

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO Conservation Advisory Group, 28th May 2003.
Leader & Conservation Portfolio Holder.
AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager.

St. Denis Church, East Hatley. Results of the Architects investigations.

Purpose

1. To present the results of the recent investigation works and seek views on the appropriate options for the long-term future of the former church. (*Copies of the architects report will be available at the meeting*).

Background

2. The former parish church of St. Denis, East Hatley was conveyed by the Church Commissioners to South Cambridgeshire District Council in 1983 'for use as a nature reserve and for the study of natural history...'. The conveyance was for the church building only, accessed by a right of way through the churchyard and with provision to erect a notice board. Conditions applied to the conveyance prohibit any demolition or architectural or structural changes without the approval of the Church Commissioners. The churchyard remains open for burials.
3. The building is a listed Grade II* and dates from the fourteenth century but was restored by the notable nineteenth century architect, William Butterfield, who also built the Chancel.
4. The churchyard is maintained by the St. Denis Local Nature Reserve Committee who organise working parties to maintain the grass, hedges, etc
5. Architects Purcell, Miller Triton, were commissioned to inspect the church in January 2002 and March 2002. Between these two dates, high winds had caused structural damage to the Nave roof and emergency repairs had been instructed. It was however, not possible to make an adequate assessment of the structural condition of the church due to ivy growth on the walls and roofs and dense tree growth surrounding the building.
6. By November 2003 the church building had become almost completely overgrown by ivy which again combined with high winds to cause significant damage to the roofs, such that parts of the structure were deemed unsafe. Architects were therefore appointed to report on the condition of the fabric. The ivy has consequently been stripped and this report summarises the conclusions of the architects, including options available to the Council.

Considerations

7. Messrs E. Bowman & Sons Ltd were appointed on behalf of SCDC to remove the ivy growth from the fabric of the Church this work was completed during the early part of this year. Subsequently, on 11th March 2003 Professor Heyman and Purcell Miller Tritton revisited the site to carry out further inspections following the removal of the ivy. It is their that reports are summarised below.

8. **Summary of key points by Purcell Miller Tritton, ARCHITECTS.**

- Severe damage to part of the external walls has been discovered. Some of the walls are unstable and are in danger of collapse. Scaffolding has been retained to the east end of the church to prevent the wall from collapsing
- The roof tiles are insecure and are liable to fall off during windy weather. The perimeter fencing has been left in place to protect the public from injury by falling roof tiles.
- The removal of the ivy has left voids in the fabric and has affected the integrity of both the roof and the walls leaving many of the tiles loose and much of the flint stone facing in a decayed condition.
- The report includes photographs which illustrate these structural problems and emphasize the need to carry out safety measures.

Much of the content in the previous report prepared by Purcell Miller Tritton on 11th June 2002 still applies and their first two options A and B are unchanged. Their original options C & D are now superseded by options E, F and G outlined below for consideration. (*Hence number A,B, E,F,G*).

9. **Option A : Do Nothing.**

It is clearly possible to leave the building alone and allow nature to take its course (high structures - bellcote, chimney, gables, roofs would eventually collapse) so long as the existing security measures were maintained. This would not however, be a cost free option. It must also be appreciated that as a Grade II* listed building this building will be appear on English Heritage's list of Buildings at Risk Register and remedial action may therefore be encouraged if not required to be undertaken by the Secretary of State.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Immediate cost to the council limited.	Reliant upon 'nature' so impossible to determine a timetable for release of liability. Eventually clearance costs will have to be met.
	The area around the church would need to be securely fenced for an indefinite period to prevent access and protect against the danger of falling masonry and tiles. Maintenance costs of fencing.
	Potential insurance liability for accidents caused to anyone, including children who did manage to gain access to the building.
	Access to recent burials could not be maintained
	The Council would be in breach of its statutory obligation to maintain a listed building in its ownership
	The loss of the architectural work of Butterfield

	(roofs, chancel and interior).
	Repair problems will accelerate and it is likely that the Council would be required to undertake repairs by English Heritage (Sec. State).
Estimated Cost (secure fencing; scaffolding; clearance; landscaping)	£15k (assuming no further health & safety works & excludes insurance costs)

10. **Option B : Demolition**

In order to demolish the church the Council would need the approval of the Secretary of State and the Church Commissioners. It is likely that this course of action would be resisted by these bodies and would require a public inquiry if this option were to be pursued.

Advantages	Disadvantages
No long term maintenance costs	Demolition proposal likely to be resisted by both Sec. State & Church Commissioners and consequently subject to a potentially expensive public inquiry.
	Loss of architecturally and historically important Grade II* building.
	Loss of local landmark.
	Loss of the wildlife habitat (owls/bats use building).
	Temporary disruption to the churchyard.
Estimated cost (inc. clearance etc)	£50,000

11. **OPTION E (REF ADDENDUM REPORT APRIL 03) : Holding repairs**

Now that the ivy has been removed the building structure is very exposed. Strong winds and heavy rainfall will accelerate the deterioration of the fabric if immediate steps are not taken to protect the building. The architect recommends the following :

- timber shoring to be applied to the east and west gable walls
- timber shoring to the south porch.(west side)
- temporary weather proofing should be undertaken to the roof.
- exposed masonry by covering with impervious flexible sheeting (possibly supported on an independent structure).
- Remnant plant growth remaining in the fabric of the building needs to be cut back and killed with an approved proprietary product.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Works will arrest further deterioration.	Temporary life of works and likely ongoing maintenance costs.
Potential to buy some time to seek consensus on restoration and use and possible grant support for restoration.	Grant support not likely to be available for this phase alone.
	Appearance likely to be relatively

	unattractive.
	Need to retain security fencing for public safety.
	Continued temporary disruption to use of churchyard.
Estimated cost	(a) £20,000 (b) £40,000 (if full temporary roof)

12. **OPTION F** (REF ADDENDUM REPORT APRIL 03) : **Make the building safe by completing long-term repairs**

Under this option repairs to the structure would be carried to consolidate the structure and make the fabric wind and weather tight. The security measures could be removed and the churchyard returned to full access. Public access to the interior of the church would still need to be restricted But this option would provide a weatherproof building with safe public access to the churchyard and a greatly improved appearance.

Works recommended by the architects are as follows :

- The roof stripped and retiled using salvaged material and reclaimed tiles to match existing. Roof timbers repaired and members replaced where necessary.
- Rainwater goods installed and drains laid to discharge into soakaways.
- Areas of the flint stone/rubble walls in poor condition rebuilt.
- Inappropriate mortar pointing removed and the entire wall surface re-pointed with lime mortar.
- Damage to the internal wall surfaces consolidated and replastered.
- Doors and windows would be repaired/replaced as appropriate.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Safe weatherproof building.	Cost
Deterioration arrested and restoration of architectural appearance.	Interior remains un-restored and use of the building would not be available until restored.
Danger removed and full access to churchyard restored	Maintenance regime required.
May attract grant funding support (from EH , Landfill Tax etc. etc)	
Building viable to explore new uses (see below)	
Estimated cost.	£80,000 plus Option E(a) = £100,000 (may be reduced to £80,000 if a rapid decision is made and temporary works described in Option E prove unnecessary)

13. **OPTION G:** (REF ADDENDUM REPORT APRIL 03) **Making the building useful**

All the work described in option F would be carried out together with additional works as follows:-

- Reinstatement of the interior floor structure and finish.
- Internal door repairs/replacements.
- Internal walls to be lime washed.
- New electrical and heating installations.
- New foul drainage system.

Fitting out works would need to be carried out to suit the required use of the building including lavatory accommodation.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Building fully restored and available for new use.	Cost.
	New use yet to be identified.
	Maintenance costs and regime.
Estimated costs	£75,000 plus Option F = £175,000

14. **The way forward ?**

It is evident that all options will require some form of investment to resolve the future of this building. Given that deliberate neglect and demolition would not seem to be appropriate options and it may take time to decide on the eventual use of the building, the advice of the consultant architect is to implement Option E (para. 12 above) as a minimum option. This would enable urgent works to be undertaken in the short-term to prevent the building from further deterioration and enable further consultation (including that with potential funding bodies to be undertaken) on the way forward. It will also buy time so that appropriate discussion can be held to try to determine a long term use. This may include a radical departure to allow the building to be converted to something with an economic value.

15. If, however, a rapid decision is made to implement either Option F or G then it will not be necessary to carry out the temporary works thereby saving this expense.

16. Option G is the most expensive alternative and would require an end user/purchaser to be found before implementation. It is the most likely option to attract funding and would need expanding to allow wildlife habitats to continue and a provision for public access and education. However, it is also likely to require a concentrated examination of use options and funding to be sourced.

17. ***Necessary new use.***

As with all historic buildings the key to securing the long-term future is a viable use. It is considered necessary to commence wide discussions to explore the potential options for new uses. Ideally the building should be used for some form of community use or perhaps as a base for wildlife studies and access to the countryside. However, consideration needs to be given to alternatives. These may include converting the building to some form of private or commercial use. To date the options have not been explored.

Financial Implications

16. Initial expenditure of up to £20,650 was authorised by the Conservation Portfolio in November 2002 to enable the ivy to be stripped and the appropriate investigations to be undertaken, with an allowance for undertaking emergency stabilisation works, if necessary. These were considered to be essential preliminary works to enable the potential way forward to be considered.
17. To date works to the cost of £9,941 have been completed, these include the cost of stripping the ivy, supporting scaffold and the architects report. These have been funded from the Council's budget for Historic Building's Preservation Fund.
18. If any of the option outlined above are to be undertaken then additional resources will be required to be made available from this budget. Such funding will have to be approved by Cabinet.

Legal Implications

18. SCDC is the owner of the building and therefore responsible for its maintenance and use.

Staffing Implications

19. None specific.

Sustainability Implications

20. Restoration and reuse of historic buildings is a fundamental component of meeting the objectives of sustainability.

Consultations

21. At the time of writing this report the St. Denis Local Nature Reserve Committee had not considered the reports but they will have received the reports by the date of the Conservation Advisory Group Meeting. Similarly it is expected that the East Hatley Parish Council will have met on Monday 19th May and considered this report. In particular it is hoped that Their views will be presented to the Conservation Advisory Group meeting.

Conclusions/Summary

22. It would appear evident that the immediate action needs to again be one holding repairs to enable full exploration of possible uses and funding sources to be undertaken. This would enable the immediate safety concerns to be removed and allow for an appropriate debate on future uses. It will however, be clear that any alternative funding to create a new community use must have local support and therefore the Parish Council and Local Nature Reserve Management Committee will need to work closely with the Conservation Manager and Portfolio Holder to identify appropriate, viable options.

Recommendations

23. That the Conservation Advisory Group consider the above options and advise the Conservation Portfolio Holder to :
 - (a) Recommend to Cabinet that a specification is drawn up and tenders sought to implement *Option E above : Holding Repairs* to enable the minimal repairs to stabilise the structure and make it safe, arresting further deterioration in the short term.
 - (b) Authorise the Conservation Manager to explore options for additional grant funding to support possible implementation of *Option F : Long term Repairs* with the view to securing the long-term, fabric of the building such that it may be available for a new use.
 - (c) Request that the Conservation Manager to undertake discussions to explore possible future uses and report back to the Conservation Advisory Group on the results.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Reports by Purcell Miller Tritton dated April 2002 & April 2003.

Contact Officer : Nick Grimshaw - Conservation Manager 01223 44 31 80