

Statement of Significance

St. Mary the Virgin Primrose Hill – Installation of photovoltaic technology

Introduction

1. This statement has been prepared by MRDA Architects and Conservation Consultants with support from the PCC. This document should be read in conjunction with the Statement of Need and the Design Access Statement.
2. The Statement comprises the following sections:
 - a. General Information;
 - b. Building and Site Description;
 - c. Brief History;
 - d. Significance of Area Affected by Proposal;
 - e. Aesthetic Mitigation;
 - f. Technical Mitigation; and
 - g. Environmental Mitigation

General Information

3. St Mary the Virgin Primrose Hill
Elsworthy Rd, London NW3 3DJ
Camden London Borough Council.
Listed Grade II No.1329902 (Listed 14/05/1974)
Registered Charity No. 1132701
Elsworthy Conservation Zone
Swiss Cottage (Ward)
Hampstead and Kilburn (Constituency)
D1 Non-Residential Institution
TQ 275841 Grid Reference
Email: office@smvph.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7722 3238

Building and Site Description

4. The Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill is situated near Primrose Hill, Hampstead in the London Borough of Camden.
5. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill, was designed in free French Gothic Style by M.P. Manning and was constructed by Dove Brothers Limited. The first brick was laid on 8th December 1890. The Church was consecrated on 2nd July 1872. The Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill is protected as a grade II Listed Building.
6. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill makes an important contribution to the urban landscape to the north of Primrose Hill. The warm red brickwork of the enclosing walls and the lofty roof-scape provide the visual symbol of the significance of this church in the local community. The site is located in the north-eastern corner of Elsworthy Conservation Zone.
7. The Church occupies a triangle of land at the junction of King Henry's Road and Elsworthy Road with Primrose Hill. The west boundary abuts a private residence.
8. The sub-soil is clay which has been subject to shrinkage and expansion throughout the life of the church. This, in turn, has contributed to areas of distress in the brickwork.
9. The Church occupies almost the entire area of the site, with a narrow margin to the south and a small courtyard garden to the east, which now forms the entrance to the St. Mary Centre.
10. The south garden contains a number of mature trees, three of which are protected with Tree Preservation Orders under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The protected trees are:
 - Californian Chestnut (west end of south garden)
 - Tulip Tree (mid-point, south garden)
 - Maidenhair (Ginkgo Biloba)
11. The Church comprises a lofty Nave and Chancel with aisles to north and south, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at the east end of the south aisle and a north transept built against the west elevation of the tower on the north side of the Chancel. The Sacristy

is located on the south and south east side of the Chancel. The Baptistry is located at the west end of the south aisle. The Ambulatory, built around the Chancel apse, was absorbed into the 'St. Mary Centre' in 2007 (described below) and was linked with the Choir Vestry, adjacent to the east wall of the tower.

12. A Parish Room was constructed at the west end of the Church circa 1995. The new accommodation, situated between the west wall and the west boundary wall, was designed by John Glanfield & Partners and comprised a kitchen, meeting room and two lavatories.
13. Extensions were added in 2006/7 to provide improved facilities for the disabled and for the Flower Guild at the north-west corner and a new St. Mary Centre with dedicated entrance hall, a counselling room, a kitchen, a universally accessible lavatory and shower facility to the east of the chancel apse.
14. The Church is built in soft red bricks with dressings in oolitic limestone from the Stoke Ground mines close to Bath. The steeply pitched roof to the nave and the semi-conical roof to the Chancel apse are covered with Welsh slates. The roofs to the north and south aisles are covered with copper sheet as is the roof to the north entrance lobby/organ loft and the small turret above the spiral stair.

Brief History

15. The area around Primrose Hill gradually became established as a desirable residential area in the mid nineteenth century. At this time St. Saviour's in Eton Road was regarded as the Parish Church. However, following the relocation of the 'Home for the Maintenance by their Own Labour of Destitute Boys Not Convicted of Crime' from the Euston Road to Regents Park Road in 1865, local people began to worship at the school. The Church Guidebook records that 'The congregation and other socially-minded visitors were encouraged to take a tour of the premises after the morning service and observe the boys at their lunch.'
16. George William Bell, one of the founders campaigned for the establishment of a separate Church building. An iron Church was built in Ainger Road, as a temporary measure, to serve as the focal point of a 'new mission centre'. The iron Church opened for worship on 28th April 1867.

17. In 1870 approaches were made to the Governors of Eton College, the principal landowner in the area, to donate a suitable site for a permanent Church. A member of the congregation, M.P. Manning, designed the building and construction work started in December 1870.
18. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill gradually came into prominence as a result of changes introduced by the third Vicar, Percy Dearmer who aimed 'to help, in however humble a way, towards remedying the lamentable confusion, lawlessness and vulgarity that are conspicuous in the church at this time'.
19. Percy Dearmer introduced a number of changes in the presentation of the Church and was responsible for painting out the polychromatic decoration of Manning's original design.
20. It is interesting to note that the church suffered from many structural problems which led to other problems arising with the roof coverings and in the drains. In parallel, problems with under-fired bricks led to the need to undertake extensive repair works to the west wall of the Church in 2005. This was grant-aided by (the then) English Heritage, now known as Historic England.

Significance of area affected by the proposal

21. The works are confined to the south facing slope of the nave roof with associated equipment located within the church. The associated equipment consisting primarily of the three-phase inverters that will be located in the back of house services area in the Sacristy/Vestry room to the east of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, hidden from the congregation and the public.
22. The significance of the exterior architecture of the roof slope is **moderate-high**. The roof slopes are large elements that contribute towards the character of the building. The building envelope primarily consists of the nave roof slopes, the apsidal chancel roof, the low pitch flanking aisle copper roofs and the St. Mary Centre.
23. The installation of photovoltaic panels on the south facing slope of the nave roof will have a **moderate** impact as it will alter the roof from a slate appearance to being covered in part by black photovoltaic panels. However, due to limited sight lines the impact on the building overall will be **moderate**.

Aesthetic Mitigation

24. Black photovoltaic panels were chosen in order to mitigate the effects of the proposals as the slates on the nave roof have a dark blue/charcoal appearance. The black colour of the panels will result in minimal contrast between the slates and the proposed panels, resulting in a similar monolithic dark mass when viewed from a distance (further details can be found in the Q Cells Data Sheet). The impact of the installation is further mitigated by dense screening from the trees directly opposite. Key views considered below:



Summer views from Primrose Hill Road (top Left) Elsworth Road (top right, bottom left)





Winter views from Primrose Hill Road (top Left) Elsworthy Road (top right, bottom left, bottom right)

25. The roof is visible from the immediate surroundings of Elsworthy Road and Primrose Hill Road, however, the photographs demonstrate that large parts of the south facing nave roof are obscured by trees when the leaves are out. On the whole, the proposed photovoltaic panels will only be visible in the immediate surroundings from the east end of Elsworthy road, a small section of Primrose Hill Road and St. Paul's Primary School to the south of Elsworthy Road.



Summer views from Primrose Hill



Winter views from Primrose

26. Beyond Elsworthy Road lies Primrose Hill, a Royal Park. Although Primrose Hill has a clear view of central London, the south facing slope of the nave roof of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin is almost entirely obscured by trees when the leaves are out, with only a partial view during the winter. From the footpaths in the park, only the most northerly boundary path has a view of the Church during the summer. The view from the boundary path is largely obscured by trees as shown in the summer views from Primrose Hill photographs (top left). This view is rapidly lost as the observer moves away from the northern boundary footpath during the winter months, demonstrated by the winter views from Primrose Hill, photographs above.

27. Inside the Church the inverters will be located within the Sacristy, a private room used by members of the clergy only. The Sunny Tripower inverters could be fitted above head height and should not have any significant impact as their dimensions are 470 x 730 x 240 mm. The power cable can be run unobtrusively from the main fuse board over the top of the existing wall cupboards with the minimum of cable on view.

There will be two and a half meters of cable approximately from the inverters to the external wall, which will be painted white to blend in with the walls. Externally there will be less than a two-meter run of black coloured cable that will be visible. The visual impact should be minimal as there is already an existing black cable that runs almost the entire length of the church.

Technical Mitigation

28. The proposed photovoltaic panels are to be mounted onto frames that are in turn supported by clamps designed to be retrofitted to slate roofs as shown in the image below. The fixings contain adapted flashings within the plane of the slates to ensure water tightness. These can later be replaced with new slates should the installation be removed. Through the use of this system it will be possible to upgrade, remove or replace the equipment without any damage to the fabric of the building.

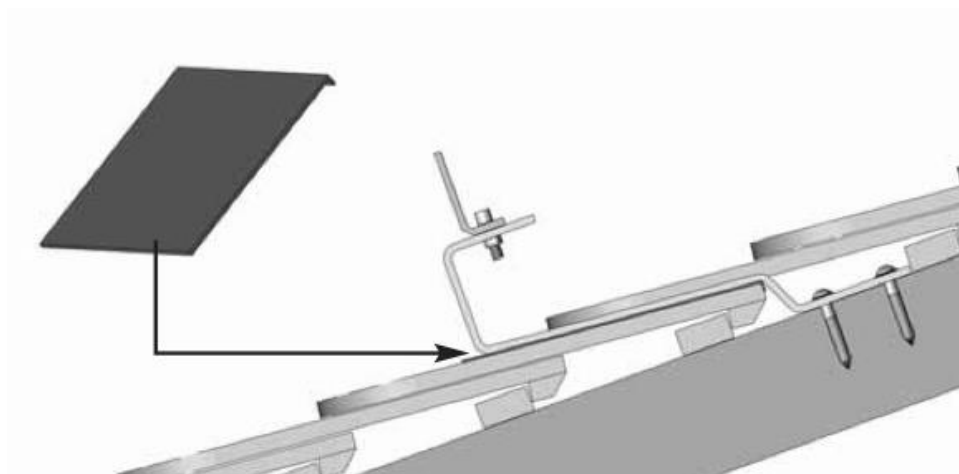


Image from Solar Choice Australia

Environmental Mitigation

29. The proposed scheme positively addresses the environment in the following way:

- Reduces Carbon Dioxide emissions through providing clean renewable energy
- Reduce dependency on finite unrenewable fossil fuel
- Increase local energy resilience

30. These points will help address the energy targets set by the government at national level, the local authority and the Church of England. Further information can be found in the Statement of Need and the Design Access Statement.

Sources

1. <https://www.solarchoice.net.au/blog/how-to-install-a-solar-panel-mounting-system-on-your-roof/>
2. English Heritage *List Entry Description*
3. Photographs by Ted Ruscoe