

Acanthus Clews slots community centre into 'picturesque' Cotswolds churchyard

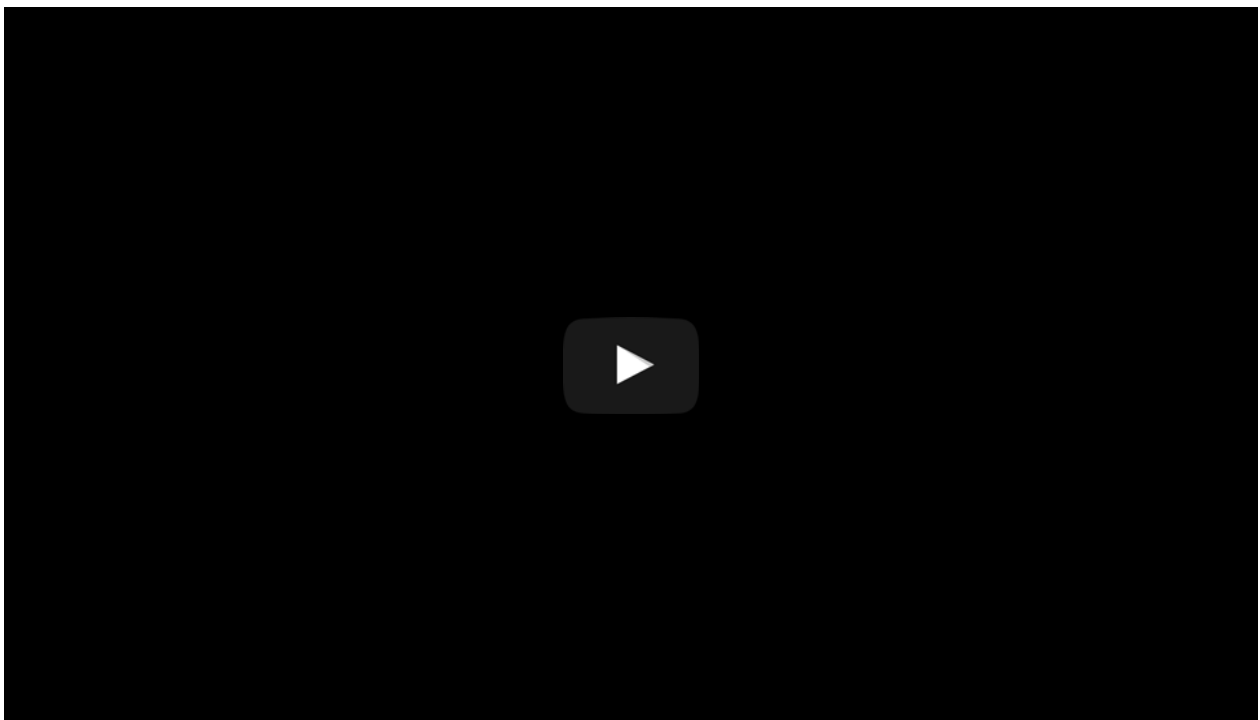
16 February, 2017 By [Mary Douglas](#)

A listed church hall in Burford, Oxfordshire, has been given a £3.2 million upgrade by Banbury-based Acanthus Clews Architects

Warwick Hall, which sits next to St John the Baptist Church, dates from medieval times, but parts of it had recently fallen into disrepair and it was no longer adequate to serve the community of Burford.

Acanthus Clews has refurbished the original hall but has also created a new building which includes another hall, meeting rooms and a café over two levels. A glazed circulation link connects old and new, and provides views to the church.

An extension added in the 1950s was removed to make way for the new building. Within the café area, the stone churchyard wall has been retained. Described by the architect as 'one of the most picturesque churchyards in the country', the site is historically sensitive and the new building's height was reduced during the design process by making the roof curved rather than pitched.



Architect's view

Due to the narrow nature of the site and the lack of opportunities for windows a series of carefully located roof lights, clerestories and glazed links has been introduced. This ensures there is plenty of natural light but also provides opportunities for glimpses back to the existing church and enables users to orientate themselves at all times within the building.

The new hall needs to serve the church and the town in a way that no other local hall currently can; it needs to accommodate a multitude of activities simultaneously. In order for the hall to be truly flexible it has to have the ability to either be a private, intimate black box space or the very opposite - a visibly open hall filled with light and views. This can be achieved via a series of sliding screens and glass sliding doors as well as rooflights and clerestories with black-out blinds. It is hoped that the hall will be able to provide an intimate space for concerts or prayer one day and then be a hub of community activity the next with kids groups and a local day centre for the elderly.

The use of traditional materials was fundamental to contributing to the grain of this setting but these textures are complemented with contemporary structural glazing and zinc cladding, and detailed in a manner to ensure the building reflects its use and expresses its inclusivity. Environmental and financial sustainability are paramount to the church. Future operational costs are as much of a concern as initial capital costs, so an integrated approach to energy usage, generation and conservation has been adopted and this includes a ground source heat pump heating and cooling system for the entire building. Vertical boreholes 120m deep were located within the garden to achieve this.



6 drawings elevations

[zoom in](#)[zoom out](#)

Project data

Location Burford, Oxfordshire
Type of project Community building
Architect Acanthus Clews Architects
Client St John the Baptist Church, Burford
Quantity surveyor Baqus Ltd
Structural engineer Price & Myers
M&E engineer Environmental Engineering Partnership
Landscape architect Clews Landscape Architects
Audio-visual consultant Smart Sense
Lighting designer Firefly Lighting Design
Acoustic engineer Arup Acoustic
Main contractor Edgar Taylor
Stone sub-contractor OG Stonemasonry
Structural glazing IQ Glass
Roofing sub-contractor Everest Roofing
Funding Community fundraising and local grants
Completion date September 2016
Construction cost £3.2 million