

Woodstock Road Baptist Church, Oxford

Design & Access Statement

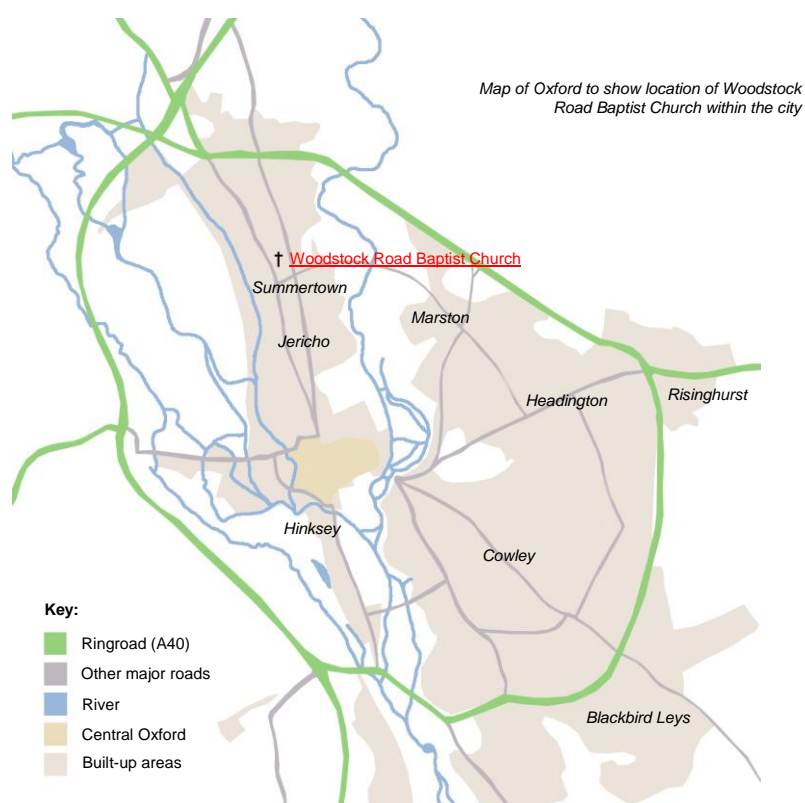
Proposed extension to the church building to provide a link between the church and the manse, and equip the building with much-needed foyer and circulation space.



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Woodstock Road Baptist Church is a vibrant and busy church used regularly by both its congregation and the community. The church building occupies a site on the corner of Woodstock Road and Beech Croft Road, in North Oxford. Its location makes it popular with the university students from both Oxford University and Oxford Brookes. The proposal is the erection of an infill extension to the church building to link it with the manse, in order to create circulation space and upgrade the kitchen and WC facilities.

- 1.2 Woodstock Road Baptist Church is located in the busy Summertown area of Oxford, approximately 1.5 miles from the city centre. The map below shows its location in the city and its close proximity to many of Oxford's key sites. Woodstock Road is one of two major roads that link the centre of Oxford with the ring road (the A40), and is also linked to Marston Ferry Road, which gives it easy access to Marston, Headington and much of the north-east of the city. This prominent location has allowed the church to use its facilities to their full potential, and to engage with as many people in the locality as possible.



- 1.3 The church has a history of redevelopment and changes to its buildings, and it has become clear that this is required again. The congregation can number up to 200 on occasion, and while the church building can hold this many, the supporting facilities are found wanting at these times.
- 1.4 The Church has decided that an extension to provide flexible space for circulation and meetings will complement the use of the church, church hall and the adjacent manse. The proposed extension is a single-storey; wrap-around design linking the church with the manse and not only provides a foyer, but a clear and easily accessible entrance to the church buildings.

- 1.5 This Design and Access Statement explains the proposals in response to the Church's immediate needs and future aspirations.

2.0 History

- 2.1 Woodstock Road Baptist Church was started in 1897 under the Rev. J H Moore. Originally the congregation met in the open air for times of worship, but after acquiring the current site on Woodstock Road, the original church was built. It is now known as Victoria Hall, after the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria, and is currently used as the church hall. Interestingly, it was designed and built to be extended. The west wall was made of wood so that when the Church grew numerically, the building could expand to accommodate the growth. The rest is built of white brick, and could hold up to 100 people.
- 2.2 In the 1930's the wooden wall was torn down and a new, tin-hut style building was built on this side of the church. This became the new church, now able to hold up to 200 people. When it became apparent that this would be well-used it was bricked externally to create a permanent structure. In terms of affiliation, the church was a member of the Baptist Union, and is now a member of the Federation of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).
- 2.3 The church currently runs two services on Sundays and many midweek meetings and events for all members of the Church and the community. It has approximately 130 members attend on a Sunday morning, and 50 in the evening, as well as a good number of children and young people attending the Sunday School programme.
- 2.4 None of the church buildings are listed. The church suffers from a lack of useable circulation and foyer space in which to welcome those using the buildings, as well as a need to provide safely-accessible space in which to run the children's groups that will allow them to be noisy and have fun without affecting the church services.
- 2.5 The church buildings are well used and well loved, but tired and in desperate need of refurbishment and renewal. The proposed extension will provide this new space to liven up the whole site and provide the Church and community with a fresh and practical suite of buildings and private outdoor spaces.

3.0 Current building use

3.1 Woodstock Road Baptist Church enjoys a full schedule of activities throughout the week, supplemented by larger monthly and annual events. These are attended by and aimed at not only the church congregation but members of the local community as well. The church is very active in the community, and involved in a number of community regeneration projects. The church's weekly and annual calendar are shown below, giving an idea of the type and number of activities that take place on the site or around the city, facilitated by the church.

Day	Activity	Frequency	Attendees	Age group	Rooms used
Sunday	Sunday morning church service	Weekly	Approx 130	0-100	All
	Fellowship lunch	Weekly	70-100	0-100	Church, hall, kitchen, garden
	Sunday school	Weekly	25	3-11	Church, hall, kitchen
	Crèche	Weekly	6	0-3	Hall, manse
	Missionary prayer meeting	Monthly	6	30-80	Manse
	Waterways prayer meeting	Monthly	8	30-65	Manse
	Sunday evening service	Weekly	50	10-80	Church
	Student meeting	Weekly	15-20	18-25	Manse
Monday	Elders meeting	Bi-weekly	6	25-75	Manse
Tuesday	SHOUT community group	Weekly	10	25-70	Manse
	Support group	Weekly	6	30-50	Manse
	On Top youth group	Weekly	6	11-14	Manse
	YL youth group	Weekly	15	14-18	Member's homes
Wednesday	Church prayer meeting	Bi-weekly	30	18-80	Church, hall
	Homegroups	Bi-weekly	10x6 groups	18-80	Member's homes
Thursday	Stepping Stones toddler group	Weekly	50	0-3	Church, hall, kitchen, garden
	Christianity Explored	Weekly	6	16-18	Manse, kitchen
Friday	Friday Bible study group	Weekly	10-12	30-70	Manse, kitchen
Friday	Livewires youth group	Weekly	15	4-11	Church, hall, kitchen
Saturday	Men's prayer meeting	Monthly	6	30-65	Member's houses
	Women's prayer breakfast	Monthly	15	30-70	Member's houses

Church activities: weekly and monthly

Month	Activity	Attendees	Age group	Rooms used
April/May	Art Week – an initiative co-ordinated by Oxford City Council designed to promote community participation in art activities	100	0-75	Church, kitchen, hall
May	Church weekend	70	0-100	Church, hall, kitchen, garden
July	Holiday club	60	4-11	Church, hall, kitchen, garden
September	Harvest Supper	70	0-75	Church, hall, kitchen
December	SHOUT Christmas meal	50	0-75	Church, hall, kitchen
	Children’s carol service	70	0-75	Church, hall, kitchen
	Carol service	100	0-100	Church, hall, kitchen
	Blood transfusion service (twice a year)	Unknown	0-100	Church, hall, kitchen
	Occasional use by Beechcroft Road Residents Association	Unknown	30-80	Church, hall, kitchen

Church activities: annual

4.0 The SHOUT Community Project

- 4.1 The SHOUT project is an Oxford-based initiative to work towards eradicating antisocial behaviour by working within the community to provide activities to get children and youth off the streets and into spaces where they can play and interact without being a nuisance to their neighbours. The lack of public space in this area of Oxford was leading to a lot of antisocial behaviour, but thanks to SHOUT alternative meeting places have opened up where those involved can play sports, find support, do homework or just meet to chat and spend time together.
- 4.2 The manse at Woodstock Road Baptist Church is used weekly on Tuesdays as one of these spaces by a small group, with the Church also being involved in the relational aspect of the project. It is this kind of use that the Church wishes to expand, and which will benefit greatly from the proposed extension.

5.0 The Manse

- 5.1 The manse is situated on the same plot as the church, and is therefore ideally positioned to facilitate the activities there. It has not been used as a house since 2008, although it does have a small flat on the third floor. The rooms on the grounds, first and second floor are used for meeting rooms and the church offices, while the manse kitchen and WC caters for any activities that are held there.
- 5.2 The last few years in which this has been the case has shown the Church that instead of extending the building to house these activities, the manse is perfectly suited for this use. The extension that would be required to provide this busy church with adequate meeting space, if the manse were not used, would be sizeable and would require significant development of the site and extension to the existing building.
- 5.3 When using the manse, the church needs only additional foyer space and updated facilities to tie the buildings together, and can continue to support the congregation and the community through the building works.

6.0 Proposed extension use

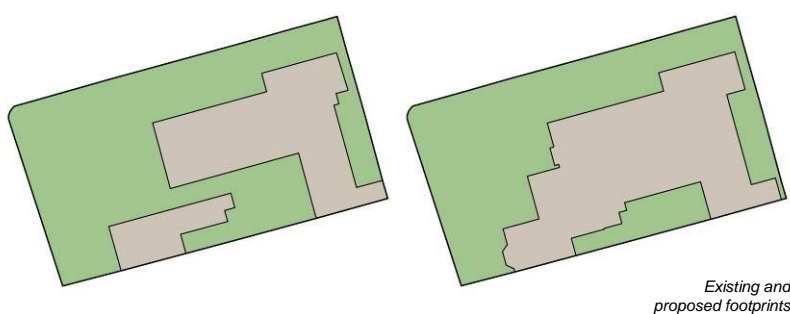
- 6.1 The new building will be used to supplement the existing activities instead of to provide new ones. The Church is busy and thriving, but is not looking to significantly expand its activities, only to provide much-needed facilities to ensure those already running can continue to run effectively. The buildings desperately need some kind of a linking and circulation space.
- 6.2 Currently access is directly into the church from the garden area between the manse and the church (the main doors fronting the car park are not used), giving no space to welcome people and no transition space between outside and inside. This arrangement means that only those familiar with the building are comfortable entering.
- 6.3 The foyer space and the additional circulation space that will be provided to the south of the church will open up the space as well as providing a buffer between the outside and the activities within. A well equipped new kitchen and new toilet facilities will significantly upgrade the church's accommodation to appropriately support the activities making use of the buildings.

7.0 Existing uses in the Summertown area

- 7.1 There are many churches in Oxford, and in the Summertown area. Within a mile radius of Woodstock Road Baptist Church there are a further nine churches and one church-based organisation. These churches cross several denominations; including Church of England, Roman Catholic, and United Reformed Church. These congregations are also very active in the community.
- 7.2 The proposed extension to Woodstock Road Baptist Church will not only benefit its Church and the community, but will add to the mix of uses and facilities enjoyed by the churches in that area instead of creating space that is replicated elsewhere.

8.0 The extent of the proposals

- 8.1 The proposal is an infill building between the existing church and manse. It is approximately 100m², and links the disparate church, manse and stores. The diagram below shows the existing and proposed footprints and shows the extent of the addition in proportion to the site area. The total combined area of the existing church and manse is 448m². Once extended, the area will be 548m². For a modest addition, the benefits for the site and users of the buildings are significant.

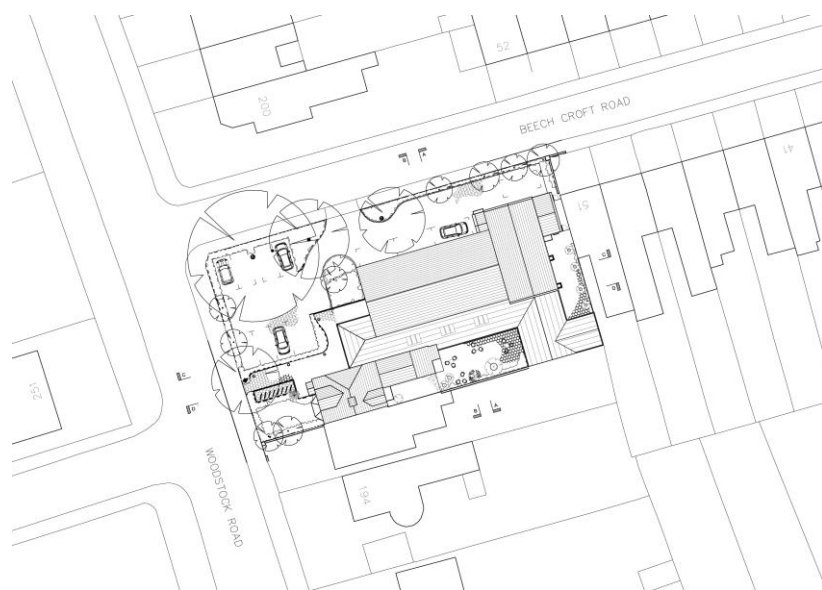


- 8.2 Good urban design principles are based around buildings creating landscapes that people are happy to live in. In the UK, and especially in cities, space is often limited, and it isn't possible to find sites that are large enough to hold the buildings that we require, as well as ensuring they have the necessary external open spaces. It is therefore suggested that where possible, infilling of existing spaces is practised. This is already widely done with large brownfield sites in city centres, but in the surrounding streets and suburbs, such as in Woodstock Road, it is a little-used concept.

- 8.3 The space between the church and the manse is perfect for this, and so this principle has been adopted and used to create one useable and functioning building. The proposal also uses this idea to link the manse and the church, fulfilling another urban design principle. The idea of infilling as a tool when extending buildings is very useful, and it is hoped that this development will be a good example of this.

9.0 Proposed building layout

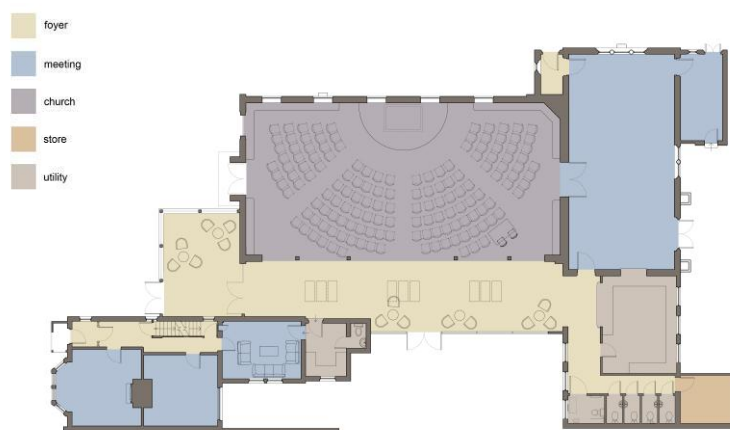
- 9.1 The design criteria for the site as a whole is that it should be easily accessible, easily navigable and fully legible for all users. The site plan below shows the proposed site plan for Woodstock Road Baptist Church.



Proposed site plan

- 9.2 The current main entrance is from Beech Croft Road for both pedestrians and cars, with another pedestrian entrance off Woodstock Road. The proposal keeps the Beech Croft Road entrance but purely for vehicular access to the site, using the Woodstock Road entrance for all other visitors. The car park will be linked to the main entrance via a path, creating a clear route for first-time visitors.

- 9.3 This newly highlighted entrance will promote the Woodstock Road elevation of the building, and will give passers-by an opportunity to see what is happening inside the building through the new glazed extension. The landscaping of the car park and front area will give the whole site a tidier appearance, while clear signposting and an obvious entrance to the building will reduce confusion for first-time visitors.
- 9.4 On entering the building through the new foyer the visitor will immediately feel at home by the presence of comfortable seating, a warm atmosphere and an open-plan space that will be light and airy. The proposal is to remove the southern wall of the current church building and to support it on columns, so that the church is open to the circulation space. The plan below illustrates this, as well as indicating likely room use.



Proposed ground floor plan

- 9.5 The concourse will serve as an arm to every part of the building; a spine that provides easy access to the church, the kitchen, the hall and the manse. The manse will cease to be a separate entity and will become part of the church building, helping to link the activities there with the activities in the church. All the facilities will be within easy reach of the entrance, and large windows in the foyer will help to bring natural daylight into the whole space.
- 9.6 The southern side of the site behind the manse will become a small enclosed courtyard garden, between the church and the neighbouring property. It will be a safe place for children to play, a place to relax and chat instead of an alleyway behind the church. The photos on the following page show how it is currently; an unusable, unsightly space that inevitably ends up as storage and with all too easy access to the car park for children.



The alleyway between the church and the manse

- 9.7 There is another small garden space at the rear of the site, on the eastern side. This will be accessed from the hall and will be used as another small courtyard. Its principle use will be to bring daylight into the rooms facing it and for fire escape purposes though it can be used for secure children's play area if required.
- 9.8 The open plan arrangement of the church means that use of the foyer will be limited during church services. This is where the link to the manse is really important; the safe passage of children into the manse without having to go outside is very useful. The hall will be able to function as a dedicated space for ancillary activities at the Sunday services, as the additional circulation space means it will no longer be needed to be used for teas and coffees after the service. This will free up the space and make the whole building more productive and easier to use.
- 9.9 The manse will keep its arrangement of meeting rooms and offices that has served the church so well over the past few years. The cosier, homely feel of these spaces lend themselves to smaller meeting rooms and are very useful in the Church's involvement with the community.
- 9.10 The new kitchen and main toilets are tucked away around the corner, making use of existing building and store-rooms. The old garage becomes the toilets, with internal access to the store. The position of these utilities means that they are easily accessible but do not impinge on the look or feel of the main church and concourse space. Providing individual cubicles is more efficient than separate male and female toilets in terms of space, meaning that the kitchen facilities can be extended. Access to the toilets currently is through the kitchen. This is wholly impractical.

- 9.11 The layout of the building is easy to navigate, and clear signage both in and outside will add to this. There are level changes between the church and the manse, but all the facilities within the manse are duplicated within the church and new proposal, so any less able users will be just as well catered for. The provision of a dedicated disabled toilet with baby-changing facilities within the extension will add to the accessibility of the building and allow it to be much more practical in use.

10.0 Size of the proposed extension

- 10.1 Another key principle of good urban design is that new developments and extensions should mix use and forms to keep from the same architectural style over and over. Visually it should be stimulating, interesting and eye catching. Clearly this means different things for different sites and buildings, here the low, translucent feel of the proposed extension contrasts with the regal Victoria Hall and tall, proud manse, while linking with the squat, low-roofed church building. The low pitch of the new roof means the extension doesn't dominate, even though it comes forward from the church. The manse is still primarily the foreground and this creates a welcoming, staggered effect, also helping to shelter and enclose the car park.
- 10.2 Originally the concourse was to extend the whole way along the west face of the church building, but budget constraints have caused this to be reduced. The space that is available to the left as one walks inside the building is still large enough to be used as a discrete space. The variation this creates in the elevation is pleasing to the eye and helps with the interface with the street.
- 10.3 As explained previously, the foyer fits tidily between the manse and the church; its width is determined by the available space. The length is similarly dictated by the position of the existing kitchen building. This is currently accessed via the hall; the foyer will allow the new kitchen to be much more open and accessible from all parts of the building. The foyer serves a practical need to bridge the gap between the component parts of the site in an elegant, understated way.

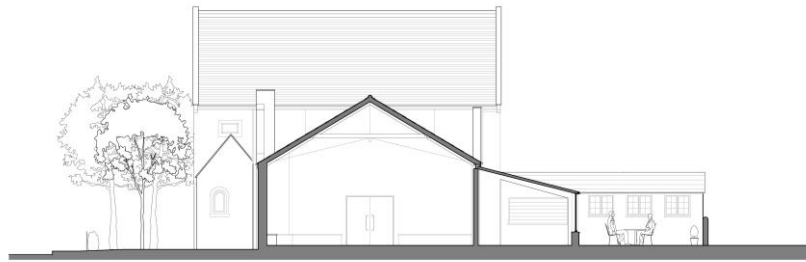
11.0 Relationship with neighbouring buildings

- 11.1 In such a tightly-packed space as this, the relationship of any building to its neighbour is important. The extension proposals must not adversely impact neighbouring properties. The OS plan below shows the location of the neighbours, and the sections on the following page show the relationship the existing church and the extension has with the houses on both Woodstock Road and Beech Croft Road.



OS Map of the site and its surroundings

- 11.2 The low roof of the foyer extension means that it will not impact the amenity of 196 Woodstock Road. The outdoor space has been used by the Church for access to their building and as a garden for many years. This use will be unchanged.
- 11.3 The owners of 51 Beech Croft Road have been consulted as part of the Church's design development process. They are concerned that the expanse of new roof should not be too dominant so as to impact the light into their garden and home. They were pleased that the overall appearance would be improved by the addition of a pitched roof to this end of the building. The pitch of the new roof has been reduced in response to the neighbour consultation so as to have no impact to the amenity of no. 51.



Section AA



Section BB



Section CC



Section DD



The alleyway between the church and number 51 Beech Croft Road

12.0 Landscaping proposals

- 12.1 Part of the brief for Woodstock Road Baptist Church was to improve the image and general appearance of the church to passers-by and visitors. Currently the church's appearance is tired and in need of refreshing. Whilst it is used frequently, this has taken its toll on the building fabric and landscape and it has become purely practical at the expense of aesthetic appreciation. As well as the new glazed foyer and entrance, the landscaping of the car park is an important design consideration.
- 12.2 The landscape proposals illustrated below involve creating a more sensible carparking arrangement, a new clearly defined path, space for securing bicycles and a balance of soft landscaping in keeping with the surrounding area.



Proposed landscape plan

- 12.3 The landscape proposals segregate cars and pedestrians and introduce more planting to the site. This will help the sense of enclosure. It will also help to place it on the busy Woodstock Road, especially as the building is so set back from the road. The large trees on the site will be complimented by hedges and bushes, used to define paths. The picket fence will stay, but will be backed by a hedge to increase privacy on the site and create a visually softer boundary. Currently the space is open, but this can lead to ambiguity and a lack of confidence in where to go within the site.
- 12.4 The materials chosen have been constrained by the budget to an extent, but have also been selected for practicality and maintenance considerations. The car park will be compacted gravel, a material that looks smart and functions well, while the path and courtyard gardens to the rear of the church will be paved using Marshalls Perfecta paving. This difference between pedestrian and vehicular access is useful in terms of navigating the site, and key for achieving safety. The manse will be accessed through the main site entrance, helping to tie it all together.
- 12.5 The materials have also been chosen to make sure the building is as accessible as possible for everyone. External level changes will be accommodated by gentle grading of the landscaping to ensure a single-level path to the church, while the two rear courtyards will be equally as accessible. Each threshold will be level other than access to the manse. Accessing the manse from the new foyer means that the level change is lower than at the front door and more easily managed by means of a proprietary removable ramp.
- 12.6 Due to the presence of a number of trees on the site, as well as some of them being rather large, an arboricultural survey has been carried out. This is included in appendix 1 of this design and access statement and should be read in conjunction with the rest of the planning application. The suggestions it makes have been incorporated into the design for the landscaping of the site, including the removal of one tree very close to the existing church and the positioning and type of new trees.

13.0 Appearance

- 13.1 The proposed extension to the church is designed to be welcoming, inclusive and to fit in with the other buildings on the site. The number of windows mean that one can see what is happening inside the building from outside helping to create a sense of openness. This reduces the fear of entering an unknown space and will help users of the building to feel more at home there, as well as more confident about entering.
- 13.2 The way the space opens up once one enters the building creates a sense of airiness. The windows along the length of the southern side will bring light in as well as adding a sense of continuity to the extension as it connects the manse and the church; two entirely different building styles.
- 13.3 The concourse will be a brick plinth wall, with aluminium framed windows and a fibre cement slate roof. This simple palette of materials will give the concourse a contemporary feel. The extent of the glazing will remove the fortress-like feel of the existing building and replace it with transparency. This means that the foyer, although a different architectural style to the other buildings on the site, is not overbearing but a pleasing interface between the existing structures.
- 13.4 The elevations below show the scale of the proposed extension in relation to the existing church, as well as giving an idea of its appearance. The trees along the boundary line of the site shelter the elevations and give passers-by glimpses of what is happening inside encouraging them to take a closer look.



Proposed west elevation (Woodstock Road)



Proposed north elevation (Beech Croft Road)



Proposed east elevation



Proposed south elevation

14.0 Access

14.1 *Vehicular access*

The site currently has a few parking spaces but these are ad-hoc amongst the trees and paths and not marked out. The landscape plan identifies twelve regular spaces around the north and west of the site, with at least one of these being large enough for disabled parking.

The site is easily accessible by car, bus, bike or on foot. Parking in surrounding streets is for permit holders and residents only. Members and visitors to the church are encouraged to walk, cycle, use public transport or share lifts.

14.2 *Pedestrian and public transport access*

Oxford enjoys a very good public transport system, and the church's position on a busy main road benefits from this. There is a bus stop near the church on Woodstock Road, just across Beech Croft Road, with frequent buses in and out of the city centre.

14.3 *Cycle access*

The landscape plan (page 11) shows that cycle hoops have been provided at the entrance for those who cycle to the church. There are hoops for 16 bikes. Woodstock Road has an integral cycle path; access to the site is easy and safe.

14.4 Those from the immediate neighbourhood are encouraged to walk to the church.

14.5 *Emergency access*

The ease of access to Woodstock Road from all areas of Oxford means that access for emergency services is not an issue. The church site is open and the car park large enough to receive an emergency vehicle. Its position on a corner means that it can be accessed from the centre, the ring road and the hospitals in Headington.

14.6 *Boundary definition*

The distinction between semi private and private spaces is important for the Church. Visitors should feel welcomed when arriving for particular activities but the building is not available for the public to drop in at any time.

- 14.7 Churches are rarely wholly private; by their very nature they are open and welcoming, but it is important to keep that distinction when needed. Internal signage and restricted access by means of lockable doors will allow the Church to adequately manage this requirement.

15.0 Conclusion

- 15.1 Woodstock Road Baptist Church is a thriving and busy church located close to the centre of Oxford with a passion for working with the local community and using its buildings to positively impact others. Its building is desperately in need of refreshing and the addition of circulation space to unite its buildings. The church is currently damp, cold and unwelcoming, with little room to expand. The proposals are to extend the church southwards to link it with the manse via a glazed 'spine' that will provide light, freshness and circulation space required.
- 15.2 The proposals are understated, not taking away from the existing elevations but adding to them and improving the overall architectural composition. The style is different to the church and manse, but not in a way that jars. The similar pitches of the roof of the existing church and the proposed foyer on the Woodstock Road elevation helps to tie the two buildings together and the stepped, recessed effect created by the relationship of the buildings in plan helps draw people into the site and define a clear entrance.
- 15.3 The proposals will help Woodstock Road Baptist Church to further its work with the underprivileged members of society in Oxford through the SHOUT and Waterways projects. They will help to expand the work of the church and provide the much-needed modern facilities for the church to be able to cater effectively for the work it is doing.

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