

Report of the Site Re-development Committee to the P.C.C.

December 2003

Subject: The Parish Hall

The committee consists of Keith Saunders (Chair), Peter Miller, Muriel Chandler, Sheila Reid, Paul Stewart, Melvyn Gardner and Sue Smith. Its work at the first two meetings centred on “blue skies thinking” in the sense of considering what we need rather than what we currently have. The following paper summarises our discussions and each section contains a recommendation for P.C.C. approval.

1.1. “Ethos”

We have considered three differing philosophies underlying the provision of facilities:

1. One possibility would be to partition off the back of the church in some way to provide what we need. This would have considerable merits as the current hall would then become surplus to requirements (it might allow us to redevelop and sell on the hall to raise funds).. However it might further isolate the church in the community and restricting the extent to which it can “reach out”. (e.g. by providing facilities for use by sympathetic local organisation).
2. A second possibility would be to provide a facility which was owned and managed by a group of trustees from the community as a “community hall” and would be removed from the direct control of the church, and as such might attract grant funding. However, it was felt that this might allow the facility to be used by organisations which were not broadly in sympathy with our aims.
3. The third possibility was a facility which remained under the control of the church and formed part of its outreach into the community. Organisations sympathetic to the church would use it during the week and at weekends - voluntary organisations, non-profit organisations, charitable schools and other public service facilities and ethical businesses.

The site re-development committee prefers the third approach and recommends it to the P.C.C. for its approval.

1.2. Facilities

The second part of our discussions centred on the facilities we would need rather than being constrained by what we currently have. Our vision is one where we provide facilities as part of our Christian ethos and mission and as part of our outreach to the wider community of Linslade. It could be a physical manifestation of our care for the less privileged in our community but also provide high-quality meeting space, training facilities etc.

The committee feels that we would need a variety of multi-purpose spaces which would maximise use on Sundays as well as throughout the week. Therefore we feel that we need:

- A hall with capacity for 60. The primary need for this centres on its use by community groups during the day whilst being suitable for youth groups (e.g. on Fridays) and on Sunday mornings. The size would be similar to presently: approx 110m². We could not support the provision of a hall merely for our own use at fetes, after service functions/coffee etc.
- One counselling room primarily/exclusively for the use clergy
- One “group room” with comfortable furniture for use by youth groups on Sundays but also as a “relaxation” room during the week for various users – approx 30-35 m²

- A small meeting room for 20-25, with conference type seating (boardroom table, chairs, flipchart, whiteboard, internet access and projector) which could be rented out to local companies, schools etc for training purposes. This would be useful for our own purposes and could bring in substantial income.
- Reception area with office for a secretary or similar
- It was agreed that a fully equipped kitchen would be appropriate for a vision of our facilities which involved regular staffing of the centre and opening as a café or sandwich bar during the week. It could be used for, e.g. luncheon clubs. A full kitchen which was only used for occasional church lunches etc. could not be financially justified.
- Toilets, including disabled, with baby-changing facilities
- Possible on-site living accommodation for full-time caretaker/manager
- Good storage facilities for the church and also for others who use it.
- The whole to be linked to the church with a passage into the south side. Would require new door through the south wall of the church. Could allow for main entrance to the hall to be in this passage.

This list is merely an outline at this stage and is intended to form an initial brief for an architect. It is without commitment: as can be seen from the strategy (see below); any plans drawn up at this stage will be subject to substantial revision following consultation with relevant people and organisations.

The committee requested the P.C.C.'s approval for this approach as a basis for an instruction to an architect, bearing in mind the proviso expressed above.

1.3. Structural survey

Once the above discussions had taken place, a survey of the hall and cottage was commissioned and carried out. The full survey is available on the church website.

The main findings of this survey were:

the roof coverings are in poor condition; there is evidence of recent movement at the kitchen end; the roof timbers are in poor condition; there is considerable decay of the exterior stonework due to inappropriate repointing; the main walls are otherwise reasonably sound; the windows are rotted; woodwork has evidence of beetle infestation; the chimney cowlings are rusted; there is a risk of dry and wet rot.

The main recommendations of the survey are:

to demolish and replace the kitchen end; to replace completely the kitchen and toilet facilities; to redesign office space in the cottage (or even to demolish the cottage); to renew completely electricity, heating, hot water and waste systems; repair/resurface exterior walls; replace windows; provide a fire escape in the cottage (if it remains as it is). Other recommendations are also made which depend on decisions yet to be made.

The P.C.C. was asked to note the contents and conclusions of the survey report.

1.4. Strategy

Suggested strategy for taking this forward :

1. December PCC meeting: discussion of this document and approval of key points
2. Late December 2003: A survey of parishioners to highlight key findings and invite views. The facilities that we need, may be amended in the light of feedback.

3. January 2004 or earlier if possible: Architects appointed to draw up outline plans, with a range of options, based on agreements so far and the recommendations of the survey.
4. March 2004: Letter written to all current and potential users of the hall spelling out what we are looking to do and inviting their thoughts (i.e. what would encourage and what would prevent their using our facilities). Personal contact made with key organisations/individuals who are then invited to a meeting to discuss outline plans produced by architect.
5. Following 1-4: further discussions at P.C.C.

The committee requested P.C.C. approval for this strategy, and approval for appointment of an architect to draw up plans.

Following is the relevant section from the surveyors report , and a questionnaire asking your views on the way forward. Please take time to complete the form and return it. The future of the Parish hall is a vital part of our planning for the future of St Barnabas and its work in Linslade. If you have any questions or alternative suggestions please contact us

Appendix

The following is section 29 reproduced verbatim from the survey report of November 2003:

29 CONCLUSION

The property inspected is of some considerable age and has been altered and adapted for differing purposes over time. Clearly the building has not been maintained to the highest standards and this is not surprising given the extensive nature and limited funds available.

Any consideration of redevelopment and/or refurbishment must initially be based on space requirements and how the existing building can be adapted. It is only with a clear idea with regard to space and use that you can give due weight and consideration to the defects and repairs required highlighted within this report.

You must also consider the historic nature of the property and the planning restrictions that will inevitably be placed upon you when making your decisions. It is likely that you will be required to at least maintain a similar visual appearance to the front elevations.

We would therefore note that the following significant repairs are now required to the property as it stands:

- a) The roof coverings, valley gutters, box gutters, etc. all require renewal.
- b) The roof structure to the right-hand extension is distorted and is likely to require renewal.
- c) The box gutters and chimney stack areas are showing significant signs of damp penetration and extensive timberwork repairs are likely in this area.
- d) The right-hand extension is showing evidence of significant structural movement that may be progressive. Previous attempts at stabilisation appear to have not been effective.
- e) The general provision of kitchen and toilet facilities to the main hall are of a very basic nature and require renewal.
- f) The provision of office space within the cottage is ad-hoc and would significantly benefit from redesign.
- g) Complete renewal of the electricity, heating and hot water systems would be beneficial.

With due regard to the above we would recommend, subject to detailed discussions with planners, etc. that you consider demolition and rebuilding of the right-hand extension maintaining a similar front façade.

Renewal and probable simplification of the roof structure to provide mezzanine floors for office, or smaller committee rooms, maintaining the three pitched roof areas from the front elevation as existing.

General refurbishment and upgrading of the public facilities and the creation of adaptable spaces using moveable partitioning.

The above would most likely necessitate the demolition and rebuilding of the rear cottage areas in order that space can be properly rationalised.