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CHURCH building & HERITAGE REVIEW



PROJECT







HOLY TRINITY CAMBRIDGE



Background and brief

Holy Trinity, in the centre of Cambridge, is a significant grade II* Medieval church within the Central Conservation Area which covers the historic core of the city. The church sits on the corner of two busy pedestrianised shopping streets, with a pathway to the rear entrance to Marks and Spencer making up the south boundary of the site. The atmosphere is often bustling with buskers, shoppers, tourists and food stalls, and the churchyard acts as a buffer zone providing space and greenery.

The church has highly significant links with the growth of evangelical Christianity in Cambridge, particularly through Charles Simeon who served as vicar here for 54 years from 1782, and Henry Martyn, curate in the early nineteenth century. The popularity of Simeon's ministry brought about significant changes in the fabric and re-ordering of the church to accommodate the large numbers of people who attended and parallels can be drawn with the recent phase of work.

Having received Planning and Listed Building Consent approval through their former architect, Richard Griffiths Architects, Purcell were appointed by the PCC in October 2014 to review and adapt the stage 3 design, obtain the necessary faculty approval, and deliver the project to completion. The church has a thriving and vibrant community, closely linked with the University student population, yet their existing accommodation was limited and restricted the mission of the church. The brief was therefore to deliver an ambitious project to provide a warmer and more vibrant welcome, and to give greater flexibility in both worship and hospitality through re-ordering the existing church. New accommodation was to provide multi-use spaces for flexibility of use and future proofing, accessibility for all, and improved circulation and flow. ›

PROJECT





Through careful consultation and review, Purcell negotiated and delivered faculty approval for a complicated new four storey extension and re-ordering of the existing church in its tight city centre location.

Design response and solution

Access through to Marks and Spencer had to be maintained during store opening hours along the passageway to the south, leading to a creative design solution of the upper three floors of the extension cantilevering across the passageway, with an historic archway being retained on the western boundary. The passageway itself has been widened to improve the space, both for users of the new entrance to the church extension and for the wider public.

The tight site access constraints meant a detailed piled foundation solution had to be developed, and then delivered in phases so that access along the passageway was always maintained to Marks and Spencer.

The palette of external materials of buff brickwork and lime mortar, Portland limestone, copper cladding and oak was carefully chosen to complement the fabric of the church and respond to the context of the surrounding buildings, while clearly being a modern addition with contemporary detailing and quality modern design enhancing the existing built environment. Materials at low level were chosen to be robust and easy to maintain due to the public access along the passageway.

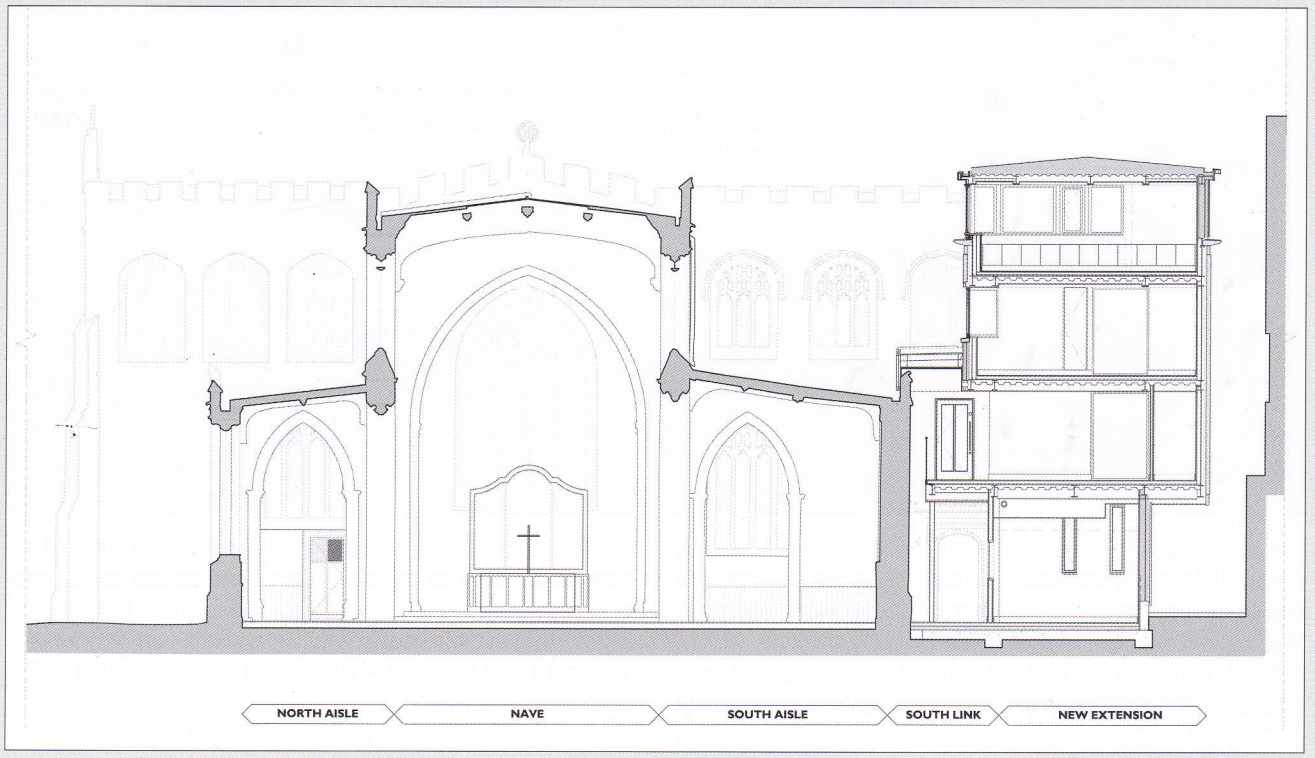
Re-ordering of the main body of the church has transformed it into a bright and flexible worship space through the removal of the remaining pews, the provision of underfloor heating and new stone flooring, a new lighting and AV system, a larger, single level, chancel dais and the provision of new flexible seating throughout. New storage provision keeps the church clear of clutter. ›





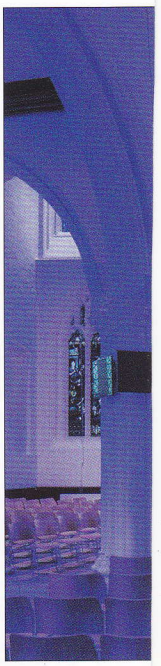





NORTH AISLE
NAVE
SOUTH AISLE
SOUTH LINK
NEW EXTENSION

PROJECT





A major contributor to the success of the re-ordering in meeting the brief to improve hospitality and welcome is the provision of a modern kitchen facility to serve over 200 meals within the church at a single sitting. Many locations were carefully considered and discounted. The option that best met the need, considering both existing significant fabric and usability of the space, was to locate the kitchen under the gallery within the south transept, with the necessary modifications for fire and acoustic purposes and the provision of services. The kitchen servery faces directly into the church to provide the best relationship with the hospitality area it is serving. When not in use, elegant oak screens fold closed to hide the kitchen from view.



The new four storey extension to the south of the church provides much needed ancillary spaces to enable Holy Trinity to offer their improved welcome and hospitality. They now have the spaces to develop youth and children's ministry, to provide increased meeting space and to increase flexibility of use and futureproofing. The stonework of the south wall of the south aisle remains exposed within the circulation spaces of the new extension, so the original form of the church can still be understood.

Accessibility for all is provided through a new vertical circulation core, including a lift, which also gives disabled access to the reconfigured south gallery within the church above the south transept kitchen. Consent was given for a new opening in the existing west wall of the transept. Significantly improved numbers of WCs, including fully accessible facilities, can now accommodate the largest gathering for worship or hospitality.

The overall approach was one of partnership working between client, consultant team and contractor. Coulson Building Group were on board as part of the team from the stage 3 review onwards on a partnering basis and contributed through the detailed design process on buildability. The collaborative teamwork ethic extended through the construction phase, with the main contractor and all members of the team working together to solve the inevitable issues on site of working with an extremely complex existing building and constrained city centre location. ■

PROJECT TEAM:
Client: The PCC of Holy Trinity, Cambridge
Architect, Principal Designer and Lead Consultant: Purcell
Quantity Surveyor: Bremner Partnership LLP
M&E Consultant: Illuminous
Structural Engineer: Peter Dann
Main Contractor: Coulson Building Group
Client Representative: Nick Pettit (Bidwells)
Archaeologist: Cambridge Archaeology Unit
M&E Subcontractor: CPS Building Services Ltd

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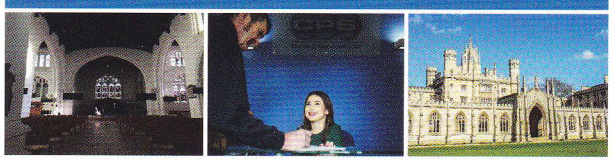

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Winners of the *RSAW Conservation Award 2016* for Cardigan Castle in Wales (pictured).

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