



Planning Heritage Statement

Version 2 - Grovelands Church, 533 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HJ

This application seeks approval for a revised single-storey extension connecting the existing Church and Church Hall, alongside the refurbishment of the existing basement and the addition of a roof light. Several amendments have been made to the original proposal to further enhance the design and functionality of the site, while ensuring it remains sympathetic to the Church's locally listed status.

Key changes to the scheme include the introduction of more permeable paving and increased areas for planting and low-level vegetation across the site and car park, promoting better drainage and biodiversity. The originally proposed WC within the new extension has been removed, and the size of the tertiary hall in the new extension has been reduced. This adjustment has allowed the gable-end extension to project less prominently beyond the Church Hall, freeing up space for further planting and enhancing the landscaping.

Additionally, the original single-ply membrane flat roof across the proposal has been replaced with a sedum green roof, bordered by a pebble edging. This green roof brings a range of environmental and aesthetic benefits, such as improved insulation, rainwater absorption, and a reduction in urban heat island effect, all while providing a more visually appealing roofscape that blends harmoniously with the surrounding greenery. The inclusion of this feature demonstrates a commitment to sustainability and environmental sensitivity. We have not included a living wall facade as we believe this to be incongruous when considering the vernacular and traditional use of red brick in both the church and the church hall.

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To further respect the Church's existing architecture, the ridge height of the gable-ended extension has been lowered to sit below the eaves level of the main Church, ensuring that the new extension remains subservient to the historic structure.

LOCAL LISTED BUILDING (LL12)

The Church, designed by the prominent architect William Roland Howell, holds considerable local significance. Howell, who played an active role in Reading's civic life and the architectural community, designed this Arts and Crafts-influenced Free Renaissance style chapel with red-brown brick and terracotta dressings. Despite alterations to the interior, the building's exterior, with its distinctive bell tower and cupola, remains a prominent feature along Oxford Road, contributing significantly to the character of the area.

The Church was originally founded by two influential figures, Arthur Warwick and Martin John Sutton, of the local firm Suttons Seeds. Their mission hall, established in 1879 for soldiers stationed at Brock Barracks, marked the beginning of religious and community life in the area, which was later expanded by the Baptist community.

CONCLUSION

The proposed extension has been carefully reconsidered in light of its historical and architectural context. By reducing the footprint of the gable end and incorporating more soft landscaping, the revised design enhances the site's green spaces and integrates seamlessly with the surroundings. The introduction of the sedum green roof underscores a commitment to sustainability, while the lowered ridge height ensures the extension remains in keeping with the scale and character of the locally listed Church. The colour palette and materials continue to complement the red-brick and terracotta details of the existing building, ensuring the proposal is both sympathetic and respectful to this important local landmark.

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