

Questions/comments and responses

The following questions/comments have been raised by Church members following the Development meeting held on Sunday 14th October 2007. Some questions may appear to be similar to others and for the benefit of those people who took the time to ask specific questions the questions have been responded to separately and in the order that they were received. The responses are based on the knowledge and information that is available to the PCC as of November 2007.

Q. How are we going to pay loans back?

Should it be necessary to rely on meeting a financial shortfall with loans, the options for paying the loan back will be discussed with the congregation in more detail.

Q. What provision is there for youth support in the new plan?

If the question is one concerning the provision of space to accommodate all of the differing children/youth groups then although there are 4 rooms indicated on the original plan there are opportunities to increase this number i.e. potentially use the space recognised as office or split one or two of the larger spaces. However, because we would be utilising the originally designed footprint to create more individual rooms, this will result in a lesser average floor space per room. Due to the need to try to reduce the finances, we are making sacrifices that will mean that we will need to wait for an additional phase of the project to provide access to the George Room & other upstairs room. The issue of the number of rooms will be investigated in more detail as we progress with the project.

Q. Can we have a good staircase so that the youth space can be developed?

The proposal at the moment is to not include the staircase as the inclusion of a staircase and floor above will increase the cost of this phase of work. The staircase could be accommodated in a later phase, however, the floor joists may have to be included in the first phase as it would be costly to reduce the specification by installing ceiling joists at this stage only to change them at a later stage to allow access. This issue will be discussed with the Architect to establish the detail of work and the phasing that has been provided for.

Q. What provision is there for storage space?

There should be sufficient storage space provided in the design. However, an audit of church equipment should be carried out to establish the amount of equipment that needs to be stored. Temporary accommodation (lockable sheds/containers) could be provided (planning permission may have to be sought) and located outside to house equipment that can be stored outside.

Q. Do we satisfy disability regulations with a separate building?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) will be met with the production of a new building. However, disabled access would also need to be provided to the north door (through which

access is gained to the meeting room at present) as members of the congregation will need to go out of that door to access the new building.

Q. Position of the office - where is it?

In the original plans for a link building, the office was to be accommodated in the new building. However, due to the reduction in specification the existing office in the clergy/choir vestry could be re-ordered to accommodate the staff as part of the first phase with it moving into the new building as part of future phases. Alternatively, the office could be re-sited in the new building with the clergy/choir vestry providing space for children's/youth activities.

Q. Provision of room 4 for staff workers?

The rooms within the new building will be better used to provide accommodation for children's work/additional meeting room space. Refer to response above regarding the re-ordering of the present office.

Q. Fixed price contract with penalty clause?

It is possible to tie the contractor/developer into a standard form of fixed price contract with penalty clauses. However, it should be appreciated that when choosing a fixed price contract the Contractor/developer takes on a large amount of the risk and therefore increases his tender price to accommodate this. It will be the responsibility of the Project Manager to reduce the potential risk and ensure that we are in control of the budget.

Q. How much less usable space/storage will be available now tower not to be altered?

It is necessary to understand how much space is to be provided in the new building and relate that space to what we presently have. An audit of the equipment should be carried out to understand how much storage space is required.

Q. Re-submission of plans?

It is anticipated that the plans for a separate building will have to be submitted to the Local Authority for approval. The re-submission will also have to be authorised by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC).

Q. Graves - any cost incurred here?

The revised costs do not take into account any costs associated with the graves. This cost was always an additional cost and is unknown. There is a 10% contingency built into the estimated

build costs and if managed well can be used to contribute/pay for any works associated with the graves.

Q. How much does the church family feel it can commit to financially?

This is a question that has to be asked of the congregation. However, there is a lot of enthusiasm presently for the project and we are encouraged by this.

Q. How long will the project take?

The length of the project is unknown at present and can only be estimated once a contractor/developer is involved in the project.

Q. Will the PCC name/employ someone to take the project forward?

The project is being driven at present by a PCC Sub-Development Committee consisting of Eileen Balch, Paul Benson, Bernard Blanksby, Phil Johnson and Karen Riley with assistance from others within the Church who are able to contribute with specific skills. Whilst minor detail is being resolved the project will be led by the Committee with direction from Paul Benson. The PCC have already given their approval to the appointment of a 'Project Manager' and one will be appointed as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

Q. How much money has been pledged? What is the shortfall?

There is presently £78,000 pledged by members of the Church with £352,000 in the bank (including gift aid owed). Based on the reduced specification at today's estimated costs to provide a separate building there is a shortfall of £695,638. This shortfall can be met by a combination of the following, grant making bodies, interest free loan from the Diocese, 'Stewardship'/'Kingdom' mortgage or fundraising.

Q. How much have we already incurred in fees?

Costs have been incurred in the past but it has been seen to be necessary to progress the project.

Q. Is internal decoration included in the estimated costs?

Internal decoration is included within the revised cost of the build for a separate building. The estimated cost, based on costs as of September 2007, is £16,337.

Q. Does the car park need to be as big?

The car park will have been designed to accommodate the number of people that is anticipated to use the building at any one time. The number of car parking spaces will have been designed to meet the requirements of the Planners. The specification for the car park has been reduced to provide a reduction in the cost.

Q. At present we need 6 separate rooms for our Sunday morning youth and children's work and crèche and are just about making do with 5 acceptable (?) working areas. The revised plans only give us 4 separate rooms.

Plans are as agreed by the church following draft designs. Additional partitions may be incorporated with (potentially) reduced flexibility at an additional cost and only if required by the majority of the congregation. Opportunities exist for an additional two rooms to be incorporated as stated in responses to questions below.

Q. In the revised plans we are not sticking to our original priorities of providing sufficient space for our present children and these plans do not allow for any future growth in our families, children and youth work on Sundays.

In order to present a scheme that could be achieved financially in the near future, it was necessary to provide a detached building by removing the link and utilising the same footprint as the original design. The staircase space will be allocated to either another activity room or to storage in the current revised phase. This space will be lost once the staircase is installed in a later phase however this will provide access to the George Room therefore not losing a room.

Q. There are no facilities for our staff workers to have a working base and storage areas on church premises. (This requirement has become an issue since our initial plans were drawn up.)

The existing office (located in the clergy/choir vestry) can be re-ordered to accommodate the staff. Opportunities exist for a more flexible method of working i.e. hot desking or mobile/home working? Consideration will be given to the office staff and other staff members in making any decisions regarding their location.

Q. The kitchen is in the wrong place - it should be as close to the church as possible. Refreshments will continue to be served in church - the safest and shortest access to the kitchen is essential.

The kitchen is located between the two larger spaces to enable food to be distributed quickly and safely to the rooms either side. There is no reason why refreshments should be served in the church when there are rooms provided in the new building.

Q. The kitchen is not big enough.

We would believe that the kitchen has been designed to the appropriate space standards to enable the larger room to be catered for adequately. This question can be asked of and confirmed by the Architect.

Q. Is it essential that the church office moves into the new building?

Retaining the office in its current location within the main church will provide an additional meeting room/space within the new building. There are benefits to having the office within the new building especially if it is to be used as a Parish Centre. Should the office be located in the new building additional activity space could be provided in the clergy/choir vestry in the short term.

Q. The floor space allocated to the office could be used for the kitchen or another small meeting room.

The space allocated for the office in the new building is smaller than the space required by and allocated to the kitchen. If the kitchen was to be located where the office is shown it would only be directly accessible by the Main Hall. The layout has the kitchen giving access to both the Main Hall and the Activity Room without leaving the kitchen.

Q. Regarding storage.

- a. In the new plans we neither have access to, nor the use of all the empty loft space in the roof area, which had originally been allocated for storage. There is now no staircase giving access to the loft area and the loft space itself will be taken up with roof timbers.
 - b. Our existing church groups are absolutely desperate for more storage space
 - c. There is not enough storage space in the revised plans for the needs of all the outside groups who at present use the Meeting Room and Portacabins in addition to the existing needs of our church groups (Some church group leaders have to store church stuff in their own homes)
 - d. Over recent years there has been a steady increase of equipment, cupboards etc. used by the nursery and the after schools club. Consequently we have had a steady increase of floor space being used for storage.
 - i. Nursery - more equipment is now being stacked up at the side of the Meeting Room wall, boxes have appeared in the corridor by the ladies toilet door, nearly all the floor space in Ted's Vestry is used by the nursery. Does the nursery also have boxes stored in the George Room?
 - ii. After Schools Club - equipment now includes a computer, a fridge, a filing cabinet, in addition to other storage containers which all take up the floor area in the portacabins.
- a. This is correct. Unfortunately, there have to be sacrifices made in revising the specification to reduce the initial costs. Staircase space could provide additional storage space. Later phases would provide a staircase and access to the George Room.

- b. As stated previously, there should be sufficient storage space provided in the design. However, an audit of church equipment should be carried out to establish exactly how much equipment needs to be stored. Temporary accommodation (lockable sheds/containers) could be provided and located outside.
- c. Additional storage space, which is required by outside groups, should be accommodated, if possible, after the needs of the church. This storage space should be paid for.
- d. See c. above.
 - i. An agreement/contract should be re-negotiated and space and storage agreed between both parties taking account of the Church's needs first. Issues related to health and safety should be dealt with now.
It should be investigated whether equipment belonging to the nursery is stored in the George Room.
 - ii. Establish whether authorisation has been given and re-assess implications on usage.

Q. The requirements of the week day nursery are dictating the design of the new building and the allocation and use of the rooms.

There is already a growing feeling of exasperation that St Thomas' is unnecessarily subsidising the nursery rent and is also bending over backwards to meet the nursery demands at the expense of our present week day activities. Since the beginning of September, nursery hours in the mornings have been increased and less time is now available to Totzone and Rendezvous leaders for setting up and preparing on the two afternoons a week that the nursery does not use the meeting room in an afternoon. The morning nursery caters for 24 children and the afternoon only 12.

The use of the new building will specifically meet the needs of the Church with external users being accommodated once the needs of the Church have been met.

This has been raised at PCC meetings and the PCC are to review the letting of the building.

Q. There is mounting concern about the new regulations for nursery hours that are due to be introduced. What exactly are these new requirements? It is imperative that the details of these changes and their knock on effect are investigated in full if the needs of the nursery are still to be considered in our new building plans.

The PCC are to review the letting of the current building and this review will assist in understanding the new regulations regarding nursery hours. However, the needs of the Church will be met in the first instance with external agencies fitting in with the plans of St. Thomas'.

Q. Is it now feasible for our revised plans to include rooms for the nursery, which have to meet specific legal requirements? A final decision needs to be made as soon as possible, so that all parties involved can know where they stand.

- a. If we no longer had the nursery there would be no priority need to have special toilets for children, there would be much less equipment to store and other mid-week church and outside activities could have greater use of the church facilities in the daytime.

- b. The suggestion that one day St. Thomas' could set up its own nursery is a totally separate issue. It would require new designs for a separate building some time in the future.

It is not known at this moment what legal requirements, if any, need to be met. This question and others including (future) opening hours, requirements for child-sized toilets, locked doors and segregation from other building users will be asked.

- a. This may well be the case. However, for the Church's own children's work it may be necessary to retain the 'children's' toilet.
- b. This is a suggestion that has not been discussed by the PCC.

Q. Why have the results of the work that the PCC asked Mick Topliss to do, never been communicated to the ordinary church members?

The work that Mick Topliss carried out re-iterated the comments made to the PCC previously. Mick's information was reported to the Church at an open development meeting in April 2007. Following the July meeting, the feeling of the church was that a non-commercial plan was to be followed. Therefore, it was unnecessary to report Mick's findings, which highlighted the production of a business plan, opportunities for grant funding, the establishment of a trust, etc.

Q. Which Church Member is now heading up the Development Project?

Paul Benson, as a member of the PCC Sub-Development Committee, is heading up the Development Project. Members of the committee (Eileen Balch, Bernard Blanksby, Phil Johnson & Karen Riley) will assist in progressing the development project with support and assistance from members of the congregation who have specific and relevant skills.

Q. Who will be instructing the Project Manager?

The PCC have agreed to appoint a Project Manager, when the time is appropriate. It is anticipated that the PCC Sub-Development Committee (or an appointed member) will instruct/act as liaison for St Thomas' in any dealings with a Project Manager.

Q. Is the decision to render the outside walls a wise one in the long term? How soon will sections of it start to flake off? Would ordinary bricks be acceptable and cheaper than stone?

The decision to render the external blockwork walls, rather than have them built in dressed stone, is part of the cost reducing exercise. Maintenance costs to re-paint/repair the render will have to be included in the fabric budget. Any changes in the external appearance of the proposed building will have to be approved by the Planning Authority.

Q. If, as has been suggested, the revised plans have to go back for planning consent, are there other small modifications that need to be made in order to meet our existing needs and priorities? Several of the questions that people are asking might suggest that this needs considering.

Any modifications to the interior of the building can be incorporated within a revised submission to the Planning and Development Control section.

Q. Ordinary church folk are continually asking to be kept informed of progress.

Information is being shared when it is available. Additional open meetings have been arranged to both inform and address the concerns of members of the congregation. Specific concerns can be directed to a member of the PCC Sub-Development Committee at any time.

Q. Ordinary church folk have also voiced their disappointment that they do not feel they are always listened to. They sometimes feel that their contributions are not valued or even considered. Even if their ideas are rejected they would still like to know the reasons why.

The church has listened to the concerns of Church members who have voiced their concern both publicly and in private. For example:

- Not committing the church to a commercial business plan and primary external usage
- Reducing the cost of the initial build
- Phasing the project

Information will be available on the notice board at the back of Church, on the website, notice sheets and in copies of 'Spotlight' and 'Ploughshare' as and when information is available.

Q. We need clarification of the proposed uses of the new building now that the plans have been revised. Suggestions made include,

- a. that the priority use for the new building is for church activities
- b. that there is sufficient space available to continue with the present activities with people of all ages both on Sundays and also mid week, both in the day time in the evenings
- c. that there will be sufficient space available mid week, both in the day time and in the evenings, to further this work in reaching out to people of all ages across our community
- d. that rooms will be available for let to outside bodies provided that
 - i. they do not conflict with church activities
 - ii. all outside groups are charged the going rate
 - iii. any need for storage space on church premises is agreed before the letting is finalised

all regular lettings are renewed and revised at regular intervals which will be determined and agreed before the booking is initially accepted

- a. It has been confirmed that the priority use of the new building is for Church use.

- b. It is essential that there is sufficient accommodation within the new design to meet our current needs. With the retention of the location of the church office, additional partitions and conversion of the space where the stairs were to be will provide additional rooms. The practicality of the existing and additional spaces needs to be confirmed.
- c. Additional growth may be provided in this revised design if additional rooms can be provided as explained above. Future growth will be accommodated with future phases of work.
- d. These decisions will be made by the PCC who may wish to appoint a centre manager with responsibility to ensure that the needs of the Church are prioritised and the rooms utilised to maximise additional revenue to contribute towards the maintenance of the building

Q. Can the existing space that we have in the meeting room, kitchen and toilets be overlaid onto the proposed plans?

Yes. We can either use the existing drawings that will have been produced to show how the building is laid out at the moment or we could measure the existing rooms and overlay them on the proposed plans.