

Heritage Statement

LANDMARK ARTS CENTRE, TEDDINGTON HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSALS FOR UPGRADING AND RESURFACING AN EXISTING GARDEN FOOTPATH

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The new parish church of St Alban, Teddington was dedicated in July 1889. The design was that of the local architect William Niven (1846-1921). He had worked with Sir George Gilbert Scott on the restoration of the Chapter House at Westminster Abbey, clearly an influence on St Alban's, and was living at nearby Udney House. His other works are fairly limited, although he published and edited several works on architecture. St Alban's was Niven's one great work, conceived on a cathedral scale. The drawings published in *The Builder* of December 28 1889 show a much more ambitious building than was actually built, including a large tower to the north, a morning chapel to the west, two more bays to the nave leading to a large range of vestibules and porches to the west and a baptistery to the north. Construction appears to have been complete by the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1893-4. At some point, presumably when it became apparent that further work was not likely, the incomplete western end was stabilised by large brick buttresses. The area between the buttresses was enclosed, presumably to provide vestries, WCs and/ or storage. The open end of the nave itself was covered by corrugated sheeting on a timber frame. The eastern windows were damaged by a flying bomb in 1944. By 1967 the church, faced with the costs of heating and repair, had retreated to the earlier church of St Marys. St Alban's was formally declared redundant in 1977, following which there was a long period of uncertainty, during which damage and vandalism were extensive, including theft of the copper roofs, breaking of glass windows and arson attacks, including setting fire to the organ. Following a passionate campaign led by local people, the future of the building was secured by an arrangement under which most of the adjoining land was developed for housing association flats, the building was repaired under the direction of English Heritage and let at a peppercorn rent to the Landmark Arts Centre, a community arts organisation set up for the purpose and who remain in the building.

The works undertaken to the building in 1991-2 were extensive, including replacement of the roof coverings, repair of the timber roof structures, replacement of the rainwater goods and replacement of most of the windows.

SIGNIFICANCE

The national significance of the buildings is reflected in its listing at Grade II* It was first listed in 1952, placing it among the first set of buildings to be listed, and which is very early for a building of relatively late date. The brief text of the listing states 1886. William Niven. Lofty stone church with green copper roof in Early English style. West end incomplete (no tower). Apsidal east end. Small side aisles and transepts. Tall 4-light decorated windows to clerestory. Flying buttresses to nave are incomplete indicating their lack of structural necessity. Interior not seen. The particular reasons for listing are not stated. The significance of the building lies in its scale and ambition, its towering presence among the relatively low buildings and the quality and authenticity of the architectural detail. The mature trees enhance the setting but the flats, roads and car parks which occupy much of

the original site are intrusive elements which were accepted as part of the measures necessary to secure the future of the building after it became redundant as a place of worship.

THE PROPOSAL

There is currently an area of ancillary open space to the east of the church building and bounded by Ferry Road and Kingston Road. This open space comprises low quality foliage and several mature trees (see ecology report) and contains a footpath running parallel with Kingston Road made up of wood chippings and bark.

The intention is to upgrade the footpath by laying a semi bonded aggregate in a honey colour finish to match the church's stonework. A central rotunda feature has been added to the design to allow for other outdoor activities that may take place in association with the Arts Centre.

This proposal to upgrade the footpath is intended to form part of the "Gaia" exhibition which will be held in the main church building between 16/06/23 and 01/07/23 which is being sponsored by Richmond Council. In the longer term, the upgrade of the footpath is intended to form part of a wider programme of external works to allow better access to the Arts Centre as well as improve the use and appearance of the outdoor space.

The proposed changes are a modification of a previously accepted intrusive element and cause no further harm to the setting of the former church.

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