

The Church Centre, West Malling

Update and Recommendation to the PCC

from The Church Centre Working Party

In January 2015, the PCC agreed to explore options for the sale of the Church Centre and to do so only by securing best value with planning permission for change of use (cf. 2015/01-150120, para 7.1.4) and tasked us with driving the project forward (para 7.1.6). In February 2015, the PCC approved the use of monies from the Church Centre Fund to engage Derek Hudson & Partners as an Architect to assist with the planning process and potential change of use (2015/02-150217, para 8.1.1).

This paper reports on progress so far and asks the PCC to decide on a preferred option for our planning application and to consider future costs to the project.

In moving forward on the proposal to dispose of the Church Centre with the benefit of planning permission for residential development, two options for such development are currently being considered:

Option One:

- ❖ retain and convert the existing building to provide three three bedroom residential units; dormers will probably be permitted in addition to limited extensions to the rear of the existing building;
- ❖ if possible add in one or two new residential units to the rear of the site;
- ❖ provide sufficient car parking for the number of units, plus visitor parking and possibly an additional two spaces for residents of Churchfields adversely affected by the “loss” of two on-street parking spaces due to the creation of an vehicular access way into the site.

Option Two:

- ❖ demolish the existing building and build five to six two/ three bedroom semi/ terraced residential units on the site (five to six being the maximum number thought possible to fit on to the site);
- ❖ parking as in Option One.

The Working Party met with Lucinda Green (LG), Planning Officer for TMBC on site on Tuesday 12th May to discuss the above options. LG’s preference was strongly in favour of retaining and converting the existing building and had reservations about any additional new build units; she was strongly opposed to the idea of demolition and replacement with new build houses. TMBC’s Conservation Architect, Geoff Pearson, also visited the site separately and has confirmed that he thought conversion to residential would be a suitable future use for the building. He did not make any specific comments in relation to demolition and new build.

Clarification of land ownership at the junction of the site with Churchfields and St Mary's Court is being sought.

LG also indicated that a number of reports may need to be included with any planning application such as:

- ❖ Archaeology Report – a Desk Top report may be sufficient; preliminary enquiries to be made to Kent Archaeological Society
- ❖ Heritage Assessment – in relation to the Church and the Churchyard's listed walls
- ❖ Contamination Report – possibly, again Desk Top – maybe necessary due to existence of the Air Raid Shelter (LG had no objections to this being removed)
- ❖ Design and Access Statement – need to link in to adjacent Church
- ❖ Listed Building Consent will be necessary for any works affecting the walls i.e. removal of the air raid shelter
- ❖ Asbestos survey of existing building
- ❖ Possibly a "scoping" Ecology Survey - to confirm no bats in residence

Finance

<confidential>

Next Steps

Bearing in mind the preliminary advice from TMBC and being aware of strong local feelings for the Church Centre as a building, **the Working Party's recommendation to the PCC is that we proceed with a planning application for Option One:** the conversion of existing building plus one or two new build units to the rear

The PCC need to confirm that it is happy for the Working Party to continue work on preparing a planning application for this Option with a view to submitting this to TMBC by the middle of July 2015.

David would also like to arrange an open afternoon for Churchfields residents, as soon as possible, to give them sight of the proposed plans and the PCC's preferred option.

There will be costs associated with this application which will need to be covered by St Mary's PCC:

- ❖ <confidential>

Clare Innes,
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