

St Margaret's Church Angmering

The church family of St Margaret's, a Grade II listed church located right in the heart of the pretty Sussex village of Angmering, received an early and most welcome Christmas present this year – a sealed copy of the faculty from the Chancellor of Chichester, granting them the right to start a major programme of works in the New Year, designed by Canterbury-based architects, Lee Evans Partnership.*

PROJECT TEAM

Architects:

Lee Evans
Partnership LLP

Quantity Surveyor:
C M Parker Browne

Structural
Consultant:
Dixon, Hurst, Kemp

Services Engineer:
Ian White Associates

Building Regulation
Consultants:
Butler & Young Ltd

Archaeology:
Archaeology
South East

Main Contractor:
Farnrise
Construction Ltd

Art Glass Artist:
Mel Howse



This marks the end of almost 2 years of a challenging consultation which culminated in a Consistory Court hearing on 26 April 2007 in which the rector's, the Revd Canon Mark Standen, and churchwardens' petition to carry out the works was opposed by the Victorian Society, the Ancient Monuments Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

It is an interesting case. In his judgement the Chancellor, the Worshipful Mark Hill, makes it clear that his decision does not set a precedent for other churches in the Diocese of Chichester and emphasises that all future cases will be determined on their own merits. However, St Margaret's is one of the first medieval Grade II* listed churches to gain consent for such an extensive reorder.

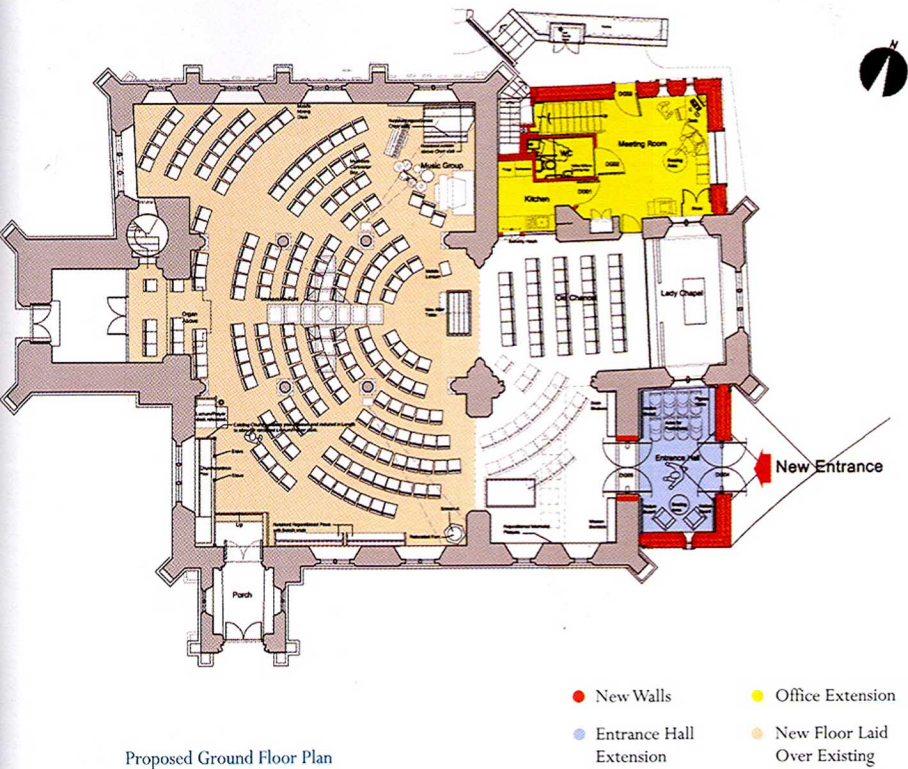
St Margaret's is of some historic interest. Believed to have been built between

1180 and 1220 a tower and some medieval arches are all that remain of the original church which was then substantially developed during the fifteenth century. During the 1850's it was reordered and extended by the distinguished Victorian architect Samuel Sanders Tuelon. The church is set within an attractive ensemble of buildings, also of Tuelon design, which include a hall, cottage and former school. It is one of 112 'Tuelon' churches, although it is generally accepted that there are better examples of his work elsewhere. An incongruous extension housing the vestry and an office was added during the twentieth century in the north eastern corner of the church.

Although the rector and churchwardens respect the church's considerable architectural heritage they also recognised that the original structure was impeding their worship and mission.

Angmering is a growing community of around 8000 residents and is no longer the small, 'sleepy' Sussex village it once was. The church runs a full programme of events each week and has also established an impressive range of ministries designed to reach into each section of the community. It is a busy church and the orientation of the liturgical uses can vary requiring the congregation to face west, north, or south as well as some times east in the traditional way

A detailed Statement of Need cites the limitations of the existing church building



Glass samples by Mel Howse

which in summary include: a poorly located main entrance not visible from the village or to beckon passers-by; the absence of a welcome area; under-used sections of the church; poor sightlines; uncomfortable and 'inflexible' pews; a lack of kitchen and toilet facilities; and cramped office space.

The guiding principle behind Lee Evans Partnership's scheme is to only make changes that are essential for the church's purpose. The proposals consist of three elements: Firstly, the demolition of the twentieth century single storey extension and the construction in its place of a meeting room, WC, kitchenette and office. Secondly, the construction of a new main entrance and welcome area to the church, adjoining the Gratwicke Chapel, with a new secondary entrance formed through the wall of the chapel. Thirdly, the internal re-ordering, to facilitate a flexible approach to both liturgical and secular uses of the church, which involves the installation of a new baptistry, removal of pews, pulpit and choir stalls, and the repositioning of the Tuelon lectern and font.

Lee Evans Partnership's design creates a building that acts as an inviting beacon for the local community. In what might seem a radical move the entrance has been relocated to the eastern façade of the church in one of two new gabled extensions. (These two new extensions are in fact inspired by Tuelon's original design which projected a three-gable rear elevation to the approaching or observing bystander.) The result is a new entrance that is both welcoming and clearly visible to the visitor which fulfills the basic tenets of all successful public buildings; exterior glazed doors lead to an open greeting area with secondary glazed doors into the church beyond.

Although the new extensions have tiled pitched roofs and will employ the traditional stone and flint used in the existing gable ends they are modern and bold in design. Their striking

windows feature symbolic etched and enamelled glass by Chichester artist Mel Howse. For example the warm yellow and gold glasswork of the entrance facade represents a welcome from St Margaret's to all that visit. An ethereal image of The Holy Spirit is depicted in the sweeping motion of the layered motifs which echo the church's original architecture and tracery. Similarly the blue and white glasswork of the new office extension's fenestration is also rich in imagery.

The project went on site in January and the work is now underway. The reordering is part of Angmering's long tradition and will ensure the future, liturgy and mission of the church, utilizing aspects of the interior and exterior of the building that currently restricts its use. The character of St Margaret's is derived in part from a long history of alterations and adaptations of the church from Medieval times through to recent times, reflecting the evolution of Angmering as a vibrant and continually growing community. ■

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