

GROUNDWORK

Design and Access Statement

St Francis Church, Riders Lane, Havant

Proposed improvements to frontage



Background

It has been identified by St Francis Church that there is a need for improved landscape, visual amenity and access that will engage with the congregation and surrounding community. This will make the existing open grassed space directly in front of the church building of greater amenity value for the Church Hall users and surrounding residents and visitors. Groundwork Solent Senior Landscape Architect Mike Kemp has been commissioned by St Francis Church and has worked with the Reverend Jonathan Jeffrey, vicar of the church, to produce the proposals described.

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Views of the surrounding site

Consultation Exercise:

In January 2013 the Church organised for plans to be on display for the users of the church and the community hall users. 85% of these users are also local residents. A questionnaire was drawn up and over 35 people replied. 94% felt the church land needed improving; 82% felt they would like to see something for all ages and would like to see better access to the church. 83% were satisfied with car parking arrangements as they are; 88% supported provision of a quiet area; 76% wanted an area for families. The provision of seating was less popular. 83% felt they and their family would use the site if it were improved There was particular support for the floor maze. Some concerns were expressed about the potential for vandalism.



Use

The existing space consists of an area of open, flat grass bounded by the public footpath along Riders Lane and a hedge enclosure between the grass space and parking / driveway to the church frontage.



Existing frontage from Riders Lane

This proposal is for new footpaths and paved areas, small items of play equipment, sculptural entrance features, seating, and tree and shrub planting, and will provide improved amenity and an area of interest for the local community.

This will enable social gatherings, better community engagement and an enhancement to the setting of St Francis Church

The design is also intended to facilitate children's play by providing small sculptural play equipment. The nearest play facility being 500m away across a busy main road.

Hard surfaced paths will provide a choice of access routes to the church, a central plaza space, and will draw passers-by through the site.

Amount

Total area of new footpaths and paving = 340 sq m

Proposed new paving is all located on one level and a combination of bitmac and block paving is proposed.

Total area of new planting = 120 sq m

No of new trees = 14

Layout

The proposed new footpath routes are intended to formalise natural desire-lines from both North and South approaches to the site, from Riders Lane, and an additional central route directly on the main axis of the church building. Paths are designed to provide a sweeping arc of movement towards the main entrance, and to provide social gathering spaces. The large area of existing grass is broken up into reduced areas, within which small incidental play features are located, with seating areas overlooking them. The paving as a whole is intended to be low maintenance but of a

generally better quality than the plain bitmac currently in place. The central axis is further enhanced by strategically sited arch features, which will serve to emphasise the symmetry of the church façade, and provide a strong visual identity which will be more visible when approaching the church frontage from further along Riders Lane.

Scale

The scope of the new landscaped space is bounded by the public footpath along Riders Lane and the existing driveway and parking, which forms a sweeping arc, across the church frontage. The width of paths is deliberately varied, along gentle curves, and the layout is intended to be in keeping with the scale of the surrounding space, which is dominated by the imposing church frontage. Sufficient space has been provided for small gatherings outside the church, and increased circulation, around the space.

Landscape and Appearance

Materials:

Paths – bitmac, and light brown block paving in varying patterns, with well defined edgings. Surface water will run off onto adjacent grassed areas with small soakaway drainage to the larger areas of hard surface, if necessary.



Herringbone pattern block paving with brick edges

Arch features will be commissioned using a local artist-blacksmith, and the final design will be based on the plans included with this application.



Play Equipment:

Items of equipment are intended to provide a range of activities using the principles Natural Play. The majority of materials used would be timber, with some metal elements, and natural rock.

A tactile maze is included which is designed to provide a puzzle to solve, and to give young children an idea of what it is like to be blind or to have difficulty seeing properly. The maze is constructed with a pattern of tactile pavers which have rounded 'blisters' which can be felt by walking over them. These are the same as those used at road crossings, where they help people with poor or no eyesight to find their way across roads safely. The idea is to find your way through the maze and get to the middle, but with your eyes shut, starting at the gap in the outer ring, walking on the blue surface, using your feet to feel the blisters. A central feature would provide instructions on how the maze is intended to work.

Soft Landscape:

The existing hedge which currently acts as a visual barrier would be removed and replaced with low flowering groundcover such as periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), which is necessarily robust. Within this groundcover a line of birch trees (*Betula pendula*) would be planted. This species is intended to provide a foil to the building without hiding the building from the street.

An area of more intricate and varied planting is placed at the focus of the footpath system, directly in front of the main church steps, and could provide a setting for wedding photographs.

Tree Survey / Impact Assessment

It is considered that the proposal will have no impact on existing trees or their roots as it is not near to any significant trees. Measures will be put in place to ensure that any site traffic during construction will not have any impact on existing trees and their roots. All movement between the main entrance and the area of the works will be along existing routes.