



The problems that we face, and the facilities we need

1 Principal Characteristics

St Owen's Church is a Grade 1 listed building in the village of Bromham, Bedfordshire within the Diocese of St Albans. It is situated in a privately owned park which once belonged to Bromham Hall. There has been a church on this site for at least 800 years and there are signs which indicate that there may have been an earlier Saxon building here.

It is approached through the park from the main village road – a distance of some 500m. There are no adjacent buildings that could supplement the facilities at the church.

The main entrance is the South door, which, in common with the West and North doors, has steps down into the Nave. Wheelchair access is only available by use of cumbersome removable ramps.

Both North and South porches still have a functional upper room reached by an outer staircase; this feature is rare if not unique. The one over the North porch now houses the boilers for the heating system, while the one over the South porch is used as longer-term storage.

The North porch has been fitted out as a simple kitchen for producing coffee and tea after services or meetings; however, this is not adequate for serving meals and there is no separate hand-washing facility. The only toilet is a Portaloo situated outside the North porch.

2 Statement of Need.

Our main aim is to reach out to the community, to increase the numbers of those attending worship, and to make our church grow. To do this we need to be able to open up the building for seven days a week and to offer facilities for young people with families. We have seen how this works in other churches but to make it happen here we have identified the following essential requirements:

- Lavatory facilities
- Meeting room
- Improved access – in particular, permanent disabled access
- Kitchen facility
- Facilities for use by Bromham C of E Lower School

Lavatory Facilities

The present Portaloo does not afford disabled access; moreover, whilst hand cleansing gel is provided, cleanliness is not easily achieved. The PCC considers that permanent toilets, including disabled facilities and conventional washbasins with internal access from the church, are a priority.

Meeting Room

Our capacity to reach out to the community in Bromham was improved by the substitution of chairs for pews in 2008: an immediate solution to the need for more flexible space, but by no means the total solution. Moreover, the enhanced use of the Nave has demonstrated even more clearly that there is a need for more space to permit the full range of activities for which we have identified a growing need in the Village. We need room to hold activities at the church site both during the week and on Sundays during service times.

Access

Dignified access for wheelchair users can only be provided by a permanent change to floor levels thereby obviating the need for temporary ramps. The change proposed would also enable us to hold funerals where Health and Safety requirements dictate the use of a coffin trolley.

Kitchen facility

There are at present a sink and tea making facilities in the North porch. We are unable to prepare hot food on the premises which critically limits the service we can offer to the community. When hot food is brought in it can only be done with the attendant risks associated with hot and heavy vessels. New facilities would enable us to redress this and are vital to support our outreach programme.

The Village School

Supported by the Head Teacher at Bromham C of E Lower School, we wish to encourage a closer bond with the school so that children can come to the church for workshops, activities and worship. The proposal would enable them to use the premises as a field centre for religious and historical topics. At present we can only accommodate one or two classes at a time. The Church Nave plus the proposed extension would give us the capacity to cope with a whole year group from the Lower School.

3 Preferred Solution

The Parochial Church Council, in consultation with the church architect, conservation bodies and other interested parties put the following proposal to the Local Planning Authority.

Extension along the North Wall of the Church

An extension built along the outside of the North wall of the church with access, both internally and externally, via the North porch providing a community meeting room, toilets and kitchen. The floor of the extension would be at the same level as the existing nave, with the floor level in the North porch reduced to the same level obviating the need for steps. Similar treatment of the South porch with a sloping path down to the revised entrance would enable wheelchairs and coffin trolleys ease of access.

Bedford Borough Council granted Planning Approval on 26 January 2015

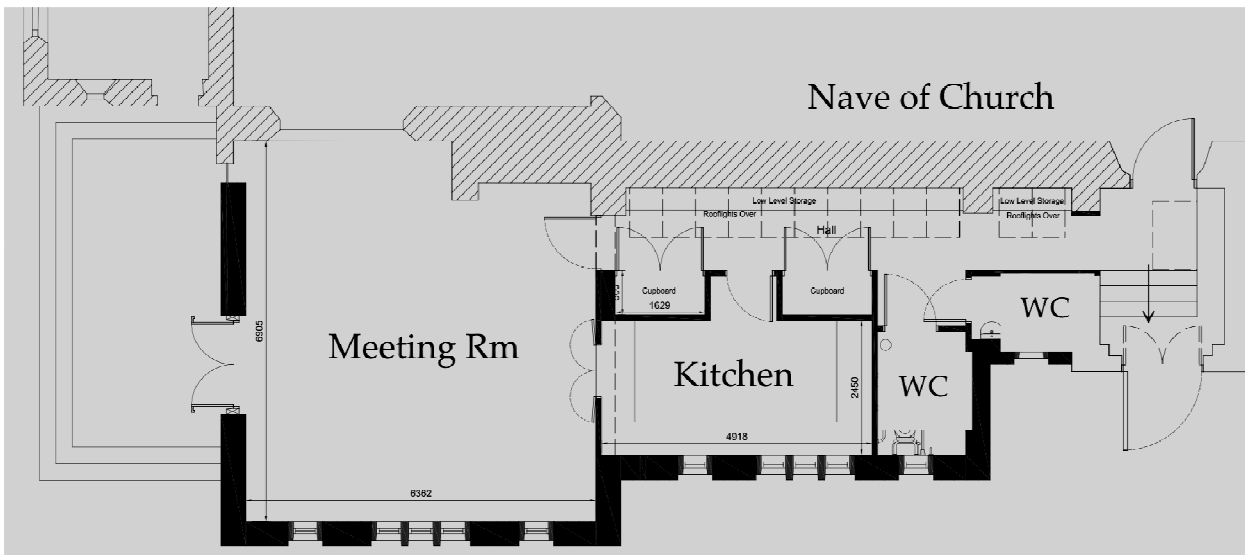
Costings

A provisional budget provided by our architect and quantity surveyor suggests an overall cost in the region of £425,000 (plus VAT of some £87,000 to be reclaimed from the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme).

Illustrations of the scheme follow on the next page



Artist's Impression of North Elevation



Plan of extension