

Design and Access Statement

St Mary's Church Room,

The Street, Sole Street, Cobham, DA12 3AX

Proposed New Entrance Extension and Replacement of Services Block

November 2022

Introduction

This application for Planning Consent is for a single storey extension to St Mary's Church Room in place of an existing entrance and kitchen wing.

Planning permission was granted for this exact scheme on 29th October 2019 (Application ref: 20190822), but this permission has recently expired.

Description of the Site and Use

St Mary's Church Room is one of three churches in the Church of England benefice of Cobham, along with Luddesdowne and Dode. This pre-fabricated building was erected in 1889 to serve the growing community of Sole Street, built as a mission hall for St Mary Magdalene's Church, Cobham. Church services are held at St Mary's every week and the space is used by many local community groups as well as being hired out to individuals. In 2016, Gravesham Borough Council included St Mary's Church Room in its 'List of Assets of Community Value'.

The main building is a timber-framed structure with a painted corrugated iron clad roof and walls. There is a small porch on the south side and a lean-to services block on the west side, housing a small kitchen and toilet. These extension blocks are not part of the original building, but are similarly timber framed and clad in corrugated metal. The original timber windows were replaced with uPVC windows a number of years ago, with the exception of the original stained glass east and west windows, which are in poor repair. The building stands on a small site of just over 200m². The area around the building has been covered in concrete paving.

St Mary's Church Room is positioned at the centre of the village of Sole Street, on the corner of Sole Street and Manor Road. Although this building is not listed, there is a grade II listed house north of the site and another south of the site, on the opposite side of Manor Road.

Planning permission for a different scheme, replacing the Kitchen/WC wing and entrance, was granted in 2014. This permission has since expired.

Statement of Need

The existing building does not meet DDA requirements as the entrance porch is too small to accommodate the turning circle of a wheelchair. The WC cubicle is also too small for disabled access and fittings are in need of updating. The present kitchen is small and its limited facilities restrict the use of the hall.

The fire escape for the hall is presently situated on the north side of the building, in the centre of the gable end on this side. This area is concealed behind a curtain and used as a store, but chairs can only be stacked to the sides because the exit needs to be kept clear. Furthermore, the steps outside this door and its restricted width make the door unsuitable for wheelchair access.

At present the site is accessed via steps from Manor Road and via a ramp from the corner of Manor Road and Sole Street. The ramp does not meet current building regulations requirements and has no handrail. The concrete paving around the building has an unattractive appearance and has blocked vents to the floor structure.

The corrugated metal roofing material of the building has rusted and the corrugated walling is in need of repair. The replaced uPVC windows are of a domestic style and do not suit the ecclesiastical and community use of the building. Local residents are unhappy about the unsightly appearance of the building and have raised funds for its improvement.

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The proposal is to replace the existing kitchen/WC wing and entrance porch with a new larger wing. The new entrance porch provides a wheelchair accessible lobby to the main hall and to a new wheelchair accessible WC cubicle. A new kitchen will be provided along with additional storage space. These facilities have been positioned along the west and south-west sides of the building, matching the positions to the existing, and allowing the form of the principal worship space to remain unaltered.

The existing uPVC windows are to be replaced by timber windows incorporating an arched detail, picking up on the design of the existing east window. The east and west stained glass windows are to be restored.

A new window opening will be provided on the south side of the hall in place of an earlier door, previously removed and blocked up. On the north side, a window towards the east end is to be replaced by a new escape exit door. The existing exit door will be removed and a high level window provided in the northern gable. This enables the niche to northern end of the church to function satisfactorily as a store.

As the corrugated sheet metal roofing and external walling is part of the building's character, this will be renewed and the new extensions are to also be clad in the same material. The exception is the roof of the new kitchen block which will be an EPDM (single ply roofing membrane) finished flat roof. A flat roof was chosen here to prevent the west window being blocked. This kitchen wing is tucked behind the entrance wing so the roof will be barely visible from Manor Road and not at all visible from Sole Street.

New paving at the site entrance on the corner of Sole Street and Manor Road will improve the accessibility of this currently tight corner for pedestrians. A new ramp from this point to the building entrance improves accessibility to the building. Proposed planting beds along the two pavement boundaries will enhance the landscaping around the site.

Summary

The proposed extensions are required to improve the accessibility and usability of St Mary's Church Room. The renovation of the external materials is designed to enhance the aesthetics of the site and restore the character of the building.

Photographs of the Site as Existing



Sole Street elevation (from the south-east)



Manor Road elevation (from the south)



North-east corner



South-west corner with existing extension block