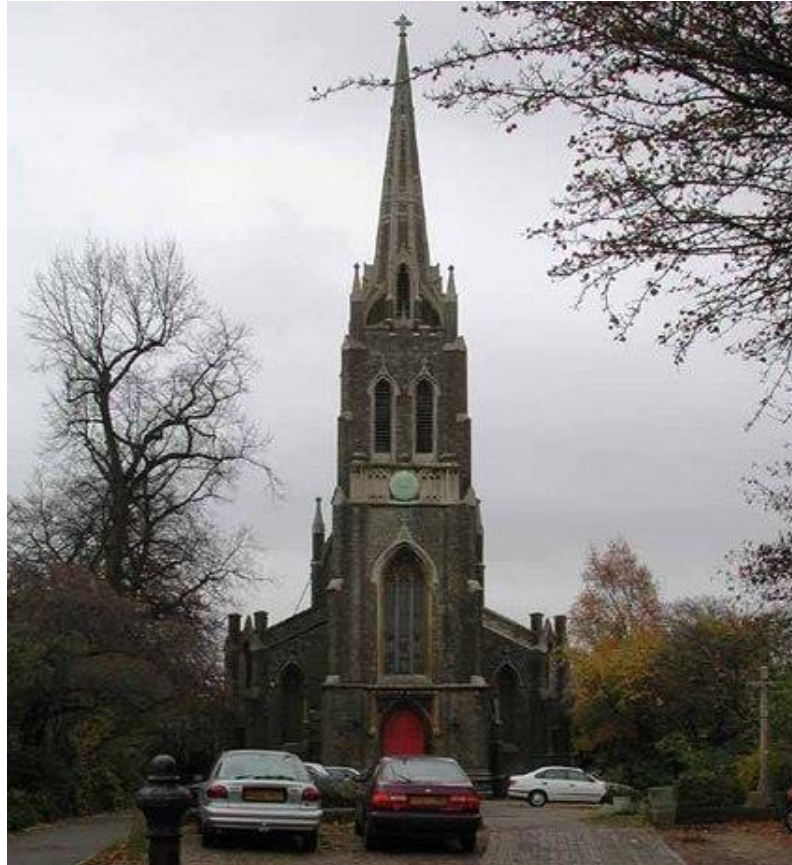


## St Michael, Highgate – Emergency roof works London N6 6BJ

### Heritage, Design and Access Statement



#### 1 Setting and History

- 1.1 St Michael's Church, Highgate, is Grade II\* listed principally for its Architectural interest as it is a particularly large and ambitious church of the 1830s, and it also incorporates work by three leading architects of the Gothic Revival period. The Church is set within the Highgate Conservation Area, Sub-area 1: Highgate Village.
- 1.2 This Parish church was consecrated and opened for worship on 8th November 1832. The church was designed by Lewis Vulliamy (1791-1871), and built by William and Lewis Cubitt, who completed the construction in eleven months. The chancel of 1878 was designed by CHM Mileham, The design was considered to be an outstanding example of the neo-Gothic style, of which the Architect was a pioneer. Further work was carried out by Temple Moore from. It was restored c1950 following war damage.
- 1.3 The original church comprised a (liturgical) west tower and a six-bay aisled and galleried nave with a short sanctuary recess at its east end and to accommodate the steep slope there was a low undercroft beneath. The works of 1879-81 saw the galleries cut back to form a crossing, a raised choir inserted in the easternmost bay of the old nave, and a further full bay, accommodating an enlarged sanctuary with vestries and a parish room beneath, added to the east end of the building. The eastern ends of the north and south aisles now contain, respectively, the organ chamber (with a small sacristy beyond) and the Lady Chapel. The spire, which is a landmark on the northern skyline from the hills south of London, gives a

grace and dignity to the whole frontal elevation. It is of Bath stone surmounted by a cross of Portland stone.

- 1.4 The Church features some fine examples of stained glass and contains a number of C18 and early C19 wall monuments from the original Highgate chapel. The chief monument is the slate slab in the central aisle in memory of Coleridge and his family. Coleridge worshiped here in the eighteen months that elapsed between the consecration and his death. His grave is presently in the crypt, and the memorial has words written by Coleridge himself when he knew he was dying.
- 1.5 St Michael's Church Hall, a late 20th-century two-storey extension, was constructed in the 1980s from contrastingly lightweight materials on the south side, to the design of Cowper Poole Reynolds and Towns, an Architect who was a member of the Congregation.
- 1.6 The basement is original to the church, with some modifications to the layout made over the past years.

## **2 Description and Conservation Area Appraisal**

- 2.1 The statutory definition of a conservation area is an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Conservation areas are normally centred on listed buildings and pleasant groups of other buildings, open space, or an historic street pattern. A town space or features of archaeological interest may also contribute to the special character of an area. It is, however, the character of an area, rather than individual buildings, that such a designation seeks to preserve or enhance.
- 2.2 The most recent legislation dealing with conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (Sections 69 to 78). ). Guidance to the legislation is given in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in March 2012.
- 2.3 Planning legislation requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. In doing this the emphasis will be on control rather than prevention, to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous but at the same time to ensure that any new development accords with its special architectural and visual qualities.
- 2.4 The village of Highgate lies at the top of Highgate Hill, 129.2 m. above sea level and 4.8 m. below the highest point of London, in Hampstead, to the West. The highest parts of the hills are covered by sand and gravel while the lower reaches gradually change to London Clay. The area has many springs, streams and ponds.
- 2.5 The Highgate Conservation Area has a variety of plan forms. The historic village, centred on the High Street, has a relatively random pattern of plot sizes which tends to reflect the importance of the individual properties. The Conservation Area also contains late Georgian and Victorian terraced developments which conform to a regular plot size, typical of speculative development of the period.
- 2.6 The Highgate Village Sub-Area forms the historic 'core' of the Conservation Area, developed along the major roads which crossed the high ground to the north of London. This area has the most intense development within the Conservation Area, rich in form and detail. It has all the elements expected of a village with a shopping frontage in the High Street, grand houses, simple cottages, public buildings and a central square. The grand houses reflect the fact that Highgate has been a desirable residential area since the late 17th century. There are a series of strong edges that define the village core around which the rest of Highgate has developed.
- 2.7 South Grove leads roughly east-west from the High Street to Highgate West Hill and its character expresses the contrast of the tight-knit urban grain of the village with the more open spaces associated with the spacious private gardens of the larger houses and the wider streets to the west. At its eastern end, South Grove forms the south side of Pond Square.

- 2.8 The Parish Church of St. Michael (listed grade II\*), dates from 1832, and is set well back from the road on the site of Ashurst House which was built c1690 for Sir William Ashurst, Lord Mayor of London. The foundations survive beneath the church.
- 2.9 Highgate Cemetery at the back of the Church was consecrated in May 1839 by the Bishop of London (the West Cemetery) as part of the 'Magnificent Seven' and considered by many critics to be the finest. David Ramsey, the landscape designer, laid out serpentine roads and footpaths leading upwards through the burial area to the remarkable buildings and terrace just below St Michael's Church.
- 2.10 Due to the elevated position of Highgate Village there are many glimpses of distant views. When looking south from Fitzroy Park, Highgate West Hill and Swain's Lane there are outstanding views of London sitting in the Thames Valley with the hills of Crystal Palace and the North Downs beyond.

### 3 Significance



A drawing of St Michael's Church from around 1832, before the cemetery existed. Picture: Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre

- 3.1 St Michael's Church, of 1830-2 by Lewis Vulliamy with further work of 1879-81 by GE Street and 1903 by Temple Moore, is listed at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons:
- *Architectural interest:* a particularly large and ambitious church of the 1830s, incorporating work by three leading architects of the Gothic Revival; the design is considered to be an outstanding example of the neo-Gothic style, of which Lewis Vulliamy was a pioneer.
  - *Artistic interest:* the east wall and window form an unusually rich ensemble that combines high-quality decorative and artistic work of several periods;
  - *Group value:* as part of an important cluster of listed buildings at the junction of South Grove and Highgate West Hill; also as a focal point within the Grade I-registered Highgate Cemetery.
- 3.2 St. Michael's, Highgate stands higher than any other church in London. As you enter you are level with the cross on top of St. Paul's Cathedral. The spire is a landmark on London's northern skyline from the hills to the south.
- 3.3 St Michael's Church Hall is a late 20th-century two-storey brick building to the north of the church which is connected to the north aisle via a small link building. It is not of any particular significance but does not detract from the main church.

- 3.4 The proposed changes do not impact upon the historic fabric of the building but on the new Church hall only.

## **4 Planning Background**

- 4.1 Many listed buildings can sustain some sensitive alterations or extensions to accommodate continuing or new uses, but they vary greatly in how much they can be changed without harming their special architectural or historic interest. Policies relating to listed buildings are available in the local plan and there's detailed guidance in the government's National Planning Policy Framework.

### *4.2 Relevant Planning Policy*

#### Camden Local Plan - Adopted 2017

- **POLICY C3 CULTURAL AND LEISURE FACILITIES**  
Protection of cultural and leisure facilities: The Council will seek to protect cultural and leisure facilities and manage the impact of adjoining uses where this is likely to impact their continued operation.
- **POLICY D2 HERITAGE**  
The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

#### Highgate Neighbourhood Plan – Adopted 2017

- **CORE OBJECTIVE 5: DEVELOPMENT AND HERITAGE**  
To preserve and enhance Highgate's unique character. Sub-objectives:  
SO5.1 To guide the design and form of both new development and alterations to existing buildings and boundaries to preserve and enhance Highgate's conservation areas and ensure Highgate's rich archaeological history is recorded and, where necessary, preserved.  
SO5.2 To ensure, wherever possible, that any development strengthens the feeling of community  
SO5.3 To mitigate the effect of building works on neighbours  
SO5.4 To maintain the sense of Highgate as a green village  
SO5.5 To ensure that new development proposals are sustainable

#### National Planning Policy Framework

- Policy 16.Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

#### The Highgate Conservation Area Management Strategy

- **Maintenance and Repair**  
The Council encourages the routine and regular maintenance of historic buildings and buildings of interest to help ensure the preservation of the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### *4.3 Faculty*

A petition for Faculty for this works was submitted by the PCC to the Diocese of London on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

## **5 Design Statement**

- 5.1 The proposals include carrying out urgent work to the church hall roof and adjoining link as these are both leaking. The works will also will include a new legacy stained glass window. At this time opportunity will be taken to raise its cill in order to stop water ingress into the church, and repair the stone surround. Repairs to another window behind the organ (on the same elevation) will also be done, with its cill similarly raised.

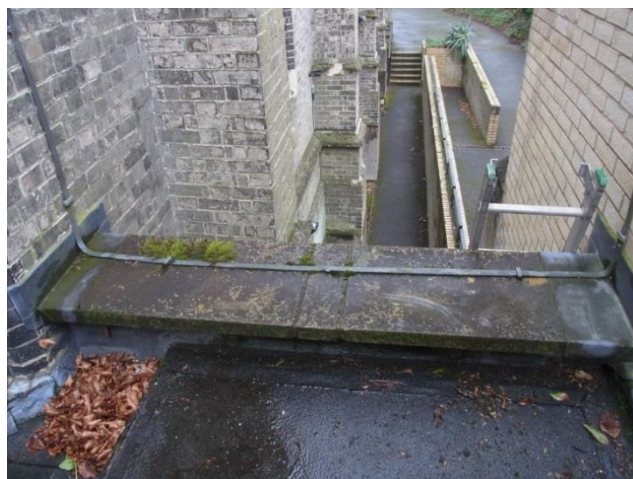
- 5.2 The flat roof over the link building between the church hall and church is covered in felt and with inadequate flashings throughout. A raised casing at the far end houses a water tank and a number of kitchen vents are located within the area. Two glass windows overlook the roof and suffer from intense water penetration during heavy rains. One window is over the door between the link and the church, the other behind the organ.
- 5.3 The proposals will include stripping out of the existing finishes, installing new roof structure and finishes (single ply membrane) as well as improved detailing to keep water away such as new fall front to back, raised parapets and window sills. Safety provisions to support maintenance will include installation of a handrail to the West parapet.



*Link roof, view towards the back (East)*

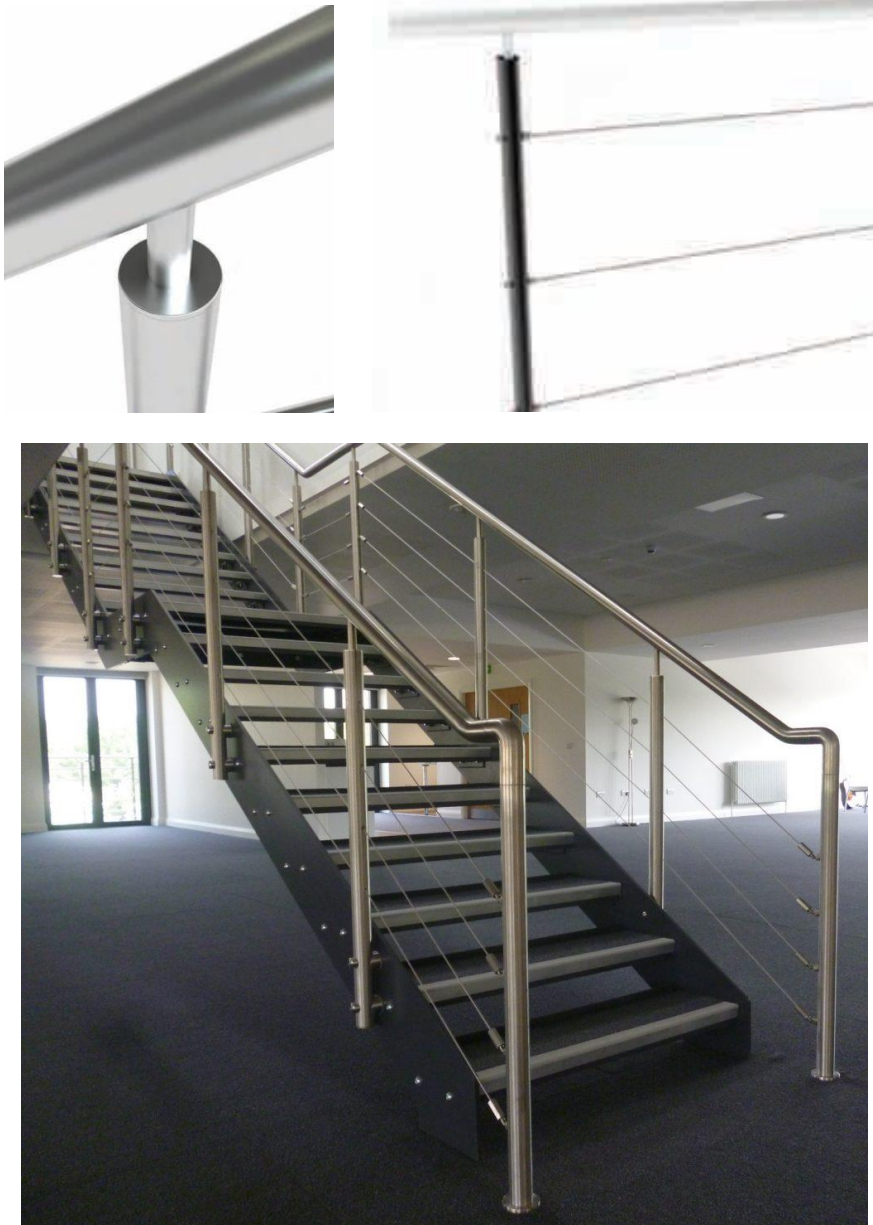


*Link roof, window sill and catchpit*



*Link roof, view towards front (West)*

- 5.4 The west parapet will be raised by two courses to allow for appropriate gutter depth and upstand. The existing coping stone will be reinstated on the top of the new brick courses. A stainless steel balustrade with five wire infills will be installed on the top, allowing for two end stanchions and one intermediate.
- 5.5 Both the top rail and end stanchions 50mm diameter tubular stainless steel grade 316 satin polished. The stanchions would be spaced at approximately 1000mm centre and fixed to the parapet with rose cover, subject to site details. Infill will consist of five 3mm diameter stainless steel tension wires.



## 6 Heritage Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The installation of a new handrail to the link roof is part of a series of emergency repairs to the 1980s Church Hall roof, which is in very poor conditions. The new handrail will improve the accessibility of the link roof for maintenance and comply with all the relevant Building Regulations; therefore this proposal will contribute to protect the building from further damages due to the poor original roof design and will guarantee that the Hall will safely be in use, continuing its important role within the local community.
- 6.2 The proposed railing will not be installed on the original building but on a later extension of no particular significance. On the Church side, the top rail will be fixed in existing mortar joints to

avoid any damage to the original fabric; position will be agreed on site with the Architect and the railing specialist before installation.

- 6.3 The proposed railing is durable, hard wearing and maintenance free, reducing the possibility of future additional works to the church. The modular connection with internal fixtures provides smooth and clean lines and a discreet design, with a low aesthetic impact on the existing building.
- 6.4 The railing will be installed to the West elevation which is set back from the Church main elevation by approximately 25m and from South Grove by approximately 86m. The railing will therefore be very discreet and almost invisible from the main street.
- 6.5 The impact of our proposals on the historical character of the building will be minimal.

## **7 Amenity Space**

- 7.1 The proposal will contribute to maintain an important community space open and safe and should be therefore considered positive.

## **8 Access Statement**

- 8.1 No change is proposed to the current accessibility of the building.

Roger Mears Architects

1811\01-Heritage, Design and Access Statement  
18 July 2019