

8 July 2010

Dear Ian

**Planning application 2010/1264: St Barnabas Church (listed building consent)**

The Hackney Society objects to the proposed extension of St Barnabas Church. We would like to make the following comments, which we hope you will find useful:

**Comments:**

St Barnabas Church, designed by Arthur Ashpitel FSA (1807-69) was built between 1845-52. Ashpitel was born in Clapton and he was educated at Dr Burnett's school at Homerton. He trained under his father, and his first commission was St Barnabas Church. The predominant character of the church is Perpendicular – a late medieval style with details from the 14th and 15th century. Bridget Cherry describes the building as 'interesting as an effort to copy local character [of medieval churches]'. There is a prominent four-stage tower with embattled parapets, and angle buttresses.

English Heritage gives the following reasons for the Grade II designation in the listing description:

- It is a good early Victorian Gothic church reflecting the newly developed desire to create churches faithful to their medieval predecessors. The post-war changes have had no significant effect upon the exterior of the building.
- Its association with a key figure in the 19th-century Evangelical Movement.
- It has group value with the vicarage and school.

The church was to serve the rapidly expanding population of early Victorian Hackney. The endowment and half the cost of the vicarage was paid for by Joshua Watson (1771-1855), the leader of an influential group of Evangelical churchmen known as the Hackney Phalanx.

**Extension**

According to the project architect the current congregation is growing and strong, hence the need for an extension to provide additional WCs, meeting rooms and kitchen. The Hackney Society would like to support an appropriate extension to the church, but feel that the case has not been made for why the extension needs to abut the gable of the aisle and the external wall of the tower. It is mentioned that: 'the smaller scale of the current proposals compared to the extensive extension proposed in the previously consented scheme is considered to be more sustainable to the users of the church.'

We are very concerned that the integrity of the Church's cruciform plan and the symmetry of the two pitched gable roofs on the west elevation will be destroyed by this proposal. While supportive of the choice of weathered zinc for the extension's cladding we find the form and windows of the proposed new building are complicated and unsympathetic to the original design by Ashpitel.

It also seems an extreme solution to what is not providing much additional space (approx. 48 sqm of meeting rooms, a 11 sqm kitchen and approx 52 sqm of lobby, lift and stairs). Most of the proposed extension is designed as a lobby to service the small meeting rooms in the tower. Also, the glazing to separate the tower from the main body of the church will be costly. We understand why the proposed extension has been located to the north of the building – it cannot be seen from Homerton High Street – but it will be visible from St Barnabas Terrace and Wardle Street.

We would like to see a pavilion or satellite chapel in the grounds. We feel there is a better architectural solution to the problem and we would like to see this explored further. Church Care and SPAB give good advice on their websites:

(<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/develop.php?FJ>)

(<http://www.spab.org.uk/advice/statements/spab-statement-1-church-extensions/>)

Church Care says:

'any alterations to a church's interior or exterior will have a noticeable impact on the building's character and atmosphere, and will be costly. It is therefore advisable to consider carefully whether the need for change is properly justified. Apart from saving time and costs, reconsidering your needs and the required changes might prevent the execution of disappointing alterations. Proper consideration of the real requirements might show that new facilities can easily be accommodated within the church building and that an extension is not necessary.'

## **Tower**

Two platform floors are to be placed within the existing tower partitioned from the main nave of the church with acoustic glass partitioning. This will provide a reconfigured entrance lobby and two additional meeting rooms. We do not support the addition of the two platforms. The platforms will harm the appearance of the stained glass in the west window.

## **Sustainability**

The Hackney Society supports the addition of photovoltaics to the roof, and the other 'eco' measures like rainwater harvesting, etc. However, we would like to see other technologies explored, such as Heritage Solar Slate by PV Systems (a brochure has been attached). St

Silas Church in Pentonville has recently had their roof fitted with this conservation-led technology. Further information about the works at the church can be seen at: <http://www.saint-silas.org.uk/accommodation.asp>

Perhaps if money is a primary consideration the environmental works should be done at a later date.

### **Internal alterations**

We haven't had time to comment on the proposal for the internal alterations.

### **Landscaping**

We haven't had time to comment on the proposal for the landscaping. Overall, we feel the paving at the back of the church needs further consideration.

### **Conclusion**

Overall the Hackney Society does not support the extension in its current location. The architect, Arthur Ashpitel FSA was a local man who was born and buried in Hackney. It would be a fitting tribute to him if the extension respected his modestly proportioned Parish church, which is a great asset to Homerton High Street.

Please confirm receipt of these comments.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of the Planning Sub-group