
St Mary and All Saints Church, Droxford

Report and Recommendations
of the Steering Group on the
Future Strategy for Droxford
Church.

Presented to the PCC on 23rd
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Steering Group Members

PCC: Stuart Holt, Alan Hibbert, Sheila
Matthissen, Ann Symes, Paul Harris.

FODC: John Symes, John Jack, Tony Hoile.

Church Architect: Julian Livingstone.

St Mary and All Saints' Church

Droxford – Strategy for Future Development

Preface

The project to renew our church buildings and make them relevant to our mission in the 21st Century was launched by the late Bishop Kenneth with these words:

“The purpose ... is to reflect on how the church can grow and flourish ... and this is bound to mean change. Like most people, I often feel uncertain when faced with the possibility of change. There is a danger of losing good things from the past, or of making mistakes and poor decisions. So, of course, I want to encourage you to be wise and careful. But it is important that we do not allow fear of change to leave us permanently stuck where we are. For if we do become stuck, and everything else moves on around us, we will no longer be a living witness to God’s presence in the world.”

“Do not be afraid to think the unthinkable. Do not be put off by legalities or red tape as such things can be overcome.”

1. Introduction

In Droxford the PCC responded to this challenge in 2010 and endorsed the following vision:

By 2020 to establish our church at the heart of the spiritual life of our village, providing inspiration for worship and a centre for community activities.

In order to help them realise this vision the PCC set up a ‘Friends of Droxford Church’ organisation (FODC), recognising that new facilities would require significant funds which were beyond the resources of the congregation. Since 2010 it has emerged that the building is in worse state of repair than anticipated and the repairs are larger and more urgent. Now the PCC and FODC have decided to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Grants for Places of Worship Scheme. It is a condition of this scheme since October 2012 that the project must provide two outcomes, conservation of our heritage and wider community use and understanding of the building. Consequently it will be necessary to engage with the wider community in Droxford and demonstrate that with the HLF investment, more people and a wide range of people will have engaged with heritage.

In order to guide this application the PCC have been asked to provide a strategic statement of how they would like to see the building develop to support the future needs of the congregation at worship, as well as to encourage wider community use.

2. Overview of the Church

The earliest and main parts of the Church date from the middle of the 12th Century. The massive square pillars are sections of the outside walls of the original Norman building, and the chancel arch stands in its original position, but it was raised 4 feet at the end of the 19th century.

The North aisle and North chapel were built at the end of the 12th century and the South aisle was added in the late 14th century. In the 18th century extensive alterations were made to the interior of the church. The roofs and ceilings were renewed, the clerestory windows were remodelled and two galleries were built but they were removed a century later when the present box pews were installed. The Jacobean oak communion rails were restored to the sanctuary in 1903. The font is modern but imitates the Norman style, and the pulpit is a 19th century copy of one dating from the 15th century. The pews in the chancel and nave date from the Victorian era.

The Chancel

Uniquely in the Benefice and possibly in Hampshire, St Mary's has two side chapels opening from the Chancel through a broad arch on either side. However the existing furniture restricts both visual and physical movement around the Chancel and chapels. The approach to the altar could be improved to make



better use of the space and enhance this visual impact. To this end, it has been proposed (and the DAC approved in principle) that the choir pews should be removed and movable seating introduced, allowing a more flexible use of the combined space. There is a heating pipe running along the altar step which is unsightly, and re-routing it should be considered. It has been suggested that raising the height of communicants kneeling at the altar rail with additional kneelers would make serving communion easier.

South Chapel (Lady Chapel)

This chapel is currently poorly furnished with approx. 20 uncomfortable wooden chairs, and the north side opens onto the back of the choir stalls.

Our long term vision is that South side chapel should continue to be used as an intimate space for prayer and worship and eventually could be screened with engraved glass and doors in the archways creating an enclosed smaller worship space suited to weekday services. The creation of a private chapel for prayer and worship in this space could be a stand-alone project in the 10-year vision with potentially independent fund-raising.

North Chapel

This space is currently unrecognisable as a chapel. It houses the organ, a hybrid instrument, difficult to play and poor musically – see below – and universally agreed to be in the wrong place. Around the organ are cupboards, a small vestry area, and a small sink with running cold water and a drain.

Historically this space has played a more important role in the life of the church reflected in the mediaeval wall painting fragments, aumbry, and memorials. It is part of our plan to enable the original features to be re-discovered and better understood for their significance as part of our church heritage.

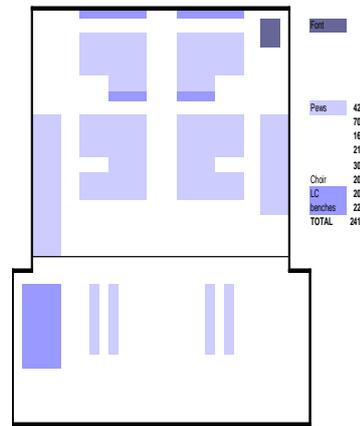
The space should be re-ordered and a number of different uses are being considered. It could create a comfortable meeting room for up to 20-25 people, which would be an ideal size for a Parish meeting room, or Sunday School area. It could also be used to display the Heritage of the church and the history of Droxford. Alternatively the space might be adapted to house enhanced kitchen and/or toilet facilities. All of these uses would require moving the organ to the body of the church, and a partition to separate it from the chancel would be necessary for functional separation and sound-proofing. There is already a wooden screen and door into the North side-aisle.

Potential uses of this space including the options above will be discussed with community stakeholders in Droxford and fully explored during consultations in the 'Development Phase' of the GPOW grant application.

Crypt

There is a crypt underneath the Organ which has not been opened for over 30 years. It is proposed that the flagstones be lifted and this space be investigated for integration into the plans as part of the Heritage discovery in the Development Phase of our grant application.

The Nave and Aisles



Nave and seating plan showing pews (241 seats)

Droxford church has the largest interior community space in the village – with double the capacity of the village hall. The church can accommodate 250-300 people with additional chairs. However, the space is extremely inflexible as it is dominated by late Georgian and Victorian pews, historically a recent addition to the Church.

From the perspective of modern standards of comfort and convenience the PCC has higher aspirations. Our long term vision is to enable the space to be used more creatively and for a greater variety of activities. This will require a more flexible approach to the layout of the Nave and aisles. It is our intention to make the space available to the wider community for a larger variety of events ranging from public or private meetings, to conferences, exhibitions, choral events and concerts, presentations, talks lectures and plays.

At present the PCC and users of the church are aware of the following deficiencies:

- the seats (i.e. pews) are uncomfortable and immovable, so cannot be re-positioned to suit the occasion or event
- many seats are behind pillars and have no view of the centre of action whether at the altar, chancel, lectern or pulpit
- there is no open space to gather before or after the event, e.g. after church services for coffee; or for children to gather; or for intervals at concerts
- there is insufficient free space around the font to celebrate baptisms
- there is no dedicated space for wheel-chairs
- there are no toilet or kitchen facilities
- heating and lighting could be improved

A change in the type of seating would enable the participants to be organised in the best configuration for the event – e.g. around the font for baptisms, in a small circle for prayers - and it would allow the church to host a greater variety of activities.

Our vision would also have a beneficial impact on the interior architecture of the Nave, returning it to its original form, improving the visibility of the columns and enabling optimum viewing on big occasions. It is the intention of the PCC to improve the consistency and look of the floor tiles at the same time as addressing the heating and lighting of the space. In some areas where the pews are on a wooden platform, the floor would be raised and tiled.

A range of church seating is currently being considered including stackable pews, benches and chairs. Priority areas for replacement are the Chancel, Lady Chapel and surrounding the Font.

West door and Tower Room

We would like to preserve this space as the main entrance to the church for processional use on formal occasions e.g. weddings, Remembrance Sunday etc. It also used by the Bell-ringers and provides access to the Tower. There is some space adjacent to the walls which could be used more efficiently for storage (e.g. stacking chairs when not in use in the Church). This door is also used as one of the three exits in case of fire or emergency, although wheel-chair access is now through the North Door.

3. Toilets and Kitchen

We would like to provide toilet facilities to enable the church to be used comfortably for all kinds of services and community activities. This is particularly important for weddings and funerals likely to attract large congregations (some travelling long distance), and concerts or recitals which can extend for up to 3 hours, and potentially all-day events (e.g. Pentecostal Celebration, Prayer and Study Days, and Conferences). The facilities must be adequate to attract new community activities and events to the church. The siting of the toilet and kitchen facilities should be determined in the 'Development Phase' of the HLF/GPOW application. This decision will take account of different Community and religious uses of the church building, as well as professional advice from the conservation and planning authorities. English Heritage and WCC and the DAC have been consulted and have given outline approval for an extension on the North East side of the church, accessible from outside and from North Aisle, and situated over the existing Boiler Room. This will be one of the options amongst others considered in the 'Development Phase'.

In addition kitchen facilities are needed to support café-style services and provide simple meals such teas and harvest suppers, and interval refreshments for concerts and longer worship sessions. Provision will also be needed for storage and robing areas.

4. Organ

The organ is considered by professionals to be a poor musical instrument and has been found inadequate at weddings and concerts. The present instrument is limited to accompanying hymns, and is not capable of accompanying the wide range of events that the church seeks to provide. A modern digital electronic organ has a wide range of possibilities which may be used in many ways and it is also capable of being played, when necessary, by someone who is more a pianist than an organist.

In addition to replacing the organ, it is proposed to find a new location, possibly in the southern aisle or at the back of the church. The current position is unsatisfactory both for the congregation (or audience) and for the choir. The sound is filtered by the Chancel arch and furniture, the organist is detached and invisible to the congregation, and the sound takes too long to travel to the back of the nave. Movement of the organ would also allow re-location of the choir behind or in the middle of the congregation to provide clearer and more stimulating support for sung responses and hymns. Most importantly moving the organ would release the space it currently occupies in the North Chapel for other uses (see above). Some of the pipes could be re-configured for ornamental use in the body of the church.

5. Approach, Churchyard and the Environment



Entrance



Access Path

Approach

Improvements to the approach to the church should be considered:

- Improve the churchyard entrance by reposition the bin and signs around the gate.
- Trim trees overhanging on the right hand side of the church path to open the view to the tower and clock from the entrance.
- Removal of railings around monuments where they are rusty and decayed beyond repair.
- Move (or bury) power cable obscuring the view of the church from the main access path
- Trim yew trees and shrubs in the churchyard and re-erect/straighten fallen memorial stones

New Memorials



Recent memorials have been placed along the East boundary. Unfortunately the fence along this boundary is in poor repair and overgrown with nettles and weeds. Our vision is to provide a solid fence which will mark the East boundary and provide an architectural backdrop to the memorials. We will create a separate special fund, perhaps focusing on legacies and relatives of the deceased, to improve this area.

Other Issues

- Heating: A boiler room is situated outside the church in a basement along the North wall. This houses an oil-fired boiler for heating the church, and covered with an ugly concrete and asphalt roof. (There may be a need eventually to remove an old asbestos-coated boiler.)



We believe a thorough heating audit should be included in the GPOW development phase, with a view to a more sustainable and economic solution. If the toilet and kitchen facilities are built over the existing boiler, this would create an opportunity to re-house a modern boiler in the extension.

- External Lighting – A review of Security has pointed out the need for improved lighting around the church. Additional consideration should be given to installing a burglar alarm and/or a web-cam. Lighting along the pathway from the square is not adequate in the evening, especially during winter.
- Car park – The first 20 metres of the churchyard is owned by the Parish Council and consideration is being given to extending car parking from the Village Square. If this can be done sympathetically (e.g. grassed hard-standing) it might provide some reserved parking for church services, and also provide the opportunity to re-position the Gate and path centrally in a new wall on the churchyard boundary. Overall this could improve the first impression of the church when viewed from the entrance gate, especially if the overhanging trees were trimmed.

- Audiovisual facilities – a 'Powerpoint' projector and screen, and broadband access should be considered for the future. A projector would enable sermons, lectures and talks to be illustrated. The Rector will be trialling a 'Songs of Praise' service from October 2013. Broadband access would enable Services or concerts to be shared in another building (e.g. Droxford Village Hall) by 'streaming' audio (and eventually video). This could enable 'overflow' participation in Funerals and Weddings, and within our ten-year vision, facilitate simultaneous benefice-wide services, or even sharing Cathedral services

6. Recommendations

1. The PCC is invited to endorse the future strategy for the church building.
2. The PCC and FODC are resolved to work together to consult the wider community and to increase the use and activities in the church by the community
3. The PCC and FODC are resolved to work together to apply for funds through the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Grants for Places of Worship' scheme, and such other grants as they deem complementary to the GPOW.
4. The PCC and FODC agree to work to the following timetable:
 - 31st October 2013 - submit draft 1st Round application to the GPOW Development Officer (DO)
 - 29th November 2013 – submit 1st Round Application
 - March 2014 – Decision on 1st Round – development costs become eligible if specified in the 1st round application
 - April 2014 – Start-up meeting for 'Development Stage'.
 - October 2014 – submit draft 2nd Round Application to the DO (including Activity Plan and Maintenance Plan)
 - November 2014 – submit final 2nd Round application
 - March 2015 – Decision on 2nd Round – delivery costs become eligible for recovery
 - April 2015 – Delivery Project Start-up meeting – i.e. building works start.