAN: 5-bay nave with aisles same height as nave; 3-bay chancel with chapels opening off.*

*EXTERIOR: west end with round-arched double entrance; tympanum with central statue of the Good Shepherd and blind arcading. Above, a large wheel window; gable end with balustrade and 2-light traceried window. Central bay flanked by rectangular plan turrets with narrow lancets and string courses. Aisle walls and battered buttresses extend to each side of turrets. Aisles with heavy battered buttresses from foundations to roof and lancets windows in arched recesses. Chancel with paired lancets; polygonal stair turrets with pyramidal caps.*

*INTERIOR: nave arcades with tall, cylindrical pillars without capitals but carrying the beginnings of a vault which was never completed. Vaulted chancel; its north aisle 2-storeys, the south carried up without a floor. Finely detailed pavement, marble high altar. Image of the Virgin and the font also by Scott.*

*HISTORICAL NOTE: "This is certainly Brooks's best church and a most impressive example of the ambition of the later-nineteenth century church builders" Basil Clarke. (Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood (St Pancras part IV): London: -1952: 140; Clarke B: Parish Churches of London: -1966).*

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The Grade II\* listing places the church amongst the best 5% of all Listed buildings. It is sited at the edge of a densely built up area along Savernake Road, running between South End Green and Gospel Oak. It is thought that its location here anticipated further building development on the Heath north of the Overground railway line, which would have placed it in a more central location within its parish. The heathland was protected in 1889.

The church stands on a relatively constrained site, there being no graveyard, and with only narrow strips of land on the south, east and west sides. The site slopes approximately one metre down from north to south, and 2 metres down from west to east.

The original 1952 Pevsner edition describes All Hallows as “*One of the noblest churches of its date in England and no doubt Brook’s masterpiece.*” John Betjeman, in his 1968 Collins Guide notes the “*spacious interior, admirably suited to ceremony... cathedral-like effect created by massiveness,*

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*simplicity and proportion*". Brooks was a leading church architect of the time, having designed a number of churches between 1856 and 1889. The earlier ones were high and decorated Gothic, such as St Margaret, Lee (1878). All Hallows was one of the last, displaying a plainer, more monumental style.

The defining features of the church are:

- The massive battered buttresses flanking the triple-pitched roof, with no tower or spire, but square turrets aside the rose window at the west end and octagonal turrets at the east.
- The "hall" church interior, in which the aisle ceilings are the same height as the nave. The effect is compounded by the fact that the vaults were never constructed beyond the springing points, surviving as stubs at the top of the slender columns, and the entire ceiling is instead a horizontal rough boarded soffit set at what would have been the highest point of the vaulting.
- The large plain glass leaded light windows, coupled with the lack of other fittings such as screens, pews and artwork, and plain ashlar stone walls, make for a very light and airy interior, quite unlike many of its contemporaries.
- The monumental proportions appear to have been taken to heart by Giles Gilbert Scott in the handling of the east end, with an impressive spatial layering created by the double-stacked arches along the south transept echoed on each side of the chancel, and the broad marble tiled dais and high altar. The buff stone and simple wood block floor lend the interior a warmth and simplicity that complements the grand space.
- The interior is noted for very good acoustics and has been used for occasional large choral concerts for a number of years, and was recently used for the filming of some music-based television documentaries. The 4-manual Hill organ was installed in 1915.

There have been very few alterations since the pre-WW1 completion period:

- The part-undercroft at the east end was re-fitted with kitchen and toilet facilities in the 1970's.
- A columbarium has been installed in the rear of the high altar
- The heating was recently renewed with boilers in the south yard, using the original floor ducts for distribution and panel radiators around the column bases.
- An inner glass lobby was added to the north door in 2001, reducing draught from the 'everyday'-used door and enabling passers by to look into the building when it is locked.
- Recent installation of photovoltaic panels on the nave valley roof in connection with the feed in tariff.

The church is noted as a focal building in the Mansfield Conservation Area Appraisal document. The management strategy stresses "the area's high quality and unified architectural style and form". Key points for development that are most relevant to the church site are:

- Quality erosion and loss of architectural detail – maintaining the original features and materials.
- Rear extensions – maintaining the general historic pattern of rear elevations
- Gardens and front boundary treatment – resisting the loss of soft landscaping and original walls / railings.
- Development in Gap Sites – maintaining the element of relief that the gap sites provide in such a densely built up area.

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- Telecom equipment, cable and satellite dishes.
- Ventilation ducts – careful positioning of extract flues and terminals
- Street furniture and floorscape – reference to the Camden streetscape guidelines
- Trees and open spaces – maintenance of the contribution that trees provide to the streetscape.

Nicholas Weedon  
6/13