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Hinckley URC The Borough Hinckley LE10 1NL

Extension to hall's entrance and minor alterations

Design, Access and Heritage Statement (rev A)



Introduction

The site is located on the west side of The Borough as it changes into Regent Street. The site is situated within the main shopping area of Hinckley. The paving to the road suggests that pedestrians have some priority and there are fully pedestrianised streets close at hand. The church is identified as one of the key buildings in The Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area, which was designated by the council in April 1986. The area is centred on Castle Street and Regent Street.

The area around the church building is quite small, consisting of a forecourt, a narrow side path, a slightly broader shared drive leading to a small car park for church use and a raised landscaped area to the rear. On the north side of the landscaped area and hall are a series of former small WCs and an old kitchen, now converted into store buildings. The front forecourt is mostly taken up with the steps and a curved access ramp with some planting beds incorporated inside new red brick walls. There is limited parking on site with space for three cars in the southern drive.

Site history

The 1886 OS map shows the main road layout of the relatively small town, including The Borough, Regent Street, Market Place, Coventry Road, Castle Street and Bond Street. Other roads surround the site, including Stockwell Head, Trinity Lane and Station Road. The (congregational) chapel is present, together with a number of other chapels, and St Mary's and Holy Trinity Anglican churches. The site of the castle is indicated to the east. The bulk of the developed area of the town is to the north and east with fields to the west and south, although there is some ribbon development, including the gas works, down Coventry Road.

The general form of the chapel matches the present arrangement, although some changes appear to have been made to the hall with the addition of the separate smaller buildings to the north-west. The immediate area shows a mix of small dense buildings in narrow plots at a variety of orientations to the roads.

The 1901 OS shows little change close to the chapel, although some additional residential development shows the town expanding in most directions.

The 1925 OS plan shows a fairly similar pattern.

By 1938 (published after WW2), the town is expanding further to the west but the area around the site remains generally similar.

It is clear from the surrounding area that newer large office and small/medium retail buildings have been constructed immediately to the north, south and west of the chapel replacing the original smaller scale buildings. At some stage, the covered yard has been enclosed and a refuse compound constructed.

Heritage Statement

The church was constructed between 1866 – 68 to designs by F Drake of Leicester. It is in a Ruskinian Venetian Gothic style predominately of multi-red brick in a mix of bonds, though with a

decorated warm buff ashlar stone front. It has hipped and gabled slate roofs linked to the two storey halls and then to a further wing to the rear and side.

It consists of a large church, a number of halls, meeting rooms, a kitchen, small offices, WCs, a covered yard and a series of stores (converted from old kitchens and WCs) with a small basement for the boiler. The rear wing contains The Vine bookshop. Some of the halls are regularly used by a dance school.

Recent conservation work to the stone façade has taken place giving this a much improved appearance and greater longevity.

The interior of the church has a large horseshoe balcony on slender columns with curved and flat plaster ceilings, rendered and panelled walls with timber floors and carpet finishes. Two new spiral staircases give access to the balcony which also link to the halls. The interior of the halls is more utilitarian with simple forms and hard wearing finishes, though the upper hall has a shaped ceiling partly following the roof form. See also existing plans and elevations.



Interior of chapel



Interior of upper hall

The chapel is accessed by ramp and steps from The Borough to the south east and is surrounded by commercial buildings on the other three sides. There is a small car park on the southern side and a narrow access path to the north, the latter providing level but hidden access to the halls. The ground level rises to the rear giving a series of level changes internally which make inclusive accessibility complex but achievable.

Hinckley URC is listed at Grade II. The halls and rear wings are subsidiary buildings linked to the chapel and form part of its curtilage, so they are effectively listed Grade II as well, though with lower significance. The chapel has a 'Moderate-High' significance which is equated with those buildings that warrant listing at Grade II because they have elements whose values contribute to the building's status as a nationally important place. We would assess the halls as having a 'Moderate' status as a series of buildings that might warrant inclusion on a list of local interest structures or that make a positive contribution to a conservation area but that are not of listable quality, other than their association with the chapel. These are buildings whose elements make a positive contribution to the way a place is understood and perceived, primarily in a local context. It

would be fair to identify the covered yard and refuse enclosures as having a 'Low' significance which includes elements that detract from or make a negative rather than positive impact on the significance of the historic building and its setting.

Issues, impact and mitigation

The hall has a rather poor means of escape in case of emergency. The existing lean-to roof over the storage area, and the refuse area enclosure, are of poor quality and appearance. The entrance to the halls is tucked behind the chapel making its presence to the street very limited. The proposals seek to address these issues and include the removal of low quality additions and their replacement with new diminutive forms finished in higher quality design and materials which nonetheless create a presence facing the street.

The works connect only to a moderately significant element of the listed chapel. They do not directly affect the more significant building, though they therefore do cause a minor impact on the setting of the church as a whole. However, they also remove elements which are causing harm to its significance and replace these with new and quality additions which are intended to improve and to enhance the appearance of the chapel.



View towards hall's entrance
NB - Doors not visible!



Exterior of storage area showing asbestos cement roof sheeting and timber compound

In addition, there are clear community benefits to the proposals which mitigate against the minimal impact.

General massing & materials

Most of the properties in the immediate vicinity are medium and large commercial buildings of a range of sizes, rhythms and storey heights. These are mostly linked in terraces, though the four storey office to the north is a detached form. The tall two-storey church stands apart from these in the street scene as a medium to large building, though made of a series of smaller elements arranged in an 'L'-shaped plan.

The buildings surrounding the site are constructed of a mix of shades of red brickwork with some stone facades and detailing and timber and aluminium windows. The large office block to the rear is of brickwork with aluminium windows set in a concrete frame. The pitched and mansard roofs are finished in slate or tile but there are a number of flat roofs with some tall parapets.

Most of the church fits well into the historic palette of materials with its stone façade and brick side and rear walls, and it also has Welsh slate roofs. The windows are of coloured glass in leaded lights in a mix of diamond and rectangular patterns set in metal sub frames. The hall is all built in a red brick and has matching slate roofs. Its windows are a mix of PVCu or metal framed units. There are few boundary and retaining walls in the area other than those close to the church which are of red brick with blue brick copings and heavy steel railings. However, there is a timber boarded enclosure around the refuse compound and a corrugated asbestos cement roof with translucent rooflights to the covered yard.

Planning history

There have been a few applications on the site in the current record. In 1988, permission was granted for the as built access ramp and staircase at the front of the church and kitchen extensions to the hall. This included an unnecessary Listed Building Consent as the chapel benefits from ecclesiastical exemption. In 1989, the record shows a refused application for change of use to offices although it is unclear whether this is a search or database error. No documents are available to view on these applications.

Locally, there have been a wide range of applications for change of use, shopfronts, signage, ATMs and minor alterations, since 1975.

Consultation

As the scheme alterations are relatively minor and do not impact directly on the listed chapel, other than improving its setting, it was felt that no pre-application consultation to seek the views of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council or Historic England would be wholly necessary.

Consultation has also taken place with the church meeting and specialist committees to develop the brief and the proposed scheme having reviewed a series of options which would have had a greater impact.

Options appraisal

See original (redacted) Feasibility Study. The decision to opt for the simplest extension was made as it met the bulk of the requirements in an affordable project. It also achieved a balance between

minimising the impact on the significance of the chapel whilst generating good visibility of the hall's entrance.

Proposals

To demolish the existing covered yard and refuse compound and to erect a new broader extension which wraps around the corner of the boiler room steps to give greater prominence to the hall's entrance. The new enclosing walls will use bricks to match the hall/boundary wall with similar copings. The roof of the new extension will be of a stainless steel standing seam finish with a series of aluminium framed roof lights. The new "front-facing" doors to the hall will be fully glazed aluminium framed doors, protected under a canopy roof supported on a steel post. Cast aluminium gutters and downpipes will be mounted within the site boundary.

Biodiversity, ecology, trees and archaeology

The site is not identified as one possessing any geological, ecological or biodiversity significance. The churchyard has never been licensed for burials. There is one tree on site in the rear garden with some shrubs/hedges here and in the front ramp. None of these is impacted by the proposals.

Transport and refuse

No increase in usable area is generated by the proposals, so there will be no impact on parking demand. Parking for three cars is available on site and this will be retained with one space marked for accessible parking. Secure cycle (and buggy) parking will also be provided within the new extension. There is controlled street parking on The Borough and Regent Street. The site is very well served by public transport with a number of bus routes passing on the adjacent road network, including Regent Street (Stands R1 – R3 serving Routes 7, 7A and 8), Coventry Road and Bond Street. It is also within easy walking distance of the Britannia retail centre and other town centre car parks.

The existing refuse compound is located close to the hall's entrance and detracts from it. The proposal is to relocate the compound to the southern car park but not create a new enclosure. The bins will be stored neatly and secured against the southern wall of the hall within a much larger space and with easier access to wheel them to the roadside on collection days.

Energy Statement

The proposal is too small to trigger a full energy statement. The new extension floor, walls and roof will be constructed with high levels of insulation and limited glazing. The existing gas boiler

which serves radiators is to be retained for the time being. All new lighting will be ultra-low energy and existing fittings are identified for progressive upgrade.

Flood Risk

The site is located outside the 1 in 1000 flood risk zone. Although the adjacent road network has some indication of higher risks of surface water flooding, the building floor levels are raised at least 1250 mm above The Borough.

No additional hard surfaced areas are proposed and therefore no FRA or special measures are required.

Fire Safety Strategy

This strategy is to be considered alongside the planning application. Fire safety has been considered early in the design stage. It will be further developed for submission under the Building Regulations and will fully comply with Approved Document Part B Vol2 (2022 amendment).

The property is a two storey church and community hall built in generally fireproof construction as detailed above. It is approached up a drive, ramp and steps from a main road in the town centre of Hinckley. The nearest fire station is on Leicester Road (0.4 miles and under 2 minutes away) with additional stations at Nuneaton and Lutterworth. Fire Brigade access is unaffected by the proposals with a good street network and easy locations for appliance parking, including the driveway to the south of the church and hall.

Fire escape from the rear parts of the existing building is not currently ideal as escape staircases land in an enclosed rear garden with limited access to a final place of safety. The proposals are to create a new secure corridor and lobby, and thus provide a much improved emergency escape route.

The church and hall is a multi-purpose building providing community users and the worshipping community with good facilities. The upper floor is approximately 5.6m above street level but a maximum of 4.4m above adjacent ground levels.

The new corridor and lobby will form a protected area providing a safe alternative route out of the building from the rear of the site. Fire proof construction to the surrounding walls will give 60 minute protection to the compartment and all windows and doors to key rooms will be rated at or upgraded to give 30 minute smoke sealed enclosure. The circulation compartment will also form a protected route for potential fire-fighting access and rescue.

A smoke and heat detection and alarm system is installed in the halls, covering all main rooms. The detector/sounders/beacons are on dedicated mains powered circuits. Some emergency lighting and escape signage is provided to the main rooms and will be installed in the new corridor and lobby. The detection and emergency lighting systems are well-maintained and monitored, and tested regularly.

Suitable portable fire-fighting equipment is installed in the building. This is tested annually. Advice will be given to occupants that only small scale fires should be tackled using these, with confirmation that safe escape is the best policy.

Crime

It is intended to design a safe and secure environment for users of the building and the surrounding community to reinforce crime prevention in the area. Consultation will be undertaken with the Crime Prevention Officer to ensure that all possibilities for designing out crime will be incorporated.

The secure safe environment is to be achieved by controlled access, secure ground level windows and doors, good lighting design, natural surveillance (where possible), and CCTV.

The site is defined by a relatively closed front aspect with brick retaining walls. The remaining boundaries are secured by brick walls reinforced by fences or the walls of adjacent buildings. They are clearly defined with obvious defensible space. Several areas which provided secluded space for activities which the Church does not consider appropriate have either been designed out or secured.

The main building entrances have simple access control systems and the new hall door will be enhanced to improve security.

To create a safe and secure environment, lighting design will be a crucial element that will deter crime and also enhance the building design and the environment for the users. This will be approached in two ways. Lighting is or will be provided to the building access points which will be high efficiency low energy lighting controlled by photo-electric cell, dusk to dawn timer switch and manual override. This provides an adequate level of illumination, co-ordinates with street lighting and prevents light pollution. Direct lighting is provided to the main site access, car park, main entrance and exit doors. All these will be fitted with vandal resistant fittings and wiring to minimise vulnerability. New internal circulation areas will be brightly decorated and well-lit to provide a safe and secure internal environment.

Any vulnerable ground floor windows and those easily accessible at high level are secure with lockable opening casements. The escape door will have a multi-point deadlocking system with

panic bars. All new lock cylinders will be to BS EN 1303 Grade 3 incorporating anti-drill resistance as standard.

The site is generally overlooked during the day and early evening, enabling some natural surveillance of the building. Improvements in appearance and level of use will create an environment which will deter vandalism.

The church has a CCTV system installed with four cameras monitoring the south and north access areas.

Access

The management committee and architects have reviewed the requirements for access and use of the building by people with all forms of disability. The buildings are intended to be reasonably accessible as required by the Equality Act. The designers are competent and very experienced in this aspect of design and provision.

Access to both the church and hall is provided by improved gentle ramps leading from The Borough to the main entrance doors with, in addition, steps to the church. The floor within the ground floor of the church and hall is set at a variety of level with easy ramps to give inclusive access to all parts of this level. The external and internal doors and internal corridors give wide and easy access to all spaces. The new enlarged lobby gives space for a buggy park to assist with another protected characteristic defined by the Equality Act. The first floor is served by “easi-go” staircases and includes alternate accommodation to that provided on the fully accessible ground floor. There are existing accessible WCs, one of which fully meets current guidance. Visual cues will be given to identify doors and handles and any changes in level. Visual and audible warnings are given in the event of an emergency.

This aspect will be further developed at Building Regulations stage and shared with the building management team.

Conclusion

The proposal is to demolish the two small sections of the building which are currently causing harm to the site’s significance. A new small scale extension is to be erected instead which also gives prominence to the hall entrance and enables better access to much needed, adaptable, beneficial, good quality community facilities. The new and refurbished building will be fully accessible and secure by design. It will begin the move to sustainable energy installations to reduce the carbon footprint and provide early warning of fire to ensure safe escape via a new clear and compliant route.