

ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, KINGSNORTH, ASHFORD

Diocese of Canterbury

INTRODUCTION

St Michael and All Angels Church stands in the parish of Kingsnorth on the outskirts to the south west of the town of Ashford. It is at the centre of the Kingsnorth Conservation Area and the church itself is Grade I listed. It sits well back from the roadside within an extensive churchyard and is the most historically and architecturally significant building in the parish.

Most of the church dates from the late 14th century, and it has a simple layout comprising a nave, chancel, west tower and south porch. A late 15th century north chantry chapel had been demolished in the 18th century. The building is in the late decorated or early perpendicular style and is constructed in Kentish Ragstone with a clay tiled roof. The plain unbattlemented tower has an octagonal stair turret and brickwork repairs to the buttresses. The distinctive square headed nave windows are paired with small quatrefoils above and these some contain fragments of 15th century medieval glass, including the complete figure of St Michael. The interior is relatively plain, with a crown post roof structure in the nave and a very tall tower arch that contrasts with the low chancel arch.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The recent expansion of Ashford has led to the building of large new housing estates including Park Farm in Kingsnorth itself. The village has a primary school located near to the church but few other facilities. The church was attracting a congregation of about 100 for a normal Sunday service and the PCC was keen to be able to cater for children's needs as well as to expand the role of the church within the local community. They were unable to achieve this aim without carrying out substantial alterations to the building.

The church is in a shared benefice with St Peter and St Paul's church at Shadoxhurst about three miles away from Kingsnorth. Both churches are now members of 'Churches Together in Ashford' which is an umbrella group of 26 local churches of different denominations.



View of church from Church Road with new extension on the left

View of church from churchyard



THE PROJECT BRIEF

The PCC wanted to provide a meeting room, tea making area and accessible wc as well as a parish office, vestry, improved storage and new boiler room to enable the church to cater for community as well as religious events. It was not possible to achieve this within the existing building footprint as there are no aisles or transepts that could be adapted for such uses.

Another key aim was to reorder the church interior to improve accessibility by raising the circulation aisles to the level of the pew platforms, and to create a quiet area in the ground floor tower space by introducing a glazed screen within the tower archway which would also allow it to be used again as a main entrance. Although the proposals included moving the font and the modern organ, the altar was to remain in the chancel sanctuary. A new heating system, lighting installation and drainage connection were included under the overall project brief.

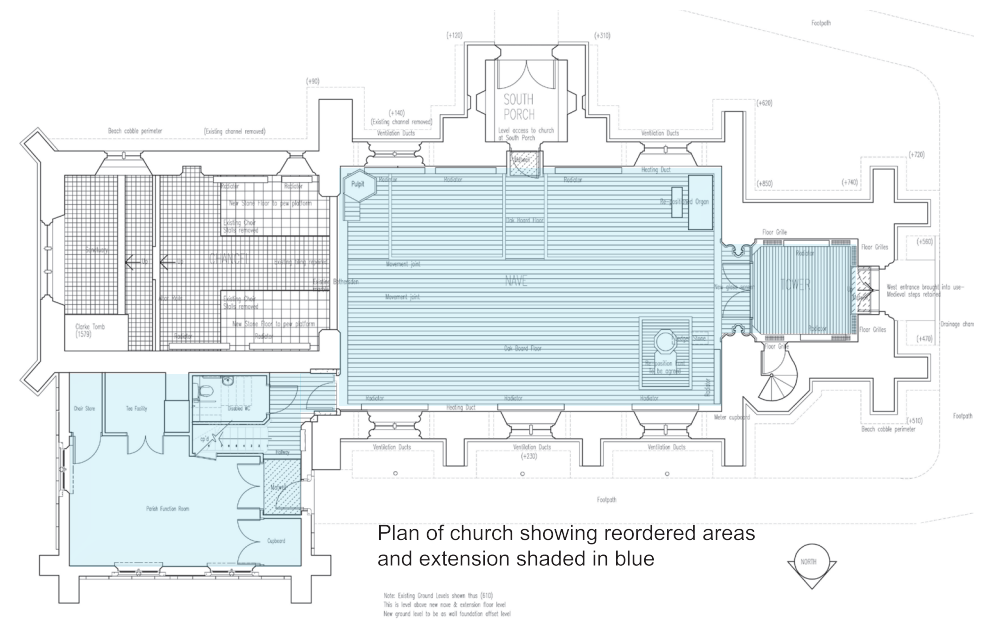
THE PROPOSALS

The only way that the additional accommodation could be provided was in an extension to the church and so the archway at the east end of the nave to the former chapel was unblocked to gain access to a two storey extension with an attic floor on the same footprint as the original chapel. This extension contained all the new facilities and had its own separate entrance from the churchyard. It was designed as a simple modern building, with a rendered finish, tiled roof and tall windows to reflect the characteristic square headed windows of the existing nave. Whilst from the exterior the windows suggest a single interior space, the central section was carefully designed to be blanked off to conceal the intermediate floor.

The main public spaces such as the meeting room, kitchenette and disabled WC are on the ground floor, whilst the church facilities are on the first and second floors. The entire building is heated by gas fired boilers serving traditional style column radiators in the church and panel radiators in the extension.

Within the church itself, a comparatively late and unexpected decision was made by the PCC to remove all of the nave pews and construct a new solid oak floor throughout, level with the chancel and south porch. This created a visually unified interior space whilst also providing flexibility, particularly with the use of stackable bench type oak pews. The provision of new storage areas in the extension allowed the nave and tower to be 'de-cluttered' and this, together with improved lighting enhanced the quality of the simple historic interior spaces. The west archway was infilled with a new fully glazed screen to provide a quiet area within the base of the tower, whilst maintaining a visual link to the nave.

Other issues such as ongoing damp problems in the tower were also resolved, by reducing ground levels and introducing pebble filled perimeter trenching.



View of church and extension from the north

OBTAINING PERMISSIONS AND TIME LINE

The PCC had first approached the DAC and their architects in 2002 but it was not until mid 2004 that Planning approval for the extension was finally granted, with extensive conditions, as the building is Grade I listed. Obtaining the DAC Faculty, Building Regulations approval and the tender process took a further year. This process involved lengthy and detailed consultations with Canterbury DAC, Historic England, SPAB, Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

Before any construction work was carried out, a non-intrusive ground survey scan was carried out to try to establish if any vaults existed below the former chapel. Fortunately there was no such evidence and the construction of the extension was relatively straightforward.

The decision to alter the nave floor construction and a change of regulations regarding disabled access in the extension led to a number of design revisions fairly late in the process and did lead to some delays. The discovery of a 17th century wall painting above the doorway to the extension was also unexpected and its conservation an additional cost. The contract for the extension and reordering started in September 2005 and was completed in June 2006.

PROJECT COSTS, FUNDRAISING AND GRANT AID

The total building contract cost of the reordering and extension project was £432,250 of which the extension cost around £250,000. The total project cost including professional and local authority fees amounted to £659,500. A large single sum from a trust fund was available to be used for the extension and this, together with grants from the Friends of Kingsnorth and Shadoxhurst, and other sources, funded the project.

During 2004 the PCC had also undertaken grant-aided essential repairs to the tower stonework and quinquennial repairs at a total contract cost of £190,500, including the redecoration of the interior.

PROJECT TEAM & SPECIALIST SUPPLIERS

Architects:	Clague
Structural Engineer:	BSF
Heating Design:	Hunt Building Services
Archaeology:	Canterbury Archaeological Trust
Damp consultants:	Hutton & Rostron
Main Contractor:	A E Ansley (Buiders) Ltd
Painting Conservator:	Tom Organ
Chandeliers:	Nailbourne Forge
Glazed Screen:	Stewart Fraser
Window Frames:	Castaway Products
Oak pews & furniture:	Luke Hughes



View of nave looking east towards chancel before reordering (left) and after (right)



View of nave looking west towards tower before reordering (left) and after (right)

PROJECT REVIEW

Has the completed scheme achieved the objectives of the brief?

Yes the kitchenette has made a lot of difference as we can now offer tea and coffee after the services – and having a toilet and baby changing facilities speaks for itself. We also have much improved storage and office space, together with a better heating system.

Have new uses for the church been generated?

Yes, we are now able to hold concerts including a harp recital, choir concerts, art shows, colour parties, games etc for the children, Lite Bite which is a monthly meal and get together as well as cream teas. We can also host various church related meetings such as for the PCC, Diocesan Synod, Alpha courses, Bible study groups and Childrens' Sunday Ark.

Has the congregation changed/increased/decreased?

The church congregation remains fairly constant with about 100 adults and 40 under eighteens.

Were there any unexpected conflicts between church and community?

A few were against the proposals but when they saw the changes they were pleasantly surprised. It is important to get the opinion of the congregation and the people in the Parish.

Is the project sustainable in the long term?

Yes

Does the PCC have any future plans?

We are in the process of getting a projector and screen and installing another toilet on the first floor of the extension, which will allow us to offer the building to a wider range of organisations for meetings and events.

Best Piece of Advice?

Make a list of the pros and cons and know where the funding is coming from. Not everything runs according to plan and be prepared for extra expenses and also be patient as old buildings have a habit of hiding things you least expect.

Parish website details and contact

www.kandschurches.org.uk
Parish office: 01233 620433

Photographs and church plan courtesy of Clague Architects



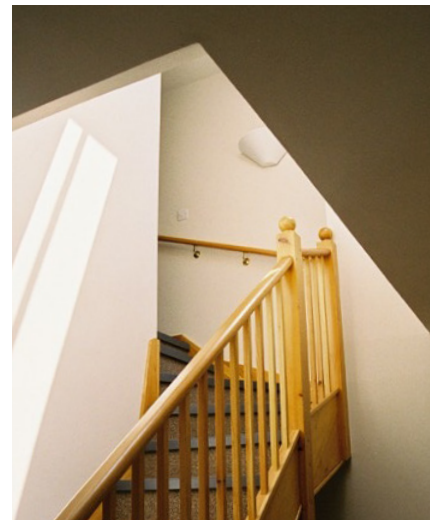
View of extension from the east



Second floor quiet room



First floor landing showing ragstone wall



View of staircase up to second floor



New choir pews & music stands in Chancel