



SAWBRIDGEWORTH EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

March 2024 (rev D)





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Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church as seen from London Road (existing view)



1. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT VISION

As an established inter-generational, increasingly diverse and growing congregation, Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church (SECC) are seeking an inspiring and welcoming redevelopment of their existing site, in a way which is sympathetic to its Grade II listed status, to enable continued growth of the church and ministries serving the local community.

SECC has always sought to connect with and serve the community in Sawbridgeworth and the surrounding villages. It regularly holds events for Christians and non-Christians alike and offers practical help to families in need locally through its collaboration with Harlow Food bank, TGL Make Lunch, the Hailey Centre and other initiatives.

SECC believes that the proposed town expansion through new residential development, alongside current economic and societal concerns will create even greater need for a community church which can help meet the increasing local needs, including a meeting place for older people and a facility for children's services, among others.

Due to the inflexible and inaccessible nature of the current buildings, SECC needs to create new facilities that provide multi-purpose and flexible halls, meeting rooms and office spaces, a welcoming entrance foyer and refreshment space, and modern accessible kitchen and WC facilities. These facilities will be able to function independent of, and as an extension to, the church sanctuary and hall, providing high quality ancillary accommodation to complement use of the historic church buildings.

SECC's vision is to provide an inspiring and welcoming redevelopment of the existing facility, sympathetic to its Grade II listed status, which enhances the usability, accessibility and aesthetics of the site enabling the continued growth of its church and ministries, allowing it to better serve the needs of the local community.

Current building barriers to SECC achieving their vision:

- Buildings appear unwelcoming and uninviting from street level
- Existing entrance foyer is too small and is inaccessible to anyone unable to use steps
- The kitchen and toilets (in the classroom block) are not on same floor level as the sanctuary, hall or any other room and are not suitable for current needs
- Kitchen too small for catering needs, tasks, and storage of equipment
- Food & drink cannot be usefully served from the kitchen serving hatch
- Kitchen needs catering quality appliances and fittings to meet modern public kitchen hygiene standards
- Toilets are cold, dated and lacking hot water
- No disabled toilet facility accessible from the church – toilet in classroom block only
- Inadequate baby changing facilities
- No medium-sized *accessible* rooms for meetings of 10 – 25 people
- Insufficient number of rooms for concurrent activities causes inefficient use of buildings
- Lack of flexibility with multiple small rooms, which leads to limits on resources to safeguard young people
- Lack of suitable office space for Minister's use, personal counselling, and church administration
- All rooms present issues to those with limited mobility
- Fire escape routes are restricted, particularly from the sanctuary and upper floors of the classroom block
- The late 1990s extension blocks windows to the hall and limits natural light.
- All buildings are poorly/not insulated resulting in high heating bills and energy waste
- The classroom block has issues with rising damp and penetrating damp
- Roofs in poor state and close to the end of life
- There is inability to heat small areas, rooms, or zones individually, again leading to high energy costs/waste
- Maintenance of current buildings is challenging and expensive
- None of the rooms open onto the garden which is consequently under used and a missed opportunity

These issues relate to the church sanctuary itself:

- inflexible and uncomfortable
- narrow door between the sanctuary and the hall causing a bottle neck after services and significant challenges for those with mobility issues
- pews inhibit free movement, especially for people with mobility issues
- very difficult to get medical help to someone in trouble
- wheelchair and pram access is limited
- pews make routine maintenance and installation of new lighting expensive due to scaffolding requirements
- internal connection between sanctuary and hall, kitchen and toilets is within the sanctuary resulting in disruption to services
- overdue redecoration and maintenance
- lighting needs updating to modern, safe to maintain, low energy, and flexible systems
- during funeral services, there are significant difficulties when bringing a coffin into the sanctuary due to the tight turns through the various doors
- PA systems and AV systems need updating to enable good visibility and sound
- baptistry needs updating as it leaks and is difficult to heat. Baptistry leak appears to be hidden behind large heating pipes and not possible to fix without complete dismantling of the baptistry

2. SITE AND CONTEXT

Siting, boundaries and Access

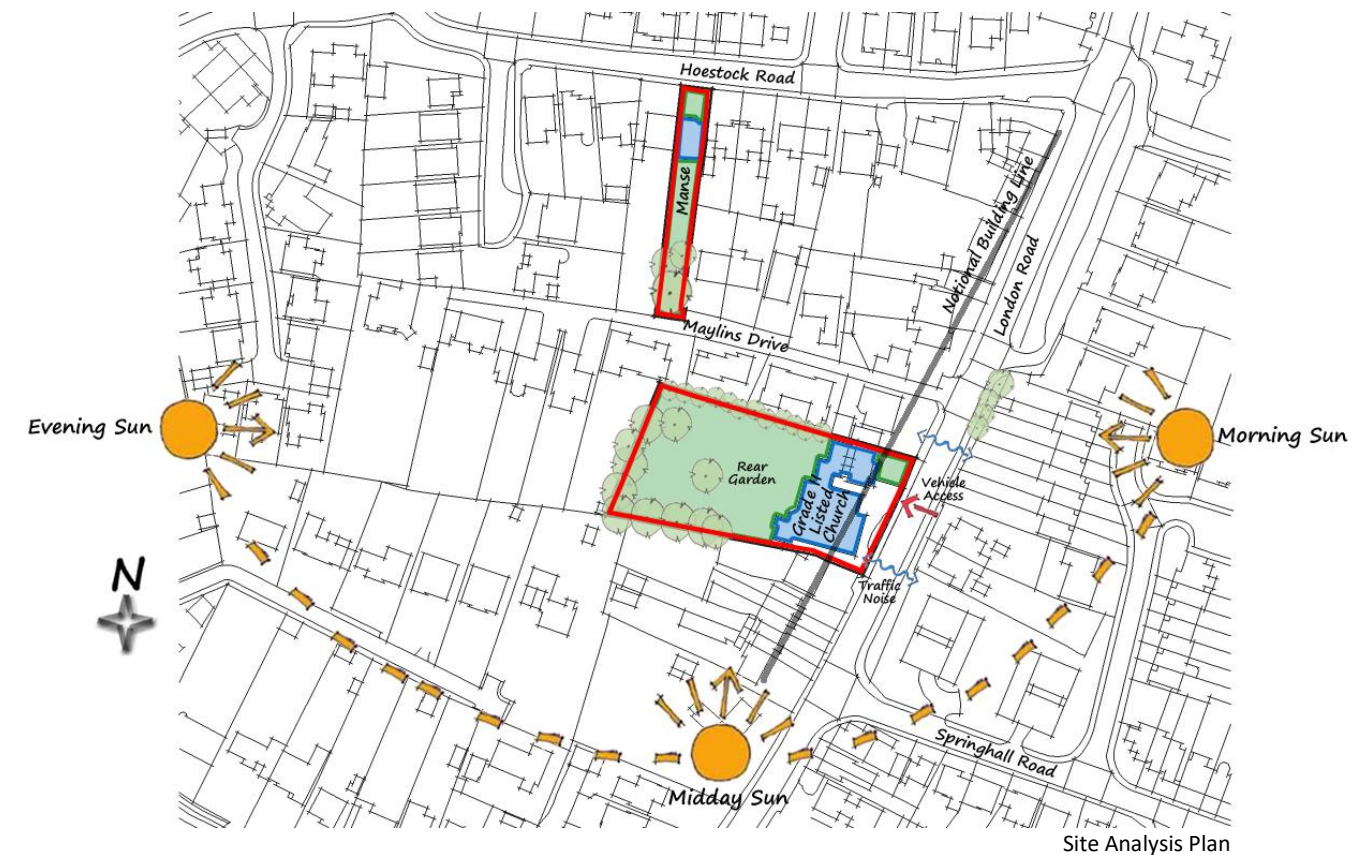
The site is bounded to the east (front) by London Road, to the north and west by residential dwellings and to the south by a house and garage abutting the boundary. There is a substation along the northern boundary adjacent to the 1911 classroom block which prevents (restricts with complex health and safety requirements) access for routine maintenance. The church buildings are sited to the east of the site by London Road, with a small frontage providing limited vehicle access and parking for approximately four cars, together with an area of amenity grass at the north-east corner.

Good sized grounds are sited to the west of the site, with the larger southern portion comprising a graveyard with standing memorial stones and a narrow strip of land to the north laid to amenity grass. There are several mature trees to the west and southern boundaries of the gardens, with a hedge line to the northern boundary which provide screening of the church site from the neighbouring residential properties. There are a few trees within the northwest quarter of the graveyard plot.

The church also owns a manse site to the north, although the manse land is not subject to this planning application.

London Road is a busy A-road and generates traffic noise from the east frontage, while the churchyard to the west of the site is sheltered to a large degree by the church buildings and surrounding residential properties and trees from road noise.

The existing building line is defined by the residential properties along London Road as indicated on the Site Analysis drawing opposite. The church extends beyond the notional building line to the southeast corner of the site and therefore establishes its own building line in the street scene.



Site Analysis Plan

View from the east above London Road – 19th century church and hall to left, 20th century additions to the right-hand side.

2. SITE AND CONTEXT (continued)

Site history

The original church site has been used as a Christian place of worship since the early 1800s, where a smaller (than present) chapel building occupied the site of the current late 19th century church. The original chapel was constructed c. 1814 and later demolished (c. 1862) and replaced by the current church and schoolroom (now referred to as the hall) which opened in 1863.

It is understood that in 1904, the plot of land to the north of the church was purchased with the aim of constructing a new classroom block, which was completed in 1911.

A modern single storey building was added to the rear of the classroom block in the 1970s, providing additional toilets and a kitchen. In the 1990s this was extended further, providing a storeroom, and connecting to the 19th century hall. These works involved modifications to historic hall windows, including over-boarding and removal of the glazing.

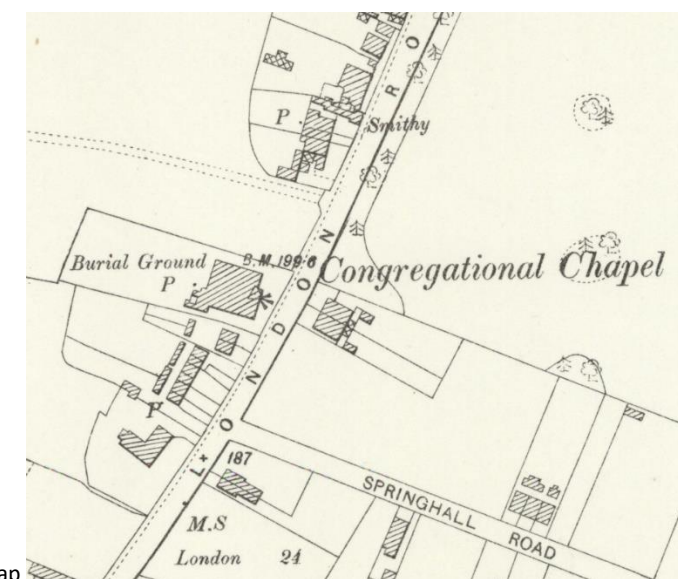
Extracts from historic maps opposite show the development of the site. The land now home to the 1911 classroom block was formerly allotment gardens. The extract from 1915 shows the addition of the 1911 classroom block along with further development to the northeast of the site along London Road.

In more recent years, modern development has been constructed around the site, including Maylins Drive and other modern residential development.

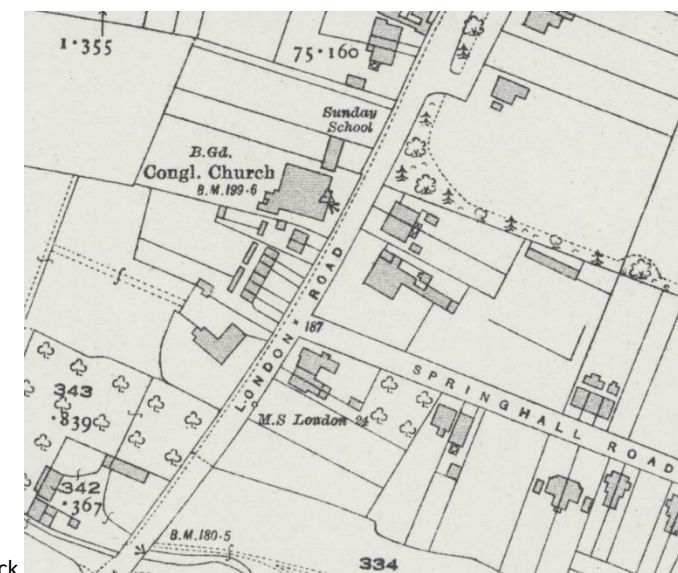
Refer also to Heritage Statement for more information and analysis.



Extract from 1873-79 historic map



Extract from 1895-96 historic map



Extract from 1915 historic map showing 1911 classroom block

2. SITE AND CONTEXT (continued)

Current Church and Schoolroom

The Grade II listed church and schoolroom, designed by the architects Poulton and Woodman of Reading, opened in 1863 to replace the 1814 chapel (opposite top left). The 1863 buildings are of some considerable architectural merit, constructed in the early English style, with polychromatic brickwork and Bath stone dressings.

Externally, the contrasting horizontal brickwork in buff stock brick with blue and white brickwork banding, decorative gothic arched windows, Bath stone dressings and buttressed tower make for an attractive composition.

The original schoolroom, now referred to as the Hall, lies to the north of the sanctuary and is set back behind the tower with a corresponding gable. Internally there are paired columns between the Sanctuary and the former schoolroom with sliding timber screen dividers. A carved pine pulpit and pipe organ form a centre piece to the west within an apsidal arrangement. There is a gallery to the east end of the Sanctuary over the entrance lobby.

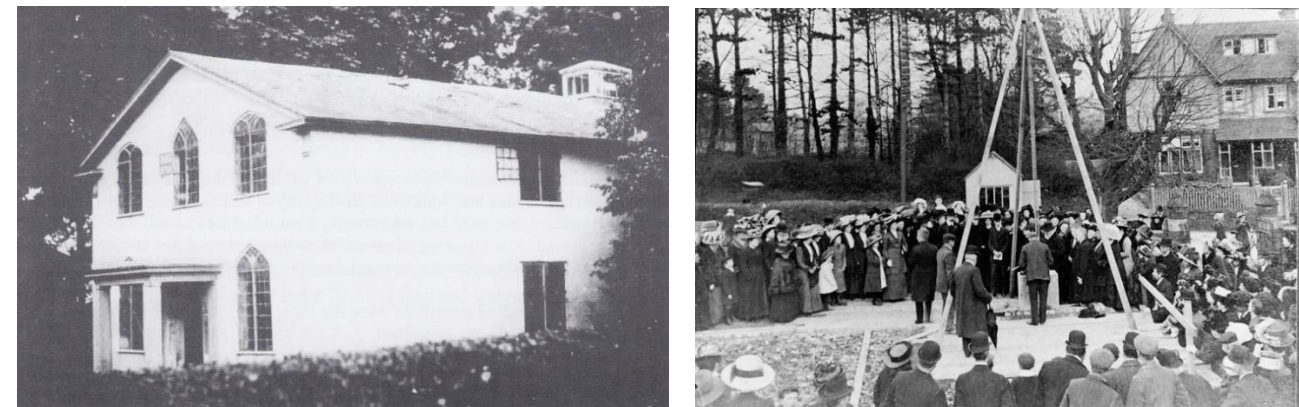
The Sanctuary space is naturally lit by the large east window and smaller windows to the south elevation. The existing pews of plain design in pine. Stone corbels support exposed timber trusses of common member size (scantling) as referred to in the listing description.

The former schoolroom has a relatively plain interior with stone corbels supporting simplified and smaller scale roof trusses. A concealed stair provides access to the gallery in the Sanctuary. It is understood that the original floor has been replaced with a modern concrete floor construction.

There were several modifications to the north windows of the hall when the 1990s extension was constructed, overall resulting in a loss of symmetry and daylight. The northwestern window was over-boarded and the leaded lights removed. These have been preserved in a good condition. (The proposals include reinstatement of this original window and re-provision of symmetry of openings to the hall north wall – see later sections for details)

Timber screens separate the Hall and sanctuary, but these are understood to be non-original features.

Refer also to Heritage Statement for more information and analysis.



Top left: c. 1814 original chapel demolished c. 1862

Top right: historic photo of the laying of the first stone during construction of 1911 classroom block

Middle right: Interior of the current church looking west to the stage and organ

Bottom right: Interior of hall (formerly known as schoolroom) with stairs to balcony concealed by half height partition

Bottom left: Interior of church with timber sliding doors to hall (left) and balcony to the east end over vestibule

2. SITE AND CONTEXT (continued)

Classroom Block

The classroom block was constructed in 1911 (as datestone) in a buff stock brick and pitched slate roof. The front façade of the classroom block has been linked rather clumsily to the former schoolroom by a wing wall and archway, but the polychromatic brickwork banding has not been successfully continued, giving a rather 'accidental' appearance to the assemblage.

The architectural style of the 1911 Classroom block is somewhat dissonant with the original church and schoolroom, employing a roman semi-circular arch within its main central gable, and rectangular windows. The original windows have been replaced with white PVCu type. It is understood that the central east window of the classroom block replaced an original east entrance doorway, evidenced by the timber clad infill below the modern window.

The brickwork to the 1911 building does not match the church, but some attempts seem to have been made to reference certain features from the church, such as the symmetrical composition and central gable.

The 1911 classroom block has ongoing problems with damp ingress, safety concerns for fire escape, small, inadequate rooms which are not configured to provide flexible use of space. Being of 9 inch solid wall construction, the classroom block has poor/no insulation and is difficult/inefficient to heat. Retrofitting insulation would be problematic due to inherent issues around rising and penetrating damp.

The classroom block has a split floor level with internal steps which presents accessibility issues. The current layout causes safeguarding issues for children's activities. Unfortunately, the classroom block does not provide suitable, good quality spaces for many user groups and organisations and thus limits the potential use of the buildings. Consideration has been given to refurbishing the classroom building but this has been deemed suboptimal on design and sustainability grounds. (See later sections)

Kitchen Block extension

The modern single storey kitchen block (constructed in the 1970s and extended in the 1990s) to the west of the classroom block is of poor-quality design. The choice of brickwork does not harmonise with the church, the buildings are poorly laid out, and have poorly considered junction detailing with the existing hall. Internally the split-level arrangement also presents issues in terms of accessibility. The link to the 19th century hall is very poorly conceived and detailed (see opposite top left) and detracts from the appearance of the historic buildings.

The kitchen block provides a kitchen, toilets, and storage space. A storeroom, connected to the former schoolroom, blocks what was once a route through from the road to the graveyard and church gardens. Access to the church gardens from the buildings is limited to doors from ancillary spaces and passageways to the northern and southern site boundaries.



Top left: poor quality kitchen and toilet block which connected to the former schoolroom

Top right: graveyard to west of church

Middle: Arched wing wall connecting the church and former schoolroom to the 1911 Classroom block

Bottom: Close-up of the Arched wing wall showing lack of continuity of light brick banding and poorly matched brickwork

3. HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

The National Heritage List for England

The church buildings were grade II listed in 1981 (list entry 1101650). The listing description reads as follows:

'LONDON ROAD 1. 5253 (West Side) Sawbridgeworth Congregational Church TL4801 1464:3/13 II GV 2. 1862-3 by Poulton and Woodman, architects of Reading. Opened April 1863 as church and schoolroom. Extension to N1911. Polychrome brick church with bath stone dressings and steep slate roof of 2 colours banded. Early English style. 5 bay church with W apse (organ) and E gallery over entrance lobby. Buttressed square tower with shingled spire rises over NE corner. Lower vestry at SW next apse. Integral 4 bay schoolroom set back on N side with 4 bay arcade opening it up to church. Original sliding screens closing off schoolroom still in use. Linked by arch, 2 storey brick extension to N. Modern hall at rear of extension. 3 part E front to church, centre flanked by narrow recessed parts. Yellow stock brick. White brick plinth offsets. 5 polychrome bands in height of gable and each of 3 courses of white brick with blue brick course above and below. Central quatrefoil datestone below tall E window. Stone plate tracery with 4 lancet stopped by blind 6-pointed star and a pyramid of 3 quatrefoils. 3 ring header arch in white brick over stone arch, outer ring has blue header at every 3rd brick. Steep stone copings, kneelers and trefoil finial. Louvred trefoil opening in upper part of gable sunk in stone infill to pointed arched top opening with segmental cill. Steep stone copings to porch on SE projecting to plane of centre. 2 centred pointed arch to door. Stone dressings with 3 ring brick arch. Similar door in base of NE tower of 4 stages with paired buttresses running up 2 stages. It has brick banding linking to centre. Very narrow lancets to 1st and 2nd stage and 2 to 4th stage. Quatrefoil in circular brick opening to 3rd stage. Diminished 4th stage and brick corbelling to base of pyramid spire. Schoolroom set back depth of tower. E front has corresponding plinth and brick bands. Polygonal headed door on right. 2 small lancets rising for stair to church gallery. Large central window with stone plate tracery of 3 quatrefoils recessed in equilateral curved triangle under polychrome brick arch. Small stone triangular vent above and a stone coping. Plank door with decorative iron hinges. Diamond leaded glazing throughout. Flanks of church and schoolroom have plinth and polychrome brick bands and buttresses with stone offsets. 1st buttress on SE has '18 AW 62' cut in brick. Brick eaves corbels. Paired stone lancet windows with diamond leaded lights and pivoted metal opening section in each lefthand light, 2 storey stock brick extension of 1911 on N. Plum brick dressings. Stone coping to front parapet and central gable and kneelers. 2 storey recessed arch feature in centre. 3 light wooden casements. Transoms to Gd floor windows. Rectangular leaded lights. Elaborate foundation stone. 4 bay arcade in church has paired columns like a cloister with C13 style floral joint capitals. Boarded dado with top rail decorated with quatrefoils. Stone corbels support open timber roof of uniform scantling. Central raised pine pulpit with dog-tooth arches and heavy bar mouldings. Old panelled pews are used as dado in schoolroom. Bath for adult immersion installed under dias in 1938. (Pevsner 2nd Ed Rev (1977) 335; WEA II (1967) 51-6; Church Building Centenary booklet (1963).'

(historicengland.org.uk)

There are numerous listed buildings in the area, including along London Road itself. Most of the nearby listed buildings are within Sawbridgeworth Conservation Area, but some (such as the church) are located outside of the conservation area. See Heritage Statement for further details



Top left: east (road) facing façade of 1863 church with 1911 classroom block to right
 Top right: rear (west) façade of church and former schoolroom and graveyard in foreground
 Bottom left: 'paired columns like a cloister with C13 style floral joint capital'
 Bottom right: view of sanctuary looking west from balcony

3. HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS (continued)

Conservation Areas

The church site is located **outside** but close to the boundary of Sawbridgeworth Conservation Area. The conservation area was extended in 1981 (the year that the church was listed) and although the church is mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted December 2014), the conservation area was not extended to include the church site, presumably due to several modern developments in the vicinity.

From the latest policy maps on East Herts Council's website, it appears that the conservation may have been extended further since 2014. (See bottom right map opposite). The church site remains outside of the conservation area (shaded purple). The properties shown hatched are all listed. Tree preservation orders (TPOs) are also shown – there are none on the church site.

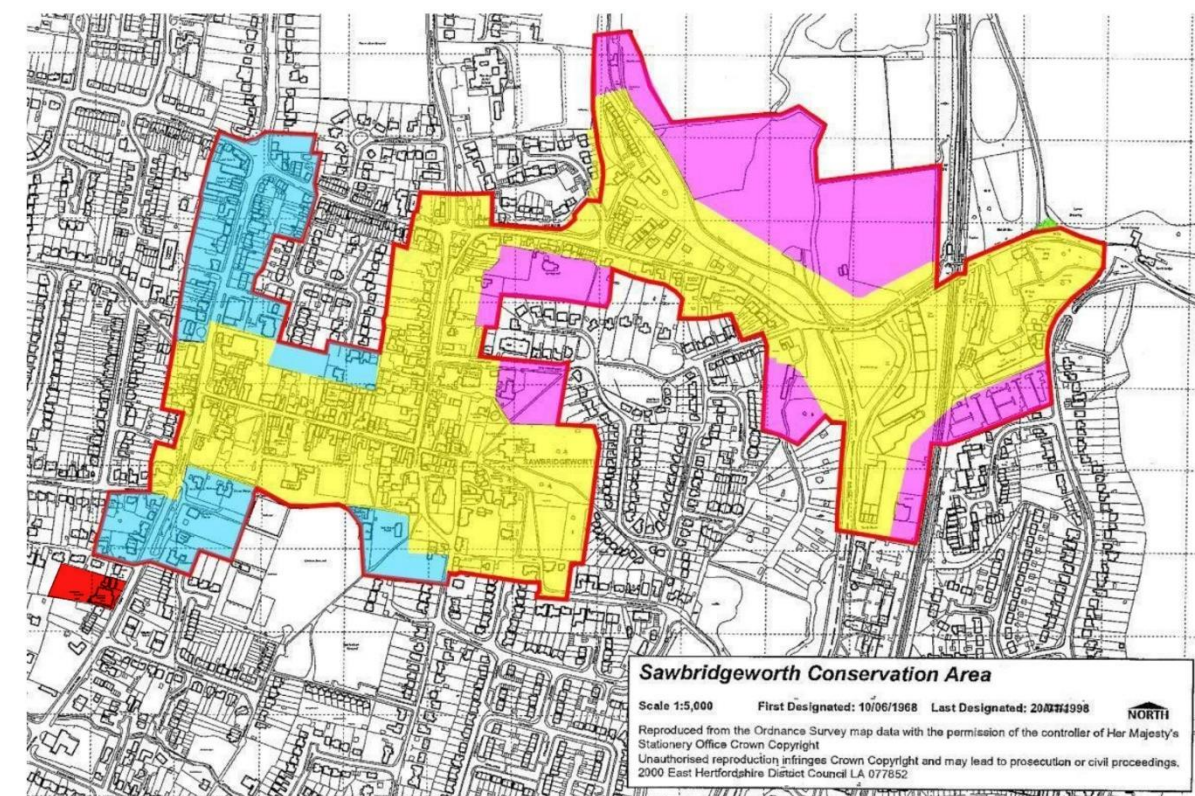
Extract from Conservation Area Appraisal

'The principal features of Sawbridgeworth Conservation Area are:

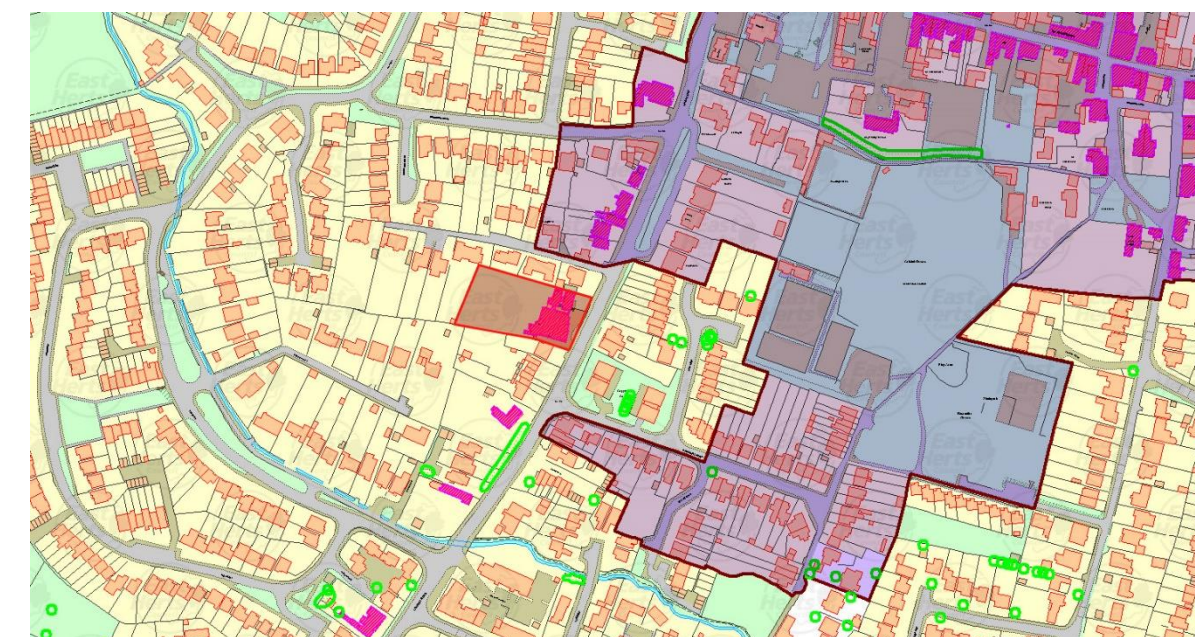
- *The medieval core of the town as defined by Bell Street, Knight Street, Church Street all meeting at "The Square"*
- *The church and large sylvan churchyard in the centre of the town*
- *Fair Green, a sylvan and tranquil open space and Vantorts Road*
- *The river valley and canal side maltings, a significant example of early industry*
- *The Rivers Nurseries, an early specialised nursery, serving large country houses and developing through improved transport links*
- *The winding, semi-rural Station Road and the old mill group around the lock*
- *The rich vein of historic buildings of many eras throughout the town and their architectural quality. Including the inns which recall the importance of London Road and the coaching era, surviving agricultural and maltings buildings which recall the importance of these two industries to the town. Showing the local vernacular traditions adapted over time to different architectural trends and philosophies*
- *The many fine trees which contribute to the character whether in public or private space*
- *The archaeological significance of the area'*



Church as viewed from the boundary of the Conservation Area next to the Maylins Drive junction with London Road



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| — | Current Conservation Area boundary | ■ | Additions to Conservation Area in 1998 |
| ■ | Conservation Area as designated in 1968 | ■ | Exclusions from Conservation Area in 1998 |
| ■ | Extensions to Conservation Area in 1981 | ■ | Church site |



Extract from East Herts policy map. Church site bounded red. Conservation area shaded purple. Listed buildings hatched pink. TPOs shown green

4. DESIGN APPROACH PRINCIPLES

The Grade II listed church and schoolroom of 1862-63 are an attractive and prominent architectural feature along London Road, the main arterial road through Sawbridgeworth. The interiors are relatively plain, but they are enhanced by several attractive details, such as the exposed roof structure, corbels, and paired columns. There are however several issues with these buildings in terms of accessibility, use, maintenance, comfort, flexibility, circulation, and safety as set out in section 1 of this report.

The architectural style of the 1911 Classroom block is somewhat dissonant with the original church and schoolroom. The original windows have been replaced with white PVCu type. It is understood that the central east window of the classroom block replaced an original east entrance doorway. The 1911 classroom block has ongoing problems with damp ingress, safety concerns for fire escape, small, inadequate rooms which are not configured to provide flexible use of space and problems with heating as most spaces are uninsulated. It also has a split floor level with internal steps which presents accessibility issues. Unfortunately, the classroom block does not provide suitable, good-quality spaces for many user groups and organisations. The split-level arrangement between the church and classroom block results in suboptimal use of the buildings. It is not easy to main the north of the building due to its proximity to a substation.

Even if the thermal performance of the classroom building was able to be upgraded, the many and varying other issues make refurbishment a suboptimal long-term option which would not meet the church's aims to provide flexible, accessible and energy efficient space.

The modern 1970/90s kitchen/toilet extension has no architectural merit and its poor-quality design has a detrimental impact on the historic church, causing harm in heritage terms.

The interrelationship and of all current buildings is problematic from an accessibility and safeguarding point of view and the buildings as a whole lack an accessible welcoming entrance area. There is also poor transition between internal and external spaces, with the buildings generally 'turning their back' on a substantial and attractive graveyard and church garden space.

The church design brief includes (but is not limited to) provision of:

- a welcoming entrance foyer with refreshment area
- sensitive alterations to the sanctuary to provide an enhanced more flexible accessible worship space
- a flexible, multi-activity hall for various church and community activities
- flexible meeting rooms, office, and counselling space
- good quality well sized storage and modern and accessible kitchen and sanitary facilities
- improved car parking layout and better safety for pedestrians
- improved landscaping to the forecourt and access to the gardens from the buildings
- a highly sustainable new building
- energy efficiency enhancements to the existing 19th century buildings

Given the barriers posed by the existing 20th century buildings, the above project vision, and historical significance and architectural quality of each building, the most appropriate design response is to:

- Largely retain and refurbish the 1863 church and former schoolroom
- demolish and redevelop the classroom and kitchen blocks to create a modern, accessible, flexible and energy efficient new extension that complements the 1863 church and fulfils the project vision

5. ENGAGEMENT

There has been extensive pre-application engagement with the Local Authority and local community. A well-attended public consultation day took place at the church in January 2024. Details of the consultation day and how the feedback received has informed the project are included in a separate document as part of the planning submission. Refer to the Statement of Community Involvement. There was widespread support for the designs and no objections were voiced by those attending the event.

East Hertfordshire District Council has also been extensively consulted, firstly via a pre-application enquiry submitted in May 2023, and subsequently with a follow-up meeting in February 2024 where the updated designs were presented to the case officer and heritage officer. Detailed discussions took place around how the latest designs had addressed comments received in the May 2023 pre-application response. The case officer and heritage officer provided in principle support for the designs, with some suggestions made regarding a few heritage design details, which have now been addressed.

The Local Highway Authority has also been consulted via a formal pre-application enquiry process. Details of this engagement are included in a separate Transport Scoping Note with appendices. There was in principle support subject to additional work being carried out, which is now complete.

Historic England was also consulted in February 2023. Historic England advised that the project was outside their remit to advise, due to the nature of the project, and that they were happy for East Herts to be engaged directly on heritage matters.

Refer to Layout section for commentary on heritage engagement for the church refurbishment.



Client's Lego concept model provided at the public consultation event to help attendees visualise the proposals



6. AMOUNT

The proposals seek to enhance the existing accommodation by providing accessible flexible and sustainable new community space. A net increase (215m²) of floor area is proposed, but this is for enhancement of use of the buildings. No significant intensification of site usage is envisaged by the church.

Existing Buildings

1863 Church (including Hall/former schoolroom)

Ground floor	345 m ²
Balcony	49 m ²

1911 Classroom Block

Ground floor	65 m ²
First floor	65 m ²

1990s kitchen block

Ground floor	78 m ²
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Total Floor Area	602 m²
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Proposed Buildings

1863 Church (including Hall/former schoolroom)

Ground floor	345 m ² (retained)
Balcony	49 m ² (retained)

New community hub

Ground floor	315 m ²
First floor	108 m ²

Demolished Classroom and kitchen block

-208m²

Total Floor Area	817 m²
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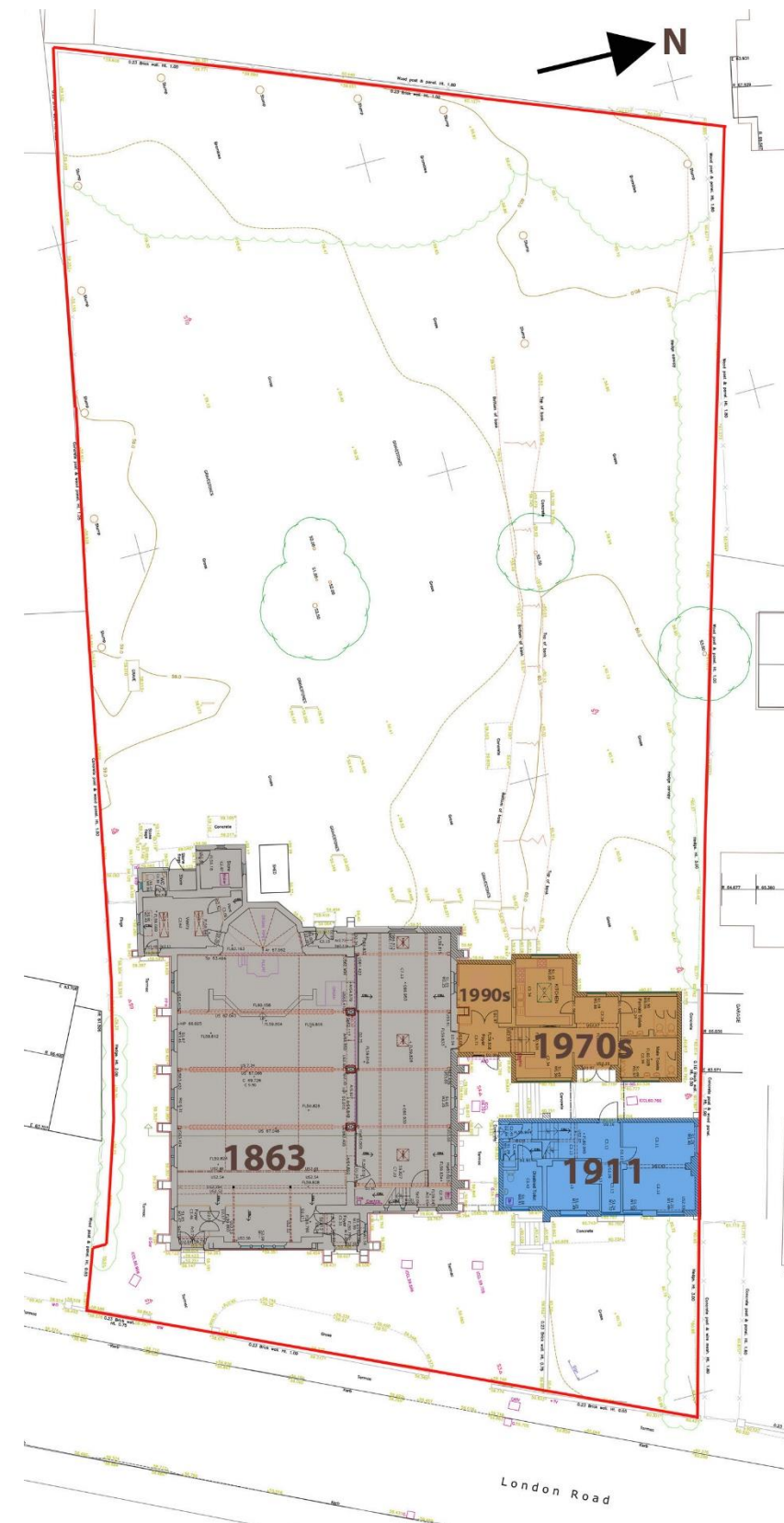
Increase in Floor Area 215 m²

7. LAYOUT

Existing Site Layout

The existing site plan opposite shows the relationship of the 1863 church, 1911 classroom block and 1970/90s kitchen block. The nature of the inter-connections and level changes between the three buildings account for several of the issues experienced by users of the buildings. The 1911 classroom block and 1970s kitchen and WCs are only accessible via steps. The gardens are accessible via the passageway to the south of the church, or via a stepped, narrow, and convoluted passageway between the 1911 and 1970/90s buildings.

The buildings don't provide accessible step-free access to the graveyard and church garden space. The arrangement also creates poor quality, dark, enclosed, and intimidating external spaces, which coupled with poor natural surveillance also represent a health and safety and security risk.



Existing site plan



7. LAYOUT (continued)

Proposed Site Layout

In contrast to the existing site layout, the proposed layout creates a simple linear link between the church and new building, providing a welcoming, light foyer and circulation space. The glazed link foyer also provides views through the building, from the site entrance to the graveyard and gardens, and affords direct accessible access to the attractive church gardens and graveyard.

The new building will be set at a floor level corresponding to the church, providing level access across all buildings at ground floor level.

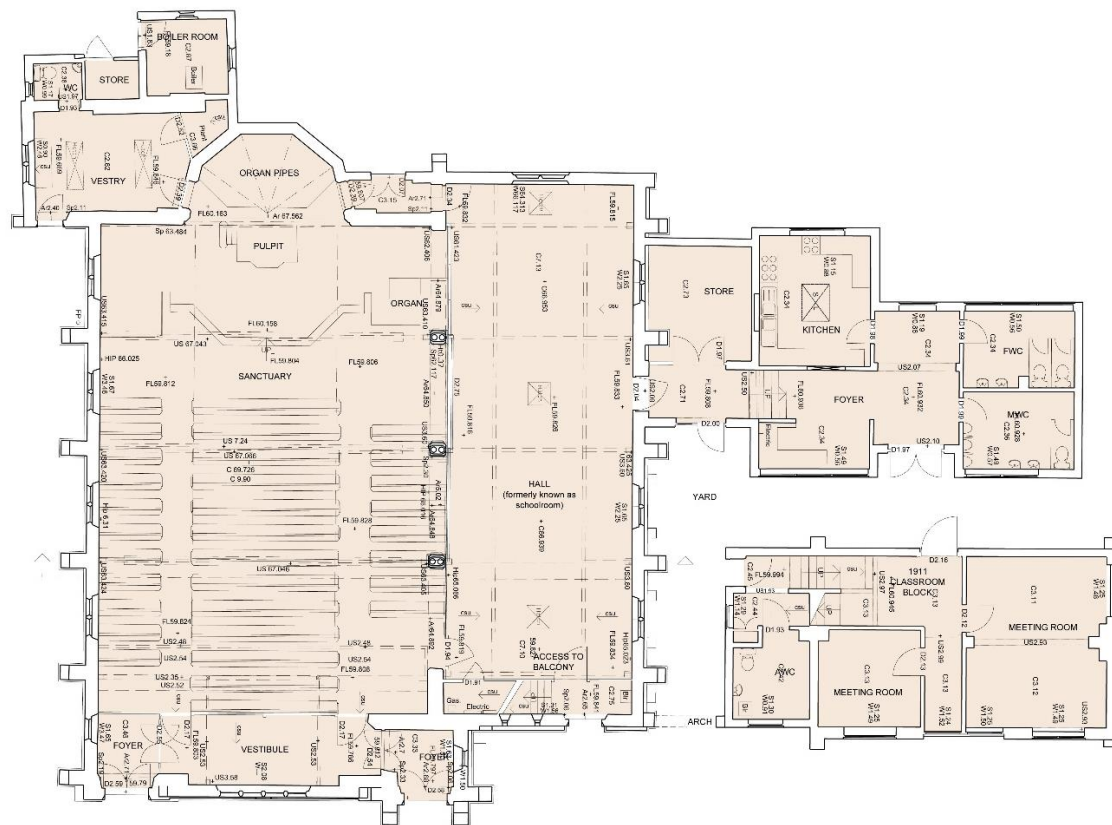
The new halls and foyer all have direct and accessible access to the outdoor spaces. It is proposed to provide a small secure play area to the west of the new hall for children's groups, from which access is also available to the existing grass amenity space arranged.

A new access path is provided to the northern boundary. This enables maintenance access along the full length of the new buildings, with space to erect scaffold when needed for routine maintenance. (This is not possible with the current buildings due to the proximity to the boundary and substation)

No works are proposed within the sensitive graveyard area and a radar scan has confirmed locations of below ground voids.



7. LAYOUT (continued)



1863 Church building Layout (proposed refurbishment)

The **existing** ground floor plan is shown above. As noted in Section 1, the current sanctuary and hall arrangement poses numerous issues for a 21st century church which requires flexible, accessible, well heated, and well-lit space.

To address these issues, it is proposed to make some carefully considered changes to the interior of the 1863 buildings.

At pre-application stage, the Local Authority conservation officer and case officer were consulted. Extracts from the written pre-application response are listed below with responses as appropriate, demonstrating how concerns have been addressed where possible. Please also refer to minutes of the February meeting in the appendix.

Reference should also be made to the Heritage Impact Assessment and Statement of Significance by Statement Heritage Ltd for an assessment of impact of the changes on heritage grounds.

Several of the elements which are proposed to be removed are understood to be non-original and some of the proposed changes will result in the buildings being returned to their original design. Furthermore, the removal of 1990s store and construction of a glazed link along the northern elevation of the hall will serve to improve daylight to the hall (original window reinstatement) and return the original symmetry of openings to the hall, which are positive heritage enhancements.

1. Removal of Pews to improve accessibility and flexible use of the space and enable new underfloor heating installation

LPA initial response extract - 'On balance the removal could be acceptable but, options to retain some of the pews, even in a different configuration, should be looked at'

CPL Response: It is proposed to retain the central pew at the rear of the sanctuary which backs onto the vestibule. In addition, two other pews are proposed to be located either side of this central pew, as indicated on the proposed ground floor plan. This approach was agreed with the heritage officer.

2. Removal of Organ and console as organ is no longer used, is not original and is in poor repair

LPA initial response extract - 'Despite not being contemporary to the original building, the organ is a significant fixture of the church, that positively contributes to its character. Its removal would result in harm to the significance of the building and not enough information has been provided on the benefits of its removal at this stage. The application states that the removal would be subject to further investigation. It is suggested that the feasibility of restoring the organ and the possibility of moving the console to a more suitable location are assessed.'

CPL Response: An Organ assessment has been commissioned by experts Harrison and Harrison Ltd. The organ is in a very poor state of repair, has not been used for over ten years, and is not intended to be used in future worship. Repair would be very expensive and not justifiable, and funds are better directed to essential refurbishment works where the benefits to the church and local community are practical.

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the exposed organ pipes and timber panelled encasement at the base could be retained in-situ as a feature of the space. The organ console will be removed and stored. The lead pipes below the stage will be removed as part of the stage removal works. On removing the stage, it will be necessary to construct timber infill panels at low level to the retained organ, to close the gap left by the stage. The new panelling will be constructed to match existing.



3. Removal of the Dais and pulpit to improve flexible use of the space and circulation

LPA initial response extract – 'Even though the dais and pulpit are redundant for the current service practice, they have strong evidential value, they reflect the historic practice and layout of the church and their loss should be avoided.'

CPL Response: The dais significantly constrains flexible use of the sanctuary. Given the proposed removal of the organ, removal of the existing heating system and repair of the baptistry, it is not feasible to retain the dais. It is

not considered to be of particularly high-quality workmanship. The dais area was significantly modified in the 1950's when the organ was moved from in front of the pulpit to the side of the church (current location). Large elements of the dais were replaced to accommodate the large amount of piping required to be installed for the pipe organ. The planned works to the baptismal pool, which leaks and is not fit for purpose, would result in significant modifications to the dais in any case, rendering any historic value impaired. The new underfloor heating system would also need to be installed underneath the dais, which is built on top of the floor, requiring removal of the dais to create an efficient new heating installation. Consideration has been given to using new movable/demountable stage sections to offer flexible use and layout.

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the dais removal could be supported.

The pulpit is located on top of the dais, which is to be removed, so the pulpit itself will also need to be moved. In the current location of the pulpit, it is proposed to have a new flexible movable stage area. Due to the bulk and size of the pulpit, it would be difficult to retain it at the west end of the sanctuary (in addition to the organ elements noted above) without impacting flexible use of the space. The architectural context and relevance of the pulpit is somewhat lost if it moved to other locations in the sanctuary, as would be the case if it was moved elsewhere in the buildings. It is therefore proposed to remove the pulpit from the sanctuary. It is also unclear how easy it would be to move the pulpit in one piece, due to its size and weight.

4. Removal of Sliding Screens and overhead panels so that the hall can act as an extension to the sanctuary space, providing more flexibility and improved access.

LPA initial response extract – ‘they are not deemed to contribute positively to the character and special interest of the church and their removal can be supported.’

5. Removal of dado panelling at base of sliding screens so that the hall can act as an extension to the sanctuary space, providing more flexibility and improved access.

LPA initial response extract - ‘options for partial, rather than complete, removal of the panelling or its reuse within the building should be looked at’

CPL Response: Consideration has been given to this request. Circulation along the full length of the columns between the hall and sanctuary is important for flexibility and access. The dado panelling along the sliding partition is built into the end of the pews. Removal of the pews will leave significant scars in the panels which would look unsightly and detract from the appearance of the building if reused. See photo below of where a pew was previously removed. It is therefore proposed that all dado panelling at the base of the sliding screens is removed and not reused. At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the removal of the dado panelling at the base of the sliding screens would be supported. Refer to meeting minutes for detail.



Dado panels at base of sliding screens with pew indentations (left)

6. Update balcony panelling which is unsafe and out of character

LPA initial response extract - ‘The replacement parapet could either be solid timber panelling like the existing or a more visually permeable timber balustrade’

CPL Response: Solid timber panelling is proposed due to privacy concerns to ladies sitting on the front row. Stained pine with boards arranged vertically has been considered, to match the design of existing church panelling. It is suggested that the design of the replacement balustrades is secured by condition to any Listed Building Consent, as structural input will be required at technical design stage.

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the design of the replacement balcony panelling could be conditioned. Refer to meeting minutes for detail.

7. Baptismal pool replacement –

LPA initial response extract - ‘Further details on the existing and replacement baptistry should be provided’

CPL Response: Details and photos were provided to officers prior to the February 2024 meeting. The baptistry location and design is now shown on the floor plans and photographs are below. The current construction is tiled concrete blockwork and the heating pipe runs around the bottom of the baptistry. The pool leaks and is hard to heat. It is proposed to replace the pool with one of similar size and layout, located in the same place as existing. The design of the new baptistry will be subject to technical design and site investigation including the existing foundations. It will likely be a tiled finish, applied to either an insulated GRP or tanked masonry structure to reduce heat loss. A new fixed section of stage will be installed around the new baptistry, constructed from timber frame and plywood, including removal timber covers. It is suggested that the design of the replacement baptismal pool is secured by condition to any Listed Building Consent, as structural input will be required at technical design stage.



At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the existing baptismal pool could be removed and replaced with a modern pool of broadly the same size and location.

8. Replace Lighting with modern energy efficient type

LPA initial response extract: ‘there are no objections to their replacement. Works required for rewiring should be undertaken in a way that minimises the loss or scarring of historic fabric and the location of cables and switches show be designed to be discreet and inconspicuous.’

9. Replace heating system to improve energy efficiency and replace unsightly heating pipes

LPA initial response extract - 'No details of the proposed system have currently been submitted. There are no objections to the removal of the existing pipes and radiators and the replacement can be supported in principle.'

CPL Response: A new underfloor heating system is proposed to the sanctuary and hall. A refurbishment system is proposed which can be installed over the top of the existing concrete floor in the hall, and over the existing timber suspended floor in the sanctuary. In the sanctuary, existing floorboards will need to be removed, insulation fitted between floor joists (essential for the heating system to function) and floorboards replaced. Preliminary discussions have taken place with Nu-Heat. The underfloor heating will give about 15kW of heat into the floor area (using Lo Pro Max with an approximate 22mm build up on the floor). 25kW of radiators around the walls will be required to supplement the underfloor heating. The system will be zoned appropriately for energy efficiency. The proposals will need to be finalised at technical design stage and it is suggested the final design could be conditioned if required.

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that new underfloor heating system would be supported and that there was no need to retain existing floorboards.

10. Installation of Secondary glazing to improve energy efficiency / reduce heat loss

LPA initial response extract - 'internal reveal would allow for the installation of secondary glazing. Painted aluminium frames would be suitable a suitable material in this instance.'

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that secondary glazing frame colour should harmonise with the space and **not** be white. Furthermore, the frames should be installed within the window reveal if possible, and mullions/transom locations should relate to existing traceries. Details could be reserved by planning condition if necessary.

11. Additional works unknown at the time of the initial pre-application enquiry

It is proposed to form a new door opening between the hall and new foyer by modifying an existing window opening. This will improve circulation and fire escape which is currently inadequate. In addition, it is proposed to refurbish or replace (like for like) several external timber doors which perform poorly in thermal, draught proofing and security terms. Refer to proposed plans and elevation drawings for details.

At the February 2024 meeting with the case officer and heritage officer it was agreed that the external doors at the base of the balcony stairs and to the vestry could be refurbished and the west lobby doors replaced if necessary. Justification should be provided for the new door opening to be formed between the hall and new foyer. (See later section in this document)

Proposed Plans

This section should be read in conjunction with the proposed plan drawings submitted with this application.

The proposed **ground** floor layout (shown below) provides a welcoming entrance foyer, refreshments and circulation space arranged along the northern wall of the retained Hall (former schoolroom) with access between the new and existing building provided via the existing and new door to the north wall of the Hall.

The existing brickwork and buttresses will be expressed as a feature within this new space. A series of rooflights will provide daylight to the new foyer and existing hall. buildings. A new kitchen with associated servery counter will provide refreshments into the space. Accessible unisex WC accommodation is provided, replacing the current poor-quality provision.

The new halls are subdivided such that the space can be configured as smaller individual meeting rooms or one large multipurpose hall. A small church office provides a staff presence at ground floor level. Removal of the sanctuary pews and stage will enable more flexible use of and better accessibility in the retained church.



The proposed **first** floor plan features a separate good sized meeting room. A small office opens onto a breakout space / mezzanine balcony with views down into the double height foyer. Accessible unisex WC accommodation is provided for the convenience of the first-floor occupants.

8. SCALE AND MASS

The early English style of the church, with its detail and juxtaposition of form (i.e. tower, sanctuary gable, set back hall gable), has a quality that should be celebrated. The 1911 classroom block made some attempts to reference certain features of the church, with limited success, as noted earlier in this report.

It is considered that that the new extension should be of contemporary design, avoiding pastiche, yet respectful to the 1863 church building. A new building that is simple in form, yet employs high quality materials and carefully conceived details, would be distinct from the church yet subservient and complementary.

This approach would create a juxtaposition between the old and new buildings - the new building would be appreciated in its own right - whilst the contrast in style would celebrate the attractive composition, form and detail of the 1863 church.

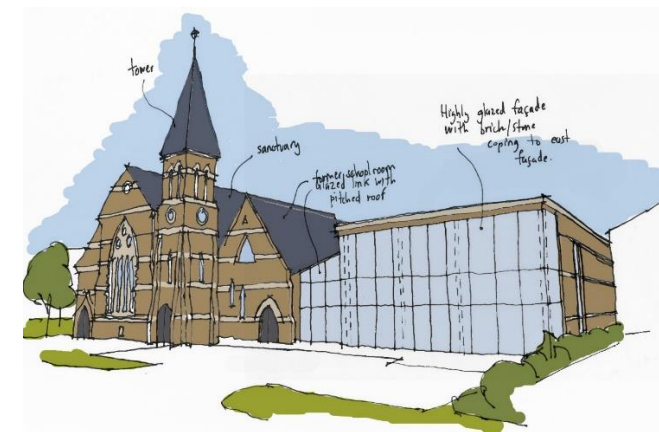
The 1911 classroom block sought to reference the gable of the church. This feature, together with the pitched roof, resulted in a dominant scale which was almost equivalent to the church gable itself, and dwarfed the former schoolroom building.

It is proposed to provide an extension of a scale and form which is subservient to the 1863 buildings.

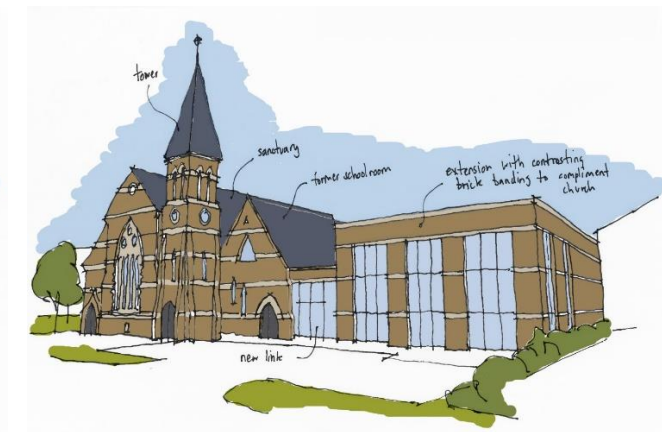


Alternative approaches to materiality, solid (masonry) and void (glazing) have been explored as indicated on the sketches opposite.

It is considered that a more solid extension, connected to the church by a lightweight glazed link is an appropriate response, providing clear distinction, balance and hierarchy to the façade composition.



Option A - Highly glazed approach considered **but not pursued**



Option B - More solid approach with lightweight link. **Favoured approach to be refined further**

The Option B conceptual approach was refined during design development and further engagement with the client and Local Authority.

In addition to careful consideration of scale to the main eastern (street) elevation, the scale of the new building has been considered regarding its relationship to the rear of the church and neighbouring residential properties. To provide a subservient scale to the proposed building as seen from the street, it is necessary for the new building to extend further west into the church gardens, compared to the existing 1990s block, to provide the enhanced community space.

No 1 Maylins Drive has living rooms that extend close to the site boundary. The mass of the rear halls has been designed as single storey to create a low eaves height close to the site boundary with 1 Maylins Drive. Duo and mono-pitch roof options have been explored, as indicated on the initial concept sketches below. The new building will be set back from the rear elevation of the church to retain the existing buttresses and express the former schoolroom. Separate section drawings and a daylight/sunlight/shadow assessment show the building form is respectful to neighbouring amenity.



Duo-pitch hall roof option
Early concept sketch approach not pursued



Mono-pitch hall roof option
Early concept sketch – approach pursued and refined

8. SCALE AND MASS (continued)

The impact on the residential neighbours has been carefully considered with respect to impact on daylight, sunlight, and shadow. A Daylight and Sunlight consultant was instructed to model the existing and proposed scenarios to assess the impact on the neighbouring residential properties in line with industry standard good practice guidelines.

The results of the analysis showed that:

- Daylight, none of the neighbouring windows will see any noticeable impact caused by the proposed extension.
- Sunlight, none of the neighbouring windows will see any noticeable loss of sunlight internally.
- Overshadowing, none of the neighbouring gardens will see any noticeable loss in terms of sunlight access.

Reference should be made to the Daylight and Sunlight Report by Syntegra Consulting, and the proposed section drawings for further detail.

9. APPEARANCE



Proposed head-on street view from London Road



View looking northeast along London Road

It is considered appropriate to face the new building in buff brickwork with contrasting light/dark brick banding to reflect the use of materials on the church. On the street facing east elevation, different options were explored for the design of the large double height windows. In liaison with the heritage and case officer it was agreed that a large opening subdivided in four, with stone surround and mullions, was a sensitive yet contemporary response, referencing the design of the large east facing window of the church. Deep window reveals will add depth and relief to the façade. Although no visible eye level, the roof is proposed to be finished in slate grey metal, to harmonise with the slate grey of the existing church.

10. SUSTAINABILITY

An important part of the church's brief is to create an energy efficient new building, and to improve the energy efficiency of the existing church. An Energy Report accompanies this application and can be referred to for detail.

Although the existing classroom building creates numerous issues around access, heating, safeguarding and general maintenance, refurbishment of the existing buildings was considered at feasibility stage. Due to the nature of the existing classroom block construction and inaccessible, inflexible layout, it would not be a good long-term sustainable solution to refurbish. This is summarised in the Energy Report as follows:

The existing extension to the original church is not in good condition and, due to its age, it lacks insulation throughout. Given its age the existing extension is most likely of single skin construction or has a small, uninsulated cavity and the roof is not lined and lacks any form of thermally proficient construction which compounds the issue of heat loss. The proposed extension, however, will be constructed to achieve higher than

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statutorily required standards of insulation and air permeability. This, combined with the use of renewable and energy efficient heating systems will ensure a highly sustainable and energy efficient building – one that, as above, delivers a 51% reduction in operational carbon. The lack of insulation makes the existing extension an unsuitable candidate for installation of energy efficient heating systems such as heat pumps and ventilation heat recovery systems. The restrictions that the existing construction places on retrofit thermal efficiency (solid walls, solid ground floor and issues with addressing thermal bridging between these elements and any retrofitted insulation) mean that much greater thermal efficiency can be achieved in the proposed new extension than by retrofitting the existing. LHC heating and ventilation systems are only economically viable for buildings with good thermal performance as they are significantly more efficient in highly efficient buildings and provide much better occupant comfort. We would expect that an extension that significantly exceeds the current Part L 2021 specification requirements, such as this one, would achieve a carbon payback (where the operational carbon savings offset the increased embodied carbon of its construction) well before the end of its theoretical design life.

The energy efficient new designs will feature the following:

- 51% improvement over Part L of the Building Regulations (operational carbon)
- Ground or Air source heat pumps (no fossil fuels)
- Low U-values for all thermal elements and high levels of air tightness
- Energy efficient services and low energy (LED) lighting
- High levels of water efficiency

10. SUSTAINABILITY (continued)

The energy efficiency improvements to the refurbished church buildings will include:

- New underfloor heating system to replace poor efficiency existing heating system
- Sensitively designed secondary glazing to reduce heat loss through historic windows
- Refurbishment/Replacement of external doors to improve draught proofing and reduce heat loss
- New energy efficient low energy (LED) lighting

11. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

A preliminary ecological assessment and roost assessment has been submitted with this application. This sets out how the proposals will achieve 10% biodiversity net gain in line with local and national planning policy requirements. The roost assessment concludes there to be some potential roost features in the 1911 classroom block. However, as the demolition of this building is not proposed for around 2 years' time, during which time new roosts could be established, it is proposed that further bat survey work is carried out closer to the time of demolition, and secured by planning condition, as advised by the consultant ecologist.

All existing trees are proposed to be retained. Existing hedgerow to the northeast of the site will be retained. A small area of hedgerow will be removed to enable construction of the new halls along the northern site boundary. Its loss will be compensated with new high biodiversity planting, including two new street trees.

12. ACCESS AND TRANSPORT

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the proposals will resolve numerous access issues presented by the existing buildings. The access improvements and features can be summarised as below:

- The new extension provides level access into the retained church buildings - currently stepped.
- The new extension floor level has been designed to match that of the 1863 buildings to provide level access across all buildings at ground floor level.
- The new first floor accommodation is accessed by ambulant stair and wheelchair accessible lift
- All circulation, accesses, doors, and facilities to comply with Part M of the building Regulations
- New fully accessible WC
- Improved access through the retained 1863 church buildings due to removal of pews, screens and stage
- Improved, wheelchair accessible access to the graveyard and new play/terrace spaces
- Clear and simple circulation flow across the site including from London Road to the church gardens.
- Direct access from new hall spaces to external areas
- New disabled car parking bay

The car park in the forecourt is to be improved by providing more space for turning, slightly widened access, marked out parking bays, a dedicated disabled parking bay, and separate pedestrian and vehicle access for safety improvements. Additional cycle parking space is also proposed, as is an electric charging point for cars. Further detail, along with pre-application engagement with the council's Highways team, can be found in the submitted Transport Note and associated appendices. One of the existing site accesses will be provided with a dropped kerb and crossover (currently lacking on one of the two accesses), improving the current Highway situation.

