

All Saints Church, Highgate

Conservation Area Statement

1 Site Location and General Description

All Saints Church is an Anglican parish church built at the end of the 19th century and subsequently extended to provide vestry buildings, and divided internally to provide a church hall with independent front and rear access.

The church is made primarily of stone, with stone dressings to the window openings. It has a large pitched roof over the nave and smaller pitched roofs over the aisles. There is no tower. The roof is partly slated, and partly tiled, although one slope is covered in corrugated asbestos, a legacy from the 1950's.

Much of the churchyard to the East of the church was recently sold off, and the land was developed for houses, one of which is the present vicarage.

There has long been a malfunction in the drainage provision in the ground immediately to the West of the church, which needs to be addressed.

On the side of the church to the South, (to the right when viewed from Talbot Road) is a small section that was extended in 1964 to accommodate lavatories, and a flight of steps down to a cellar. This extension is of limited architectural merit. Along the boundary is a line of pleached Lime trees. The line of trees returns across the front of the church grounds. There are a number of TPOs on the existing trees.

2 Overview of the Proposed Work

The church hall is currently used for secular purposes in the parish. It accommodates a number of parish activities, one of which is a crèche for about thirty children, which has been operating for about ten years.

There is a small wooden building in the ground between the church and the boundary with the adjoining houses. This has not been used for several years. The proposal is to replace it with a more substantial, albeit lightweight, building which will be run as a permanent and dedicated crèche.

No items of the proposed work affect the fabric of the existing building directly, although a lockable security gate will be installed to the railings at the top of the stairs to the basement at the rear.

Two small security cleats will be fixed into the mortar joints of the vestry wall at the rear to provide anchor points for the hooks, which will support a canvas canopy over the entrance to the new crèche.

3 Works to Immediate Surroundings

At present, the ground to the West of the church does not drain properly, and after heavy rain, the land is boggy. Because of this excess water the lower part of the inside face of the external wall to the church is permanently damp and needs constant attention.

The failure of the drainage system will be addressed as part of work to the foundations. Neither the foundations nor the superstructure touches the church buildings at any point.

The entrance to the crèche will be from the existing ramped entrance from Church Road which runs up to what is now the back of the church. This will be improved but not altered.

There is a “Memorial garden” next to this entrance. This was formed 15 years ago. Unfortunately this has become very wild because it was not tended during the pandemic. This garden will be tidied up and the planting will be reinstated. The chain link fencing will be replaced with “Flow forge” grillwork, and the existing concrete posts will be overhauled and fitted with decorative cappings. A decorative timber gate will be fitted to replace the existing metal one.

To improve the access between the halves of the church ground, three of the lime trees will be felled. These are the between the side wall of the new crèche and the boundary. There is already much greenery beyond the boundary. The trees are, in any event, screened by the gable wall to the neighbouring building, which is a three-storey private house and would not, in any case, be visible when the crèche is built.

The proposed path will provide a link from the land behind the back the crèche to the infants’ play deck at the front. This will offer a more open setting for the crèche and will improve the daylight to the remaining trees. When the crèche is occupied, self-supporting timber fencing panels will be put in place. These will be removed and stored when it is not in use.

4 Choice of Building Materials

The proposal is to build the crèche using native timbers grown in Dartmoor. The exterior face will be self-coloured render, and the non-symmetrically

pitched roof will be clad in zinc with standing seams to create an ecclesiastical presence. Doors and windows to the front elevation will be of hardwood, sheathed externally in self-coloured aluminium.

The skeleton and framing of the nursery will be prefabricated and reassembled on site once work to the foundations has been completed.

This will reduce the disruption to the regular working of the church.

5 Effect on the Conservation Area.

The proposal will replace an unsightly and obsolete wooden shed with a handsome and useful building, which will provide an income for the church itself. The shape and materiality make this clearly a subservient architectural element because all the other buildings on the site are made of masonry. There will be a clear gap between the new building and the side of the church, which is presently defined with prominent buttresses. The proposed building extends less than half the length of the side of the existing church and does not obscure the view of the buttressed side wall.

The shape strongly reflects the geometry of the rest of the church, particularly among the variety of the existing pitched roofs. However, it is of a much lighter construction palette and will not compete aesthetically with the Victorian masonry buildings, particularly as it offers a largely glazed gable front elevation, although contained by the oversailing hood formed by the prominent edges of the roof.

When the work to the entrance from Church Road has been completed, the Eucalyptus tree removed, and works to tidy up the landscaping completed, the setting and appearance of All Saints will be much improved when viewed from Church Road. The new crèche will be well set back from

the wall to Talbot Road. It will be quite different in appearance from the masonry buildings, and there will be clear open space round it. The setting of the original church buildings will not be adversely affected by the presence of the new building, and indeed will benefit from the improvements to the landscaping work immediately surrounding it.

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