



CHURCH OF ST PHILIP AND ST JAMES

OXFORD CENTRE FOR MISSION STUDIES, WOODSTOCK ROAD, OXFORD, OX2 6HR

HERITAGE STATEMENT

To support an application for Listed Building Consent to increase the height of the glazing of north and south transept screens, to construct a new stair to provide access to the north transept upper floors and to adjust the internal layout of the north side extension and vestry areas to allow its use as an independent annex.

1. Introduction

St Philip and St James was listed Grade I in 1968. The building is one of the principal works by the architect G. E. Street and was built 1860 – 62. It was constructed as a parish church within the St. Giles area of north Oxford and reputedly designed to seat a congregation of 600. Since 1970 it has no longer been in use for Diocesan worship and St Margaret's Church, the former Chapel of Ease, became the parish church instead. St Philip and St James is now used as a study centre by the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS). In 2015 Planning Permission 15/01867/FUL and Listed Building Consent 15/01868/LBC were granted to re-organise the interior of the building and construct an extension on the north side to enable the continued use of the building for teaching and study.

The proposals included new sanitary and kitchen areas to enable St Philip and St James to support an increasing number of students and visitors. Although specific to the current requirements of OCMS, the alterations are intended to be equally viable if ownership of the site were to change and an alternative user were to occupy the building.

The permissions granted consent for the following alterations:

- 6no. WCs within the former vestry including a WC for persons with a disability
- A separate and improved kitchen
- A student common room
- An extension on the north side to provide an additional teaching facility
- Renewal of the screen to the first floor level of the north transept
- Provision of a first floor level screen to the south transept
- The addition of a mezzanine floor within each transept

The works were started in 2016 with the construction of the south transept mezzanine and screen. The work has been very successful and has created an additional study area and allowed relocation of the administrative staff from the north transept.

In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic forced OCMS to re-appraise the way students are taught and interacted with. This led to a reconsideration of how the building is best used. The alterations requested in this application are to enable greater flexibility in the use of the building.

2. Historical Context

St Philip and St James is an Oxford landmark. Its spire is clearly visible from the city centre. The church is located on the east side of the Woodstock Road at the junction with Church Walk. In the early 19th century this was an area of fields and allotment gardens. The site is enclosed by a low buttressed stone wall within which is a grassed churchyard. The churchyard was not used for burials. There are a number of mature trees on the site which are known to have been planted after the consecration of the church.

In 1850 it was felt that a new parish church was needed for the expanding area of north Oxford. Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford approached G. E. Street who was the Diocesan architect to prepare designs. The church was designed to meet the ideals of the Oxford Tractarian movement. It has a cruciform plan, is an imposing design and assimilates many of the ideas explored by Street in his preceding works. The design includes elements of continental inspired Gothic detail, coloured stone banding and a varied and rich use of materials internally. The building's plan was arranged to provide the congregation with an unhindered view to the altar which took "precedence over parson and pulpit".



Contemporary 19th
century drawing of the
church

A summary of the construction timeline of St Philip and St James is as follows:

- 1854 First scheme proposals
- 1860 Construction contract signed
- 1860-62 Building project
- 1862 Building consecrated on 8th May
- 1864-65 Belfry and spire completed
- 1876 New vestry constructed
- 1912 Vestry extended
- 1921 Memorial chapel added
- 1970 Church decommissioned and made redundant
- 1983 Building acquired by OCMS
- 1985 Church converted to a study center

A more detailed chronology of the building's construction is provided at the end of this statement.



This image shows the completed church without trees along the Woodstock Road. The building in the foreground is the former vicarage.

3. Architectural Description

The architect of St Philip and St James was George Edmund Street (b. 1824 – d. 1881). Street was for 5 years a pupil of Gilbert Scott, the leading ecclesiastical architect of the Victorian period. A 19th Century architect's training included the study of medieval design and an appreciation of continental architecture. In 1850 Street was appointed architect to the Diocese of Oxford and moved to live in Oxford where he produced the initial designs for the churchwarden of St Giles. Street is best known as the architect of the Royal Courts of Justice in London. The design for St Philip and St James is powerful, if not engaging and builds upon his work at All Saints Church in Maidenhead and St James the Less in Pimlico.

St Philip and St James has a striking presence. The building has a cruciform plan and is orientated east to west. The main entrance is from the west side with doors opening onto the Woodstock Road. The west elevation is symmetrically arranged between narrow side aisles and rises to a pointed gable. A shallow, central porch forms the entrance. Above are three lancet windows and a rose window at the apex. Tall buttresses rise at the sides of the elevation.



West elevation of St Philip and St James

The architectural style of the church has been referred to as ‘vigorous’, ‘neo-medieval’, ‘shadowless’ and ‘Gothic- revival’. The internal layout consists of nave and aisles facing east towards the chancel. At St Philip and St James this format is enriched by the Tractorian ideal of the altar prominently visible for all to see.

St Philip and St James has a richly decorated interior. The nave is characterised by its size, waggon vaulted roof, marble columns and aisle arcading. The aisles are narrow and for circulation rather than seating. The emphasis is on the nave which is spacious and arranged to theatrically focus on the chancel arch and altar. The sight lines are kept clear of obstructions. This was a contrast to the Puginesque principle of keeping the altar in a separate, more sacrosanct and sometimes even enclosed space.

The external design of the building was described in the 19th Century as ‘shadowless’. The masonry openings are constructed as a layering of planes which cast fewer shadows. The walls are flat with their character formed by the variation in textures and colours. The building is constructed in hammer dressed Gibraltar limestone quarried from Shipton- on- Cherwell and has horizontal ashlar banding from Red Aberdeen Sandstone. The chancel and clerestory window openings are cut from smooth ashlar blocks with a minimum of moulding.

St Philip and St James is also ‘vigorous’. The buttressing, steeply pitched roofs, prominent transepts, large bell tower and broach spire give a Victorian confidence, swagger and energy to the building.

The positioning of the church is significant. The building is placed close to the north boundary of the churchyard. This bias gave maximum open space on the south side of the building. The south side faces the town and is where the porch for the congregation’s daily

use is located. The south side has the most composed elevation. It is the elevation intended to be seen. There is a large and eye-catching rose window to the transept gable.



South elevation of the church

The north side of the building is not readily accessible. It is largely hidden by shrubs from the neighbouring gardens and is not approached by any paths. The north transept was intended for the organ. Scars from the bellows can still be seen. It is the location of the original vestry and where historic extensions and alterations have already been made to the building.

A complete architectural description of St Philip and St James would form a thesis in itself. The most important points to note are:

External character

- The blending of medieval and continental themes
- A steeply buttressed tower rising above the transept crossing
- Deeply louvered belfry
- A tapered eight- sided broach spire with projecting lucarnes
- Lancet windows with plate tracery
- A contrasting layering of stonework textures and colours
- Prominent rose window to the south transept
- Semi-circular apse at the east end
- Walls in roughly squared Gibraltar Stone with Bath Stone dressings
- Pink banding from Red Aberdeen Sandstone

Internal character

- Large nave with narrow side aisles
- Painted timber waggon vaulted nave roof
- Large arched opening to chancel
- Stone vaulting with marble column shafts and polychromatic ribs to chancel
- Polished granite columns and carved capitals to nave arcading
- Stained glass windows from the workshops of Clayton & Bell, Charles Kemp and Burliston & Grylls
- Original pulpit and lectern
- High quality craftsmanship of hinges, locks and door furniture
- Reredos and Minton tiling around altar
- Portraits of G.E. Street and Bishop Wilberforce carved in stone above fourth bay of each aisle

4. Heritage Assessment

Planning Permission 15/01867/FUL and Listed Building Consent 15/01868/LBC were granted in 2015 to construct an extension on the north side of St Philip and St James and to reorganize the interior of the building.

The following alterations are now requested to these permissions. The alterations relate only to the internal layout of the approved extension, former vestry areas and transept screens.

North side extension

- Omission of the proposed study gallery.
- Alteration to the internal layout to provide a single conference room.
- Relocation of the reception area.
- Provision of an additional entry point in the glazed south elevation of the extension.

Former Vestry areas

- Provision of an internal corridor to link the kitchen with the north side extension.

North and south transept screens

- To raise the glazing of the transept screens to the full height of the transept openings.
- Renewal of the screen glazing with acoustic glass to minimise noise and sound transfer between the transepts and the nave.

North transept

- Replacement of the open tread iron spiral stair providing access to the mezzanine level with an enclosed staircase rising to the new archive and storage floor.
- The proposed stair is to be enclosed with Oak framed joinery and glazing to match the character of the existing joinery of the west gallery and conference room.

The proposed alterations relate to the works granted Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent in 2015. They will not cause the loss of any fabric or harm the listed building. The installation of high level glazing within each of the transept arches can be supported by the structure of the existing screens. The glazing will be designed to avoid contact with the

column capitals at the sides of each arch opening. A low profile metal channel fixed to the curved soffit of the stonework of the transept openings will hold the edges of the glass panels. All fixings are to be made into existing masonry joints.

The external appearance of the church will not be affected. The external appearance of the approved extension and consented alterations to the former vestry areas will only be changed by inclusion of a single doorway on the internal side of the new construction. This doorway is not visible from the Woodstock Road.

5. Heritage Impact Summary

In seeking to understand how St Philip and St James might best be developed for contemporary use a number of options were explored. These have included the idea of development on the south side of the church, inclusion of a basement, various designs for a north side extension as well as internal galleries in the aisles. The approved scheme evolved following consultation with English Heritage, the Planning and Conservation department, Building Control office and neighbouring St. Antony's College.

The applicant has always sought to involve all relevant statutory bodies. Pre-application enquiry 23/02081/LBPAC was submitted to Oxford City Council and the proposed alterations were discussed with the council's Conservation Officer. Historic England and The Victorian Society were consulted. The responses received supported the proposals concluding that increasing the screen heights was an acceptable way of addressing the issues of sound and heat transfer within the building. The alterations proposed to the internal layout of the extension and former vestry areas are considered minor and do not affect the historic fabric or special interest of the building.

As was stated with the previous applications, a secure future for OCMS is the best way to ensure St Philip and St James is maintained, looked after and will remain a home for the Study of Christianity. It will also enable the greater appreciation of G. E. Street's church by a greater number of people.

6. Listed Building Description

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: I
List Entry Number: 1047073
Date first listed: 29-Jan-1968
List Entry Name: Church of St Philip and St James
Statutory Address: Church of St Philip and St James, Woodstock Road
County: Oxfordshire
District: Oxford (District Authority)
National Grid Reference: SP 50890 07557

Details

SP 50 NW 24/97

WOODSTOCK ROAD (East Side) Church of St Philip and St James

29.1.68.

I 1862. By G.E Street. One of the best known of Victorian churches. Considered one of Street's principal works. Coursed rubble with bands of brick. Broach spire with clock, the spire built 1864-66. Four bay nave with aisles on either side and apsed east end. Granite nave piers with heavily carved capitals.

Listing NGR: SP5089307562

HISTORICAL TIMELINE FOR CHURCH OF ST PHILIP AND ST JAMES

St Philip and St James	G. E. Street
1824	Born on 20 th June in Woodford, Essex
1850 Land given by St. John's College	Appointment as architect to the Diocese of Oxford
1852	Relocation to Oxford
1854 Initial design and proposal	
1855	Return to London and birth of son
1857	All Saints Church, Maidenhead
1859	St James the Less Church, London Pimlico
1860 Construction contract signed with Joseph Castle of Oxford for £8,000	
1862 8 th May: Church commissioned by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce	
1863	Crimean Memorial Church, Constantinople
1864-65 Belfry and spire completed	H. G.L. Drinkwater employed as assistant to Street (until 1873)
1866 Last nave capital carved by Thomas Earp	
1867 Font cover commissioned	
1868 Churchyard wall constructed	Law Courts, London
1869 Organ transferred from Merton College to north transept	
1876 Choir vestry constructed	
1881	G. E. Street dies. His son Arthur Edmund Street (1855 – 1938) continues the practice from London.
1882-85 Reredos altered by Burlison & Grylls	
1883 Construction of St. Margaret's Church, Chapel of Ease by H.G.L. Drinkwater	
1896 Rood beam erected by Micklethwaite & Clark	
1899 Minton tiled floor replaced with black and white marble paving	
First electric lighting	
Communion rail and gates by F.C. Eden	

	Oak benches fitted within south transept
1904	Nave roof painted
	South transept furnished as Lady Chapel by Sir Charles Nicholson
	Alterations to arch opening to south aisle
	New high altar
	Organ restored and raised up with new clergy vestry beneath
1905	Vestry becomes Advent Chapel
1910	Aumbry brass door by Bainbridge Reynolds
1912	Vestry extension
1921	St. Mary memorial Chapel added to south transept by Sir Charles Nicholson
	War memorial in north transept arch
1955	Altar and triptych in Lady Chapel by Laurence King
1960	Sacrament house in Lady Chapel
	Figures added on rood
1964	Organ moved from north transept to west gallery
1970	Pews from All Saints replace chairs
1980	Church decommissioned and made redundant
1983	Building acquired by OCMS
1985	Conversion to Study centre