

## **Redevelopment of St Leonard's, Streatham Phase One and Two Statement of Need May 2016 (updated June 2017)**

### **General Information**

St Leonard's is a church founded in the Saxon period in the centre of Streatham on the A23. The oldest extant part of the building is the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Tower. St Leonard's has been remodelled and extended numerous times over the ensuing centuries with one of the most significant rebuilds taking place in the Georgian period when the current Sanctuary and balconies were installed. The development in part reflects the development of Streatham from a small Surrey hamlet on the Brighton Road into a large suburb of London, it has also been a result of the depressing regularity with which the church has burnt down. The most recent rebuild took place after a devastating fire in 1975. After the fire in 1975, St Leonard's was sensitively and practically redeveloped. Having been gutted by the fire only the stone and steel elements of the building survived. The interior was rebuilt in a minimalist style that beautifully marries ancient and modern using a limited palette of materials. There is consensus among the congregation that the unexpected beauty, light and calm of the interior of the church should be preserved and that we should not change the footprint of the building.

St Leonard's is a beautiful, friendly space; with a congregation that gives great importance to hospitality. First and foremost, we are a place of worship. We have three services on a Sunday, a said 8am Eucharist in the Chapel of Unity, a sung Eucharist at 10am and an evening service at 6.30pm. The evening service is usually a sung or choral BCP Evensong, but on the second Sunday of the month we hold a Taize service. We have a well-attended service of Morning Prayer every day at noon and Toddler Church meets in Church on Monday mornings in term time. In addition to this the church is open to the public every week day from 11-2pm. We have a committed band of volunteers who church sit when the building is open. The building is also used regularly as an arts space; hosting concerts, plays and exhibitions. We hire it out as place for celebration; used for barn dances and wedding receptions and a location for a number of large community meetings such as hustings and MP's surgeries. When the building is not being otherwise used we also have a number of local musicians who use the building to rehearse for free and then play for us at our orchestral and choral services.

The church sits in its ancient church yard which contains both listed and distinguished graves. It is one of the few green oases on the Streatham High Road. Adjacent to the church is a large church hall with offices which has been leased to the Spires for the last 25 years. Spires is a charity supporting homeless and vulnerable people with an award winning project that reaches out to sex workers and helps them exit the sex industry. The Church hall contains a fully equipped professional catering kitchen that has the capacity for well over a hundred covers.

## **What do we need?**

St Leonard's produced a Mission Action Plan in 2015. At the heart of it was its vision to:

- To go out and draw people in Streatham to know and love God and one another
- To ensure that all who are drawn to worship in St Leonard's feel that they belong, whoever they are and wherever they have come from.
- To offer worship that gives glory to God, nourishes us spiritually, and inspires us to go out 'to love and serve the Lord' in the world

At the heart of this is the desire to help the very diverse range of people who come to church feel at home when they come here. While the sense of belonging to a church has important social and spiritual dimensions, the physically fabric of the building also needs to be hospitable to everyone in our parish.

We have identified several areas where there is a need for change. We need to remove the obstacles to coming to church and make our life together accessible to everyone. We need to make sure that people's basic physical needs are met. We need to be able to sustain the ministry of the church by having facilities that enable us to generate further income. We need to make the church both more environmentally friendly and safer. We also need to comply with a requirement of the DAC that we have a new lighting system designed and installed as the present one was installed without a faculty.

## **Detail of Statement of Need:**

### **I. Accessibility:**

St Leonard's has street level access for people with limited mobility from one gate. However the front doors are difficult to use for anyone using a push chair or wheelchair. The threshold and porch have an uneven surface. We usually only have one half of the doors unbolted to reduce heat loss from the building but this means that wheelchair and invalid carriage users cannot enter the church unassisted. The door is also an obstacle to people pushing baby buggies or prams.

The building only has two lavatories and these are virtually unusable for people using wheelchairs. One is theoretically accessible to a disabled person, but to achieve this, a wooden partition has to be unbolted at ceiling and floor height which is usually impossible for anyone who needs to use a wheel chair to do. When consulted wheelchair users say they prefer to wait until they get home and that this is a significant deterrent to coming to worship and for other events at the church.

The font is close to the inner doors of the church, in a badly lit area, and there is a poor contrast between the plinth it stands on and the floor. We have had a couple of serious accidents of people tripping over the font. We need to do something about this.

The sanctuary of the church is two steps above the floor level of the nave which makes it impossible for wheelchair users to access the sanctuary, the Lady Chapel,

the Book of Remembrance, the pricket-stand and the historic artefacts kept in this part of the church.

The church lighting system does not adequately light the area around the font so it is easy to trip over the pedestal. The sound system does not pick up the choir or congregational singing or the organ so people using the loop are excluded from an important dimension of our worship.

## **2. Hospitality:**

Part of our hospitality is to make sure that we can meet peoples physical as well as spiritual and social needs when they come to St Leonards and to make sure everyone can see and hear what is going on. To do this we need to ensure that the building is warm and dry, improve our toilets, servery, lighting and sound system.

### **Restoration of the South Slope of the Roof and Rendered Walls to the South Elevation**

We currently get significant water ingress on the south side of the building. The recently completed quinquennial inspection states we should 'continue with the phased roof repairs and make an application to the HLF as soon as possible.' We need a dry building.

### **Toilets**

We currently have two lavatories which is insufficient for the 100-300 people who gather for our main Sunday services. The toilets have a very slow return on the flush and are hard to keep clean and free of odour. These toilets are also inadequate when the church is used for a large event, when we have to hire disabled accessible portaloos, which re placed in the church yard. People with children, disabilities and older people have told us that the inadequate toilets have stopped them coming to church.

### **Servery**

Currently refreshments after services are prepared in a large cupboard space abutting one of the original walls of the tower. It is small and rather damp with no ventilation and no space for a fridge. Refreshments are usually served in the Narthex. This is a relatively small space and we find that after twenty to thirty people have gathered there to get a coffee or tea after the service it is full and the rest of the congregation leave. This often means that new comers who are too shy to push to the front leave without speaking to members of the congregation. We need to be able to serve refreshments straight into the nave to encourage people to socialise and get to know each other and to help new comers integrate into the church. An important part of our life at St Leonard's is having parties and celebrations. These help build community and a sense of belonging among the congregation. Cold buffets are served in church at these events as we lease the Church Hall to a local charity. We would want to continue this, but not to provide facilities for hot food as there is a professional catering kitchen in the Church Hall which we can use for major events with advanced planning.

## **3.**

#### **4. Income Generation:**

Many of the requirements listed here relate to the need to make St Leonard's more sustainable. We recognise that the Church of England has limited resources, and that we need to use the resources we have as a congregation and through our building to support the future of St Leonard's. The building has a good record of being hired as a performance and exhibition space; and we want to build on this. Our plans for improved lavatories, kitchen, meeting space and lighting will facilitate this, as well as those of our community and congregation.

The limited, poor quality toilets have led to our losing a regular booking by the Streatham Festival for their finale concert. We are sure that other hirers are put off by the lack of these basic facilities.

#### **5. Environmental sustainability:**

The south slope of the roof currently has minimal insulation. When we repair the roof we need to add extra insulation.

The wooden doors into the church, and between the narthex and nave, are an important part of keeping the heat in. However, when they are closed, the church looks unwelcoming. Currently there is a tension between our desire to be welcoming and accessible, and to be warm and physically comfortable when in the building. We need to resolve this.

At the moment if the doors are held open to let people in, they let all the heat in the building escape. If the doors are closed and the heat retained the church give the impression that it is closed.

The current lighting system is expensive to run and maintain and uses very high energy bulbs, which only last about three months and are expensive and dangerous to replace. We need a lower energy, lower maintenance system which is simpler to operate.

people with a visual impairment.

#### **The Proposals**

We are going to restore the south slope of the roof to make it water tight. This will involve re-slating the south slope of the nave, including replacing the roof-lights, re-laying the lead gutters and repairing the render to the parapets, a project matching the recently completed HLF and Historic England funded work to the north side of the building. We also need address the below-ground drainage issues uncovered in the course of the last project.

We are going to re-model the north side of the narthex taking out the existing toilet, store room and servery. We will install a suite of six unisex toilets and baby changing facilities. We will put a new servery in the north end of the narthex and create a serving hatch into the nave of the church through the back wall. This will meet our needs to improve our hospitality. The inclusion of a fully accessible toilet will improve our accessibility.

We will move the font forwards six inches towards the Altar and put a contrasting layer of black slate on top of the plinth to make it more visible. We believe that these minor changes will both make the president more audible during baptisms and reduce the risk accidents. We have chosen to use black slate because it give a high contrast with the existing lime stone, but is already part of the limited palette of materials in the church. The largest slab of black slate in the church marks the site of the original altar before the major expansion of the building in the Georgian Period. We like the idea that black slate denotes the place of the sacraments.

We will install a permanent ramp on the north side of the church by raising the flag stones to make the chancel fully accessible to people using wheelchairs.

### **Why do we need to do it and why do we need to do it now?**

The process leading to these proposal, began with a Parish Vision Day held in 2008 to which all the congregation were invited. It was agreed that the church was in dire need of new toilets and a new kitchen. However, our facilitator challenged us to put this need into the context of our mission.

After further discussion the PCC set up a working group to put together a development strategy in 2010. This group recognised that having been rebuilt in 1975 the building was now in need of attention and renewal. The group, drawn from the congregation represented different interests including parents, wardens, musicians, builders, new and long term members of our congregation. They were asked by the Rector to look at the future of St Leonard's as a building to meet the challenges of the future. The group identified as their aim:

*We as the members of St Leonard's aim to provide a focal point for 21st century Streatham which furthers God's work in the community through the arts, worship and outreach*

The group then looked at what building design changes were needed achieve this aim.

Having done initial work, the group ran a consultation day on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011 around this aim and identified needs, followed by a display in church to garner views from anyone using St Leonard's who wanted to take part.

A key message from the consultation was that people in the congregation and those who use the church, do not want changes to the footprint of St Leonard's. They value the unexpected beauty, light and calm of the interior of the church, while confirming that we need to rethink how we use the internal space to meet modern needs and expectations.

This lead to identifying a broader set of needs than those outlined today. It is hoped that these will form later phases of the project.

The architect was then briefed based on this and a second set of consultations was held after the architect had made some initial drawings in response to our brief. The consultation was held over more than a month in November 2012. As well as members of the congregation, our regular hirers and other members of the community, The Streatham Society, The Georgian Society and English Heritage were consulted about the plans.

This led to further modifications and these were presented to the congregation in January 2013. Generally, as the project proceeded the proposed changes have become more conservative. We continued to meet with groups who had particular concerns about how the redevelopment was going to affect them and this influenced the development of the plans. The outline of the project was formally agreed at the PCC meeting in June 2013 and it was agreed to get an estimate of the costs from a quantity surveyor.

In February 2014 the PCC decided to pause the planning of the redevelopment while we undertook our Mission Action Plan. At the same time, we received the report from the quantity surveyor and realised that the project was going to be far more expensive than we had anticipated. We also decided that we needed to make the repair of the roof a priority and so went ahead with raising the funds for and repairing the north slope of the roof and the tower. This work has now been completed.

At the heart of our Vision for mission is hospitality so this became the criteria on which we decided which elements of the scheme to develop first. This also led to our including the repair of the South Slope of the roof to the scheme. Ensuring that the church warm and dry space is the foundation of being able to offer hospitality and to ensure the ongoing viability of the building.