

ST MARK'S CHURCH, PEMBERTON, WIGAN  
Proposed reordering

WIGAN M.B.C PLANNING DEPT.  
APPLICATION REFERENCE

A / 14 / 80014

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## Design and access statement

### Introduction

This document provides a short summary of various aspects of the design and access provision. Reference should also be made to the more comprehensive Heritage Statement which accompanies this application. Two further statements were prepared in the course of applying to Liverpool Diocese for a faculty, the Statement of Need and the Statement of Significance, copies of which are appended to the Heritage Statement.

### The church

St Mark's is an evangelical church, located on Victoria Street (A571) within an established residential area, just to the south of Wigan town centre. The parish has a population of approximately 11,000. Alexandra Park lies to the south of the church and Ormskirk Road, to the north of the site, is a centre for shopping, retail, commercial and leisure facilities.

The site is rectangular with a frontage to Victoria Street and sides to Alker Street and Argyll Street. The rear faces an alley used for access. It has an area of 1,354m<sup>2</sup> and is enclosed by stone boundary walls, but with little external space. There is no graveyard. Surrounding properties are generally terraced housing dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The church was constructed in 1891-2 to designs by local architects Heaton and Ralph, the most prolific Wigan practice of the time, and built by CB Holmes of Wigan at a cost of £3,500. The Chancel and Vestries were added in 1901 and the tower completed in 1927. The church was reordered in 1988 when pews were removed from the rear of the Nave to make space for a hall, kitchen and toilets.

The layout is traditional Gothic Revival with Nave, N and S aisles, Chancel, Sanctuary, and South Transept. There is a tower to the south-east. The Chancel is fitted with choir stalls to each side with an organ chamber to the south. Internal walls are generally plastered, with stone piers and dressed arches. The Chancel walls are stone ashlar. The building was listed Grade II in 1983.

### The brief

The church is vibrant with many organisations and groups, but does not have a dedicated Church Hall, placing many demands on the church building. The brief was to reorder the church to create flexible spaces for the use of the church and community. Kitchen and toilet facilities were to be updated and the building made accessible to all, including wheelchair users.

### Design

The significance of the heritage assets was considered, to inform the design, in accordance with English Heritage's "Conservation principles: policies and guidance." The significance arises from several factors, including:

- Evidential (material evidence of the past);
- Architectural/aesthetic/craftsmanship qualities;
- Rarity and age;
- Intangible values (personal association, communal, spiritual)

Various aspects of the building were considered:

- Setting;
- Communal value;
- Building exterior;
- Building interior;
- Fittings and fixtures;
- General (other Wigan churches, other buildings by this architect);

which were then accorded a level of significance (high/medium/low/negative). This then informed the design.



There are only two interventions, with two window openings being converted to door openings:

- A South Aisle window will be adapted to gain access to the extension (and becomes internal);
- A North Aisle window will be adapted to form an emergency exit and provide direct wheelchair access from a new parking area.

In each case, the alteration is the minimum necessary, retaining existing window heads and reveals.

The alterations have been designed to be transparent and contemporary, so as to contrast with the historic fabric rather than to imitate it, and inserted into the existing structure with minimal impact.

The extension to the south is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the brief for new accommodation will not fit within the existing building, and many of the functions are required close to the entrance. Secondly, an extension facing Victoria Street would assist the connection between the church and community, which was given high significance in the heritage study. The siting of the extension does not detract from the existing setting which has been accorded low significance.

The extension is extensively glazed to maintain transparency and connectivity. It will allow external views of the existing fabric to be maintained. The extension itself is subservient to the historic fabric and its corners will "dissolve" through the use of frameless glazing.

Structural glass rooflights to the rear of the extension visually separate the new fabric from the existing and allow internal views of the south clearstorey. These rooflights will bring in natural light over the existing stone walls so that they may be clearly seen through the extension from Victoria Street, increasing transparency.

### **Access**

The site is well-served by public transport, close to major bus-routes, and is within walking distance of retail areas and Wigan town centre. Roads and pavements are paved and adopted.

The church currently has no off-street parking, and it is proposed to create a small car park to the rear of the church, using a small strip of land sandwiched between the church and the gable ends of adjacent terraced houses. Six spaces will be formed, two of them designated for wheelchair users.

Level access is to be provided to the main entrance off Victoria Street, and also directly from the car park via the new emergency exit door.

The main features regarding access provision (and other measures for disabled people) are:

- Wheelchair access is provided to the main front entrance, with a 1 in 25 gradient.
- The stepped access to the front entrance complies with Part M for ambulant disabled use, incorporates contrasting nosings and handrails are fitted.
- Two designated disabled bays are provided in the new car park to the rear.
- Level access is provided to the rear entrance, direct from the car park.
- All ground floor areas are accessible, except the Stores, Vestry and Sanctuary which are raised up by 2 or 3 or more steps. The chancel area is accessible via a new internal ramp with a gradient of 1 in 22. This means that everyone can take part in services, including the giving and receiving of communion independently.
- New first floor areas have been designed with staircases in accordance with Part M for disabled use. The use of each area is duplicated on the ground floor so wheelchair users may be accommodated via good management, so that lifts are not necessary.
- Wheelchair accessible toilets will be provided.
- Circulation spaces accommodate 1500mm wheelchair turning circles.
- A fixed induction loop will be provided within the Nave. Portable induction loops will be available for use elsewhere.
- Signage will be suitable for visually-impaired people.