

St Martin's Church, Maidstone
Design and Access / Heritage Statement
New Equal Access Facilities



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Introduction

This statement has been prepared as a Design, Access and Heritage Statement for the creation of new Equal Access facilities including alterations to entrance steps and the creation of a new sloping access path.

The National Planning Policy guidance and Historic England's advice emphasises the need for assessments of the significance of any heritage assets which are likely to be changed, so the assessment can inform the decision process. Significance is defined in the NPPF Guidance in the Glossary as "the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historical. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also its setting". The setting of the heritage asset is also clarified in the Glossary as "the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve".

This statement examines the "significance" of the building and assesses the extent of "harm", as well as its setting, that would result if the alterations proposed are carried out.

This statement has been prepared by John Minter RIBA SCA who is a Specialist Conservation Architect on the RIBA.

1.0 Location and History:

1.01 Location:

The Church of St Martin is located on the southern side of Northumberland Road, between the two entrances to Cambridge Crescent and opposite the eastern entrance to Cumberland Crescent.

The church is slightly set back from the road within its own grounds and on a relatively level site, gently falling towards the road, which it shares with the former vicarage and church hall.

The surrounding buildings are predominantly residential but there are local shops, a library and veterinary surgery adjacent.

1.02 History:

The church is of fairly recent construction, being consecrated in October 1960, and replaced and supplemented the earlier building nearby of 1953, which now serves as the church hall. In the late 1970's a vicarage was constructed between the two church buildings. The church was designed by John Leopold Denman and Son of Brighton, who has been described as "The leading church Architect of his time in Sussex" (J. Allen, Architects and Artists). Amongst many other notable works in the South East are the Patcham Pylons, which flank the A23 approaching Brighton and St Cuthman's Church, Whitehawk, Brighton, which has many similar details to St Martin's. Curiously, a copy of one of the original Architect's drawings shows a plan of the church practically as built except that it is located immediately adjacent to the 1953 church / current church hall, with a site earmarked for a possible vicarage to the west, rather than in between the two church buildings, which is what was actually constructed. A further minor discrepancy is that the WC on the south side of the church differs from that shown on the plan.

1.03 Description:

The church is orientated conventionally in liturgical terms and geographically so that the east window faces east-north-east.

The church has a nave with an apse at the west end, containing a baptistery with font. There is a north aisle and north porch at the west end, paired with a further north porch at the east end of the north aisle, under the tower. To the west of the north porch there is a small store containing the incoming electrical equipment.

There is a chancel and sanctuary, each raised successively from nave level and a Lady Chapel abuts the Chancel on the north side, separated from it by a parclose screen. The Lady Chapel has its own sanctuary located within a small apse. On the other side of the chancel there is the organ console with the organ itself above. Behind the console a corridor runs east-west with the clergy vestry at the east end, with built-in storage cupboards and a single WC and choir vestry (recently fitted out as a kitchen) to the south.

Adjacent to the WC there is a short lobby with an external door, next to which is a small store used for garden equipment, underneath which a section of concrete floor has been broken out

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randomly and an iron ladder descends to a basement, either formerly used as a boiler room or intended for such use but never commissioned. The original Architect's drawing also shows a room containing a blower for the organ in this area.

On the north side there is a fine tower with concrete intermediate floors and a copper-clad site-constructed timber spire. The tower is accessed by fixed iron ladders accessed by a door adjacent to the Lady Chapel. The upper floor contains an electric clock with gearbox and drive shafts to painted metal faces on north, east and west faces. A single bell and frame are located in the south east corner of the room. There are louvred openings to all four walls.

The church is constructed of masonry cavity walls with special narrow stock bricks supporting a roof formed from steel trusses and purlins with timber rafters and pan tiles. Clergy vestry and Lady Chapel have asphalt roofs of very shallow pitch, those on the south side and possibly the Lady Chapel also being understood to be solid reinforced concrete un-insulated slabs. The tower has a copper spire.

The nave and chancel have a vaulted ceiling formed from Plaster of Paris, with built-in heating and lighting at the junction between wall and ceiling.

All floors are of solid construction, those in the nave, north porch, chancel, Lady Chapel, clergy vestry and lobby have a cork finish. In some areas, such as the chancel, carpets overlay the cork and in the north west corner of the nave there is a raised carpeted platform. The tower and baptistery floors are of marble.

Internal and external doors are of oak in oak frames.

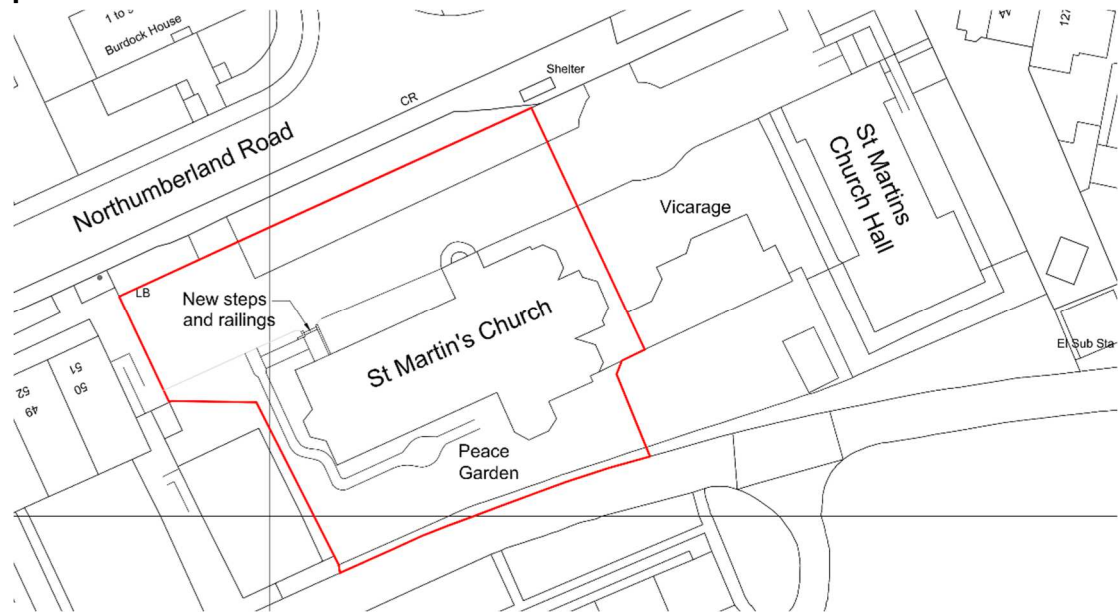
Windows are painted steel "Crittall" style units, many of which have what seems to be a Reamy glass in lead comes. There is some fine contemporary stained glass in the Sanctuary, Lady Chapel and baptistery.

The furniture consists almost entirely of loose seating aside from fixed chancel choir stalls and frontals in oak.

Heating is predominantly by gas fired stand-alone radiant heaters, most of which are in working order but they are now becoming elderly.

All in all, the building can be interpreted as being a good modern interpretation of a medieval church.

Proposal



Drawing (Not to Scale) above shows the new steps and sloping path, plus (for context only) a small proposed Peace Garden and access path, which, we assume do not require Planning Permission. The drawing also shows the relationship between St Martin's Church and St Martin's Church Hall, which has the nearest available accessible toilet.

There are currently no accessible toilets provided within the church, which has a single, rather cramped toilet that can only be gained by climbing two steps and passing in front of the congregation. The nearest accessible toilet is in St Martin's church hall, which, although nearby, is a separate building which is subject to separate opening times and sometimes needs to be unlocked especially. The church currently does not have step-free access for visitors. There is therefore no dignified, assistance-free access for visitors and the proposals seek to address these issues.

Current access into the Church



Photos above show the existing steps which are a barrier to independent access.

Currently, the church has steps on both the north entrances as well as internally to get to the current toilet. This means that someone needs to be there to help people get into the church if they struggle with steps or to put out a portable ramp. The proposals include a gently sloping path plus Equality Act / BS 8300 / Building Regulations Part M compliant steps with handrails plus tactile and colour-contrasting surfaces to provide independent and step-free access. These essential alterations will mean a small visual change to the external appearance of the building, as will the new paths that will be required to access the proposed Peace Garden to the rear of the church.

The proposals also include a new, internal, accessible WC, which, we understand, does not require planning permission. However, we include the necessary external below-ground drainage as we understand that this may be considered as “Engineering Works” and so may require planning permission.

The church wish to create a small Peace Garden to the south of the church, with its own access path. The precise design and layout have not yet been finalized but we include basic information on this on the drawings for context. It is assumed that this will not require planning permission.

Impact on Building's Significance

The proposals will have a minimal impact on the physical aspect of the Building's significance as, aside from the removal current inadequate steps the intervention will be very limited. Aesthetically the additions will be discreet and will assist greatly in promoting the mission of the church and the continued use of the building.

Ecology Statement

There proposals will have minimal effect on the existing ecology as the alterations mainly affect areas with little or no planting. However, the increased usage of the rear church yard area as a Peace Garden will encourage future planting that will encourage biodiversity.

Access Statement

The external and internal changes will greatly improve access to the church.

Drainage Statement

The proposed new foul drain will connect the waste from the new toilet to the existing public sewer under Northumberland road.