



JOHN D CLARKE ARCHITECTS

11299/das/apr

ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH EAST GRINSTEAD RH19 2DS PROPOSED NEW RAMPS AND STEP INCLUDING ASSOCIATED SERVICES DESIGN & ACCESS & PLANING STATEMENT

Site and surrounding area

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin is situated in Windmill Lane, in the northwest part of East Grinstead.

St. Mary's was built as the Parish Church for the expanding northern half of East Grinstead to provide the town with worship in the Catholic tradition within the Church of England. A tradition that has been upheld ever since. The first part of the church was built between 1891 and 1893 and a separate Parish was established in 1906.

The church shares a common site with St. Mary's Church of England school and the church hall. There are no physical boundaries between the various buildings. The church hall is located to the north of the church, behind which are timber huts which are understood to be used by associations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and St. Mary's Kidz Club.

St. Mary's school is on the south side of the church and wraps around behind the east side. Between the South Aisle and school buildings is a tarmac access drive and a well-tended lawn.

In front of the church is a tarmacadam area having vehicular access and egress. The tarmac also extends to the north and south providing car parking facilities for the school and church hall. Immediately to the west of the church, is a large Oak tree, which dominates the front area of the grounds.

The west boundary to Windmill Lane is denoted by a 1.8-metre-high Beech hedge with piers constructed of brick and tile, with decorative stone cappings to the entry and egress points. Immediately behind the Beech hedge is a notice board giving details of services, etc.

The foundation stone to the church hall was laid in September 1969 to replace the old wooden hut that was erected to replace the original hall that became St. Mary's School.

The building is not Listed and it does not lie in a Conservation Area.

Church particulars

The church was built to the designs of the Architect, W.T. Lowdell, over a 21-year period beginning in 1891, the Decorated Gothic Revival Church was consecrated in 1905.

The foundation stone was laid in July 1891 and the first portion of the church building, consisting of the Chancel and one bay of the Nave, was opened in August 1893. The following year, the organ chamber and one bay of the North Aisle was added. Two years after that, in 1896, the church was further extended by the erection of two more bays of the Nave. Consecration of the church took place in July 1905. The west end of the church was completed and consecrated on 18th November 1911.



JOHN D CLARKE ARCHITECTS

The church is long and aisled with a South Chapel. The copper-clad fleche marks the join between Nave and Chancel. It was built in three stages, the joins in the brickwork are easily visible.

The walls of the church are predominantly red brick with dressed stone gable copings, buttress weatherings and surrounds to window and door openings. The main roof is plain concrete tiling, as are roofs to the North and South Aisles and Sacristy. The turret over the crossing has plain tile hanging to its walls and a copper-clad roof and Spire. Above the southwest corner of the Nave, is another turret which houses a single bell. This turret is partially constructed of brick and stone with a timber superstructure surmounted by a small octagonal shingled roof. To the south side of the Sacristy is the Choir Vestry which has a parapeted flat roof.

The spacious interior with an elaborate tie-beam roof is faced in brick, except for the arcades of two contrasting stones. There is a broad blank area between the Arcade and the clerestory and there is no Chancel Arch; instead it is marked off by a low stone wall.

The Chancel has an east window set high to allow for a tall reredos.

Across both Aisles behind each pillar are half-arches extending across.

Particularly interesting features include the round pillars of blue pennant stone, the arches of local sandstone and the wooden lintels and corbels over the windows in the side Aisles. The stonework in the windows also shows the Gothic style and the development of 13th Century tracery.

The Vestry of 1928 by J. Turrill matches the rest of the built form.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the new ramps and step and associated extract fan and soil vent pipe outlets thru the roof as part of a broader internal re-ordering works. These improvements aim to create a flexible and inclusive space within the Church incorporating new kitchen and toilet facilities.

The project aligns with the Church's vision to become the hub of the local community and serve the parish more effectively. Currently, the Parish hall is operating at full capacity, frequently resulting in community groups being turned away due to lack of space. The proposed reordering of the Church will provide additional, much-needed space to accommodate a growing range of community services, alongside regular worship. The addition of toilets, a kitchen servery and a cafe area will significantly enhance the Church's ability to offer hospitality and support for both church and local community groups in a warm, welcoming environment.

The Church is used by disabled people with wheel chairs and families with prams, however there is no level access into the building. At present, disabled access is only possible with assistance and the use of temporary folding ramp. The proposal will provide a safe and independent access for all users and ensuring the Church is accessible for everyone.

The ramp has been carefully designed to minimise visual impact. It is symmetrical in layout, featuring a simple metal handrail and a matching brick kerb that complements the existing brick facade of the Church.