

Longcauseway United Reformed church, Dewsbury

Statement of Significance

The Church situated on Longcauseway in Dewsbury is the third such building to occupy the site. The present building was opened in 1884 and was originally designed to seat 800 people. It was built in typically non-conformist style; rectangular with two aisles and galleries on three sides. The structure of the building is in gothic style with a high wooden vaulted ceiling and intricate stonework to the front elevation of the exterior of the building.

The pulpit was built high to give the preacher commanding views of the congregation and also so that the people seated in the gallery could see him. As great emphasis at the time was placed on singing (a lot of the congregation couldn't read), the organ became a status symbol and at Longcauseway this was certainly the case. The organ centrally placed at the front of the church is magnificent and dominates the sanctuary. The woodwork in the church consisting of the pews, choir stalls, pulpit, gallery frontage, font, organ casing and the communion table is beautifully carved and ornate and is not typical of the austere design of many non-conformist churches at that time. The front of the church also has a lectern and seven communion chairs.

In 1964 Dewsbury Town Council published plans for the redevelopment of part of the town centre. These plans were to include the demolition of the building and the re-housing of the church elsewhere on Longcauseway. The Civic Society managed to secure grade 2 Listed Building status for the church and the building was saved. In 1970 new plans were drawn up which incorporated the church as it stands today. The black stonework was cleaned and a new hall was built for the church incorporating two shops beneath the first floor hall, kitchen and meeting rooms. The gardens at the front of the church were removed and replaced with a paved area (still owned by the church) which is often used for ecumenical Christian activities in the town. Floodlights set into the pavement light up the front of the building at night. The hall and shops are built of stone with a pitched slate roof.

In 1977 plans were made to modernise the vestibule and minister's vestry. The back four rows of pews were removed and the vestibule enlarged. The dividing wall between the vestibule and sanctuary now has glass panelling giving the public outside, site of the interior of the church. The church is now open to the public on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays for them to come in and look around or for prayer or quiet reflection. The idea was to welcome the people in and let the gospel out. It has made for a much more welcoming church.

The proposed installation of emergency lighting to comply with modern health and safety regulations does not affect the architectural or historical significance of any of the buildings. The ancillary premises would not be regarded as significant in their own right, and are only listed by virtue of being in the curtilage of the listed building. Where the installation is in the church, it will be installed, and the wiring designed in such a way as to have a minimum of impact on the building.

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