

The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows
Bognor Regis, West Sussex

Proposals for works to
the western entrance

Design and access statement

March 2022 – for approval

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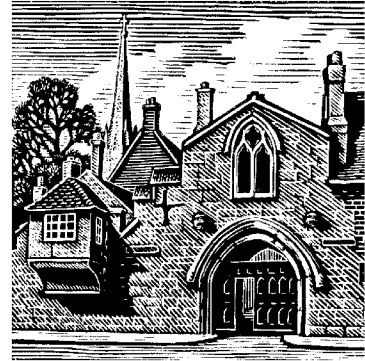
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1276-02: ACFK

March 23rd 2022

The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows Bognor Regis, West Sussex

Proposals for works to the western entrance

Design and access statement:
in support of an application for HCC and LPA approval

1.00 BACKGROUND

- 1.01 The church of Our Lady of Sorrows serves a diverse community in the centre of Bognor Regis. The church building occupies a prominent position on Clarence Road, between the town centre and the seafront.

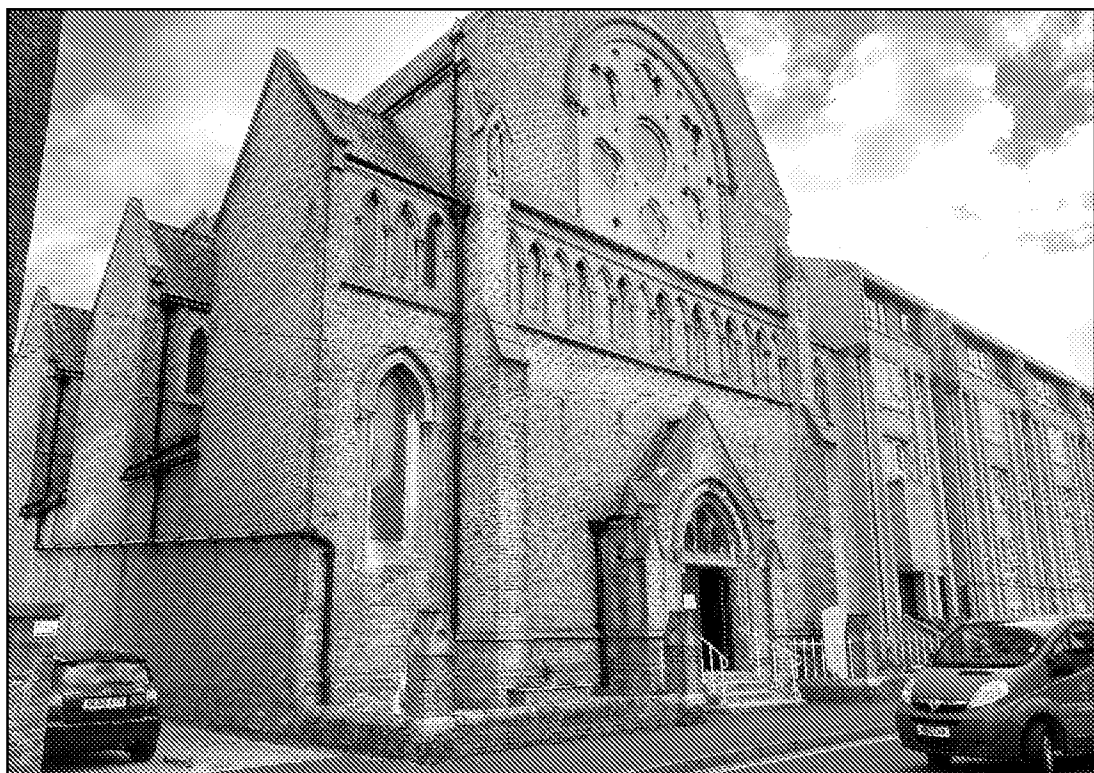


fig.01

- 1.02 The building was designed and built in two significant stages. The nave was designed by Joseph Stanislaus Hansom (the son and business partner of his more famous father Joseph Hansom) whilst the eastern end was completed in the 1950s to a different but complimentary design by WC Mangan, who was a prolific and successful Catholic architect in the mid-C20th.
- 1.03 The building is listed grade II. The reasons for the listing are acknowledged by reason of:
- architectural interest: this is a good quality Early English-style Roman Catholic church with a lofty nave by Hansom and tactful later additions by Mangan;
 - the impressive west front with its plate tracery rose window makes a strong contribution to the local townscape (see fig.01);
 - architects: the church is the work of two significant Catholic architects:
- 1.04 This document describes the proposed changes to the western elevation of the building and the entrance sequence, to facilitate equal and dignified access for all into this busy church building.
- 1.05 Although the building is listed, no listed building consent is applied-for from the local planning authority (Arun District Council) as the church enjoys Ecclesiastical Exemption from such secular control. Consequently, a separate application will be made to the Roman Catholic Historic Churches Committee in pursuit of Faculty approval, which takes the place of listed building consent under the relevant legislation¹.

2.00 THE NEED FOR THE PRESENT PROPOSAL



fig.02

- 2.01 The principal entrance into the church building is from Clarence Road. As originally designed, the main doors are set four steps above pavement level (see fig.02 above), with a further single step immediately inside the narthex area. This arrangement

¹ The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010

continues to the present day, although the pavement level has been raised slightly against the lowest step over the years.

- 2.02 This sequence of steps makes this entrance impossible to navigate for people with significant mobility issues, such as wheelchair users and people with small children in pushchairs. At present the only accessible point of entry is on the southern side of the nave, which can only be accessed by travelling around to the eastern side of the building via Clarence Road, the High Street and Albert Road. This is a long travel distance and does not constitute 'equal and dignified' access for all.



fig.03

- 2.03 The church wishes to achieve access for all through the main entrance to the building. This document sets out a proposal to achieve this, by modifying the existing doorway. The intention is to remove the external steps and to bring the threshold of the doorway down towards the level of the external pavement. A 'well' area is to be created inside the narthex, with sufficient space to access a short-travel platform lift on the south side, and a new set of five steps rising to the main internal floor level. This final proposal has been developed after considering other options.
- 2.04 The creation of a new aperture within the Clarence Road façade was considered, either using ramps or a platform lift address the change in level between the external pavement and the internal floor level. Given the symmetrical design of the western elevation, as designed by Hansom Jr., this was ruled out as potentially resulting in too great a level of harm to the appearance of the building.
- 2.05 The current proposal retains the dignity of the architectural composition, and has the added bonus of installing glass doors, facilitating a greater sense of welcome and enabling views into the building even when the doors are closed (especially at night). People of all levels of ability and disability are able to enter through the same door, fulfilling the brief for 'equal and dignified' access.

3.00 THE PROPOSAL IN DETAIL

- 3.01 The difference in level between the external pavement on Clarence Road, and the internal main floor level, is around 700mm. Upon removal of the existing external steps, it is proposed to set the new door threshold about 100mm above the level of the pavement, and to create a slight slope up to meet it from the tarmac-surfaced pavement. A slot drain can be inset into the junction between the two if necessary.
- 3.02 The remaining level difference of 600mm is addressed by the creation of the new flight of internal steps, within the overall narthex area. The drawings show five steps, each of 150mm rise. The tread depth is shown as 250mm, giving a fairly 'relaxed' gradient to the new steps. (Drawing 1276-02-328 shows a section as proposed, illustrating this.)
- 3.03 Set to the southern side of the new 'well' area is a platform lift. This sits within its own 'shaft', which is contained within a glass enclosure – for the safety of those using the lift and those who might be around the lift. The lift is positioned to ensure that there is sufficient space for wheelchair users to make the turn out of the lift when it has reached the upper level. An example of such a lift is shown at fig.04 below.



fig.04

- 3.04 The removal of the current internal draft lobby (fig.05 below) is essential to create sufficient space to build the new well, steps and lift area. This has the added benefit of opening-up the vista into the nave and the sanctuary upon entry into the building.
- 3.05 Upon the adjustment to the level of the threshold of the outer doorway, the existing timber doors are rendered redundant. These are quite understated in their design and their removal is not considered to be a major disbenefit.

- 3.06 The proposed new doors are glazed sliding doors, with automatic opening mechanisms. This is proposed to facilitate touch-free entry, and to enable access for all (especially unaided wheelchair users). Sliding doors are proposed in favour of automatic swing doors, as sliding doors are less susceptible to the effects of wind creating differential air pressures between the interior and the outside environment.
- 3.07 Sliding doors operate quickly and quietly, during both opening and closing cycles, and are therefore good at keeping warm air inside the building during the heating season. The interior configuration of the door head, and the space to either side of the doorway, allows a pair of sliding doors to be fitted, giving a generous clear opening width. The width and height of the new doors also makes it easier for pall-bearers to enter the building carrying a coffin, when funerals are taking place.



fig.05

- 3.08 The new doors are simple rectangular shapes, with outer frames in powder-coated aluminium, with large glass panes. The height of the door is broken by a transom within the door leaf, echoing the stone plinth detail found to either side on the external façade. The tone to be used for the powder coating could be a dark bronze colour. Other manifestation to the doors could incorporate artwork relevant to the church.
- 3.09 It is suggested that the lowering of the threshold to accommodate the new taller doors, creates a better-proportioned set of doors within the context of the west front of this church building (see fig.06).
- 3.10 Following a detailed examination of the condition of the masonry of the church building in late January 2022, some low-key repair and cleaning works will be carried out to the masonry of the porch and elsewhere on the façade during these works.

4.00 ACCESS MATTERS

- 4.01 The creation of a more open and welcoming point of entry into the church building can be seen as a positive benefit arising from the church's desire to create an elegant and fully accessible entrance.



fig.06

above: Extract from drawing 1276-02-326

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