

## **UPDATE - PPT Re-ordering: issues arising from project plans**

### **Overall response to presentations of initial and iterated sketches**

In the main, the responses to the presentation of the architect's interim sketches and subsequent iterations have been broadly positive and supportive with several respondents endorsing the proposal either in full or in large part and some indicating that they hoped we really are now nearing the point when things can go ahead.

Some respondents were content that we now have a credible project proposal with identifiable strengths but questioned the priority of some aspects compared to others and felt there was more scope for simpler solutions and re-designated/designed usage of existing space. Overall, these responses provide a useful reference point for carefully re-examining the rationale for some specific aspects of the re-ordering proposal and testing their justification against both the relevant cost drivers and in relation to any technical complications that they may engender.

There was explicit support for the use of chairs, but also a reiteration of the advocacy of using mobile pews instead (as exemplified in Sidmouth Parish Church). There remains a more general concern about reducing total seating capacity both by the removal of (all/most) of the pews and replacing them with seats and by the insertion of a glass & wood enclosed space in the outer North aisle. The latter feature has now been dropped but the extent of any loss of seating capacity needs to be determined with greater accuracy to determine impact. It may be that there are legal implications to retaining seating capacity for civic services and the concept of utilising a mixed seating arrangement by using chairs in the central nave and deploying mobile pews elsewhere may warrant further exploration.

There was also explicit endorsement of the plans for a renovated and enhanced West porch entrance and emphatic support for ensuring that its interior is extensively de-cluttered.

Mention was made of the need for disabled parking with access to both the proposed renovated Parish Church Room and to the Church building itself (see FAQ 5. below). The innovative idea of organising long-term parking by permit in Mary Street Car Park and utilising a minibus carrier to convey worshippers to and from the church was mooted. However, concerns were raised about the volume of works traffic during any construction phase. The need for a carefully organised traffic plan was emphasised. Moreover, there is concern about the overall impact on traffic flows and parking in the wake of any church re-ordering especially as part of its core purpose explicitly anticipates greater and more frequent usage of the church and the Parish Church Room. It is clear that any plans for re-ordering will have to include some traffic and parking impact assessment and be carefully co-ordinated with the Town Council's wider traffic and parking assessment to ensure it is compatible with planned improvements.

The issue of storage space was raised by several respondents (see Q. 6. below) as was the increased challenge and burden of cleaning. Addressing this will probably require the services of a contracted cleaner or Verger being factored into the running

costs of the church and therefore incorporated into the pricing policy for external usage of both church and Parish Church Room (see FAQ 7. below).

Finally attention was drawn to the fact that the church is probably a 'Sick Building' as attested by the inadequate heating and ventilation, and the presence of damp and mould (see FAQ 9. below). It was suggested that a professional environment assessment and opinion would be needed at some point to ensure that the reordering project addresses this problem and avoids exacerbating it through the planned provision for a servery and adjacent toilet facilities. Furthermore, there should be a principled commitment to improving the overall carbon footprint of the church and its environmental impact including energy sourcing and the possible usage of Solar Powered panels on south-facing roof space.

Sound advice was received to make use of a laser pointer in any future presentation. The importance of making full use of the church website for updated sketches with costing scenarios and commentary/FAQs was noted and is being implemented accordingly.

Where individuals responded in a more general way to the overall re-ordering project, their reaction was somewhat ambivalent. Among some, there was confidence that we are now very much on the right track. Among others, while the concept of the restoration of church facility and medieval fabric is strongly supported, the concepts of renovation and refurbishment are viewed much more guardedly with a strong preference for accommodating as much as possible in the Parish Church Room. To some extent these latter respondents question the need for a whole scale re-ordering project/process and articulate some concerns with regard to its rationale/ necessity, scope, efficacy of outcome, sustainable impact and affordability. These reflections will need to be born in mind and considered further as the overall cost-benefit implications and technical details become clearer because, ultimately, a project of this kind can only succeed if it has secured not only the consent, but the active support of the church congregation and the wider community.

## **FAQs**

### **1. Do we have any costings for the project?**

**YES.** *The Architect's preliminary cost estimate for the work on the church building itself was projected at £859,663.61 for the first two phases - if we proceeded on the basis of three phases (see FAQ 11.). The Church Finance Group was tasked to undertake a comparative review analysing the significant cost drivers and assessing the viability, affordability and implications of the work and cost plans. The PCC received a report and decided to re-consider options and priorities to ensure we were configuring the work in the most cost-effective way. It then commissioned a Quantity Surveyor to undertake a Preliminary Construction Cost Estimate and the subsequent report projected a total of £701,000.00. Obviously the PCC will want to undertake a thorough risk assessment including identifying realistic sources of funding. This will need to be completed before setting any indicative budget threshold for the proposed re-ordering work in the church which, strategically is seen as the crucial stage. The Parish Church Room will now be considered a second project subject to further consideration and a separate contract.*

## **2. Do we want two crèches in the glass enclosure envisaged for part of the North Aisle?**

**NO.** What had been envisaged was an enclosed flexible multi-purpose sound-proof space in the outer North aisle which can be used for crèche and for a range of other purposes – for example as a meeting space for those planning services or leading house groups; as a café church for young people; as a venue for study groups, outreach coordination, and meetings of external organisations and associations in the town. It was envisaged that the multi-space would have child-proof and safe retractable folding oak/glass door panels utilising a version of the Dorma Agile Sliding Door System to allow the space to be re-appropriated for seating during large services, concerts, etc. Subsequently consideration of the cost drivers involved and feedback from the DAC on the appearance and architectural fit of the enclosure within the overall church space led to its being jettisoned from the project plan.

## **3. Will the South and West porch entrances lose their present wooden doors?**

**NO.** Both the South and West doors require inner and outer glazing to secure the desired level of constancy and stability of temperature in the main building. Both will retain their respective wooden doors specifically for security purposes and to ensure the continuity of their historical authenticity and aesthetic appeal. However, it is acknowledged that proposed glazing for the South and West porch inner doors will require careful siting so as to retain the wooden doors in the South Porch and to blend with the wooden façade and panelling in the West porch. Ambient light from the West porch could probably be improved by renovating the glass window above the outer doorway and re-visiting the kind of glass used for the inner Bell Tower window. In any event, the wooden doors will remain open whilst the church is in use.

## **4. What are the plans for energy/heating?**

The solution sought (in the Statement of Need) is for an energy-efficient and effective heating system. At present, the stated preference is for underfloor heating utilising a ground heat pump or a state-of-the-art gas boiler supplemented (as necessary) by overhead electric radiant heating elements. The possibility of installing Solar Power panels in a suitable location will also be considered. The relative cost of any energy source or combination of sources will have to be reviewed in the light of changing energy pricing over recent years but what is envisaged is a long-term environmentally sustainable cost-effective solution. The DAC have proffered advice on what might constitute the optimum solution.

An internal recommendation has been made that the church consider a gas CHP (Combined Heat & Power) unit as being a more suitable “on demand” heating and power system that could also provide electricity and underfloor heat for the Church and Church Room. Similarly, a recommendation has been received that we should look at the possibility of utilising water source heat pumps if there is a local domestic system in place with which we can link up. These are options that will be seriously considered as possible energy solutions in terms of scope, utility, ease of installation and value for money. The issue of improved insulation through secondary glazing of windows and “blown-in” loft insulation has also been raised and these are measures that might help reduce energy usage and maintain a more constant temperature. To some extent these are technical matters that should be explored further as part of the detailed building specification process within established cost parameters.

## **5. How will disabled car parking and access be facilitated?**

*The present access to the Church building through the South porch via a ramp, cobbled pathway and steps is inhibitive to some and cannot be improved owing to Listed Building related development restrictions. The present access to the Church Room from the car park is also difficult and somewhat dangerous because of vehicle traffic coming around a bend in the approach drive. The proposal eventually envisages incorporating a ramp or lift system from the car park into any refurbished Parish Church Room facility. It may be that car parking space immediately adjacent to this ramp or lift can be prioritised for disability parking. The present entrance to the Church building via the West porch facilitates assisted disabled access, but is again restrictive. The proposal envisages improved disabled access through the West porch into the church (and toilet facilities) and again it is possible that parking space at the bottom of the approach drive may be prioritised for disability parking.*

## **6. How/where will spare chairs and the disassembled dais be stored?**

*The issue of storage space has been addressed at some length in the Statement of Need. The plan is to create significant new storage space by rehabilitating the area currently occupied by the organ console, the organ loft and the vestry. By raising the organ onto a platform, relocating the organ console and knocking through the wall from the vestry to access the organ loft, it is intended to create space for storage of furniture and furnishings so that they can be set up and/or taken down on a regular basis. It may be necessary to consider interim storage arrangements in temporary facilities set up adjacent to the vestry.*

## **7. How will cleaning of the glass, toilets and other items be organised?**

*The issue of cleaning – glass, toilets, etc. – will certainly require us to establish a sustainable long-term maintenance plan. While the Men's Group would probably be happy to take on some aspects of this, if the church is to be used a lot more after any refurbishment, then part of the income received from outside usage could be used to engage a vergger or cleaner. Hygiene and health and safety considerations are likely to require the introduction of at least some professionalisation of cleaning arrangements. This would not stop any people who would like to clean voluntarily having their own responsibilities (like brass, etc.).*

## **8. What are the implications of the toilet entrance and siting for the church stained glass windows and the immediate external surrounds?**

*The proposed toilets will be accessed through a doorway in the west end of the outer North aisle. This will not affect the stained glass windows directly in any way. Only the clear glass window on the far north side of the west elevation will be materially altered: it will be raised slightly to accommodate an archway into the toilet area. The toilet area is below the line of sight of the most recently inserted stained glass window. It will not impinge on the horizon of the neighbouring house above as the bank immediately behind the North-West wing of the church building will be excavated to allow the structure to retain a low profile. Some memorial stones, however, will have to be re-sited following due process. Drainage will be arranged within the normal parameters of the technical engineering requirements and provision for planning, water & sewage, health & safety matters.*

**9. The church is an old medieval building that whilst of great character and beauty is also cold, damp and plagued by poor ventilation. What is being done to ensure that it can escape from this ‘Sick Building’ syndrome?**

*It is recognised that there are some health issues with the Church building which currently suffers from poor ventilation, cold and damp as attested by the widespread mould. Moreover, its masonry structure is permeable to water and vulnerable to ‘weather’. It is acknowledged that a professional environment assessment and opinion will be needed at some point to ensure that the re-ordering project addresses this problem systemically. However, there is some reason to be confident that a steadier source of low-level heat as envisaged from underfloor heating will improve the health of the building and prevent mould growth. This does not preclude the possibility that we may need to tackle the existing mould factor directly by means of a specialist treatment and also ensure that improved ventilation, air circulation and extraction are factored into the final plans. Re-decoration of the internal masonry of the church building is envisaged as the final element of the re-ordering process.*

**10. What activity/outcome is the sum of £50,000 for which the church will be seeking promissory pledges supposed to achieve?**

*The sum of £50,000 is the upper limit that has been set by the PCC for Architect’s professional fees for the next stage of the planning up to the DAC issuing a Faculty. It covers what is technically referred to as RIBA stages 2 (concept design) and 3 (developed design) to get the project through DAC (and any relevant Planning permission). We shall request that these, with the fees paid to date for the work after the feasibility study deducted, be the subject of a formal quote including VAT and expenses.*

**11. Can the re-ordering of the church building be broken down into stages and phases?**

*The simple answer is yes, but there may be knock-on effects in terms of incremental costs which are inevitably increased by adopting such an approach. Our current thinking is that the PCC needs to set out clearly the rationale (for example, in relation to fundraising) behind phasing the project, but that in relation to the church building project itself, these might consist in the following:*

**Phase 1a** – access, heating, flooring and seating in the nave, chancel and Lady Chapel. This would include the refurbishment of the south and west porch entrances, installing the server, installing pipework for it and all toilets, and conduits for power and audio/visual facilities. This work would prevent any use of the building for its duration.

**Phase 1b** – construction of toilets and insertion of audio/visual apparatus.

**Phase 1c** – work on the vestry and organ loft, the organ itself and storage space.

**12. What happens next?**

*The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) undertook another formal visitation in late 2015 – this time accompanied by other relevant stakeholders. The Church Re-ordering Group subsequently provided an update and briefing for the Church Wardens and together with them, a presentation was made to the church congregation in order to convey the initial sense of the DAC’s advice with regard to the present proposals and to seek further feedback. The PCC has received and*

*reviewed the DAC's advice, the architect's projected costings and the QS Report and, pending one further round of consultation, will agree a statement of intent. In the event that the church confirms its desire to move to initiate the contractual phase of re-ordering, that decision will be ratified before the end of the calendar year with a view to making a formal application to the Diocese.*

***NB. Points needing further consideration.***

In order to maximise the available space for storage and small group meetings, there may be a need to re-visit the door/entrance located in the Vestry area space. We think the external door of the organ loft (presently accessed by a rickety folding metal slide) will become redundant as access to the store will be via the new internal door from the vestry which will still have an external door. *To be explored further.*