



15th March 2024

SAWBRIDGEWORTH EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Notes of Meeting with East Herts District Council and the Church to discuss
Heritage and Design Matters
11:00am on Friday 16th February 2024.

Via Microsoft Teams

1.00 Present:

MK	Mark Kimber	Sawbridgeworth EC Church	SECC
JU	Julie Urquhart	Sawbridgeworth EC Church	SECC
AS	Antonia Serantoni	East Herts District Council	EHDC
SFL	Steve Fraser-Lim	East Herts District Council	EHDC
DA	Daniel Almond	CPL Chartered Architects	CPL

2.00 General Project Update

2.01 DA provided a general project update relating to work carried out since the pre-application enquiry as follows:

- Constructive pre-application enquiry with Highways with LHA suggestions being implemented, i.e. parking survey
- A positive public consultation day attended by local residents and the Mayor (Summary to be included in the planning submission.)
- Daylight, Sunlight and Shadow analysis carried out and has informed the designs which are judged to comply with BRE guidelines (Report to be included in the planning submission)
- Sustainability work underway, including work to demonstrate why a new build approach is more sustainable than refurbishment.
- The heritage consultant has tried to engage with the County Archaeology team but no response forthcoming.

Due to planned improvement works to the existing 19th century church building in late summer '24, the application for planning and listed building consent is to be submitted within the next few weeks.

3.00 Heritage Design Matters

3.01 DA suggested that the list of heritage items from the pre-application enquiry be used as an agenda. He had previously forwarded to all present an extract from CPL's DAS setting out an update/response to each of these items.



3.02 Removal of Pews

It is proposed to largely remove the pews but a single row of pews will be retained along the back of the sanctuary next to the timber vestibule screen. This approach was agreed.

3.03 Removal of Organ and Console.

MK explained that organ experts Harrison and Harrison had been engaged to assess the significance and condition of the organ and advise on repair costs. They have concluded that whilst the organ is a good example of a small organ by the firm Norman & Beard, the instrument's condition is poor, and it is now unplayable. A comprehensive restoration would be required to make the instrument playable but this would be very costly given the complexity of the original pneumatic mechanism and likely alterations to the console and casework in order to accommodate it in a different space.

MK confirmed that as the organ has not been used in church worship for more than 10 years and is not intended to be used for future worship, the repair costs cannot be justified by the church (a charity), and such costs would also impact on the essential refurbishment works needed to the buildings at large, the costs of which are also significant. MK also pointed out that moving the console would involve disconnecting the lead pipes to the organ pipes. Removing the dais would also require removal of the lead piping and storage would be difficult due to the sheer quantity of lead involved. Restoration after this point could be difficult.

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AS agreed that moving the console was beneficial to address access considerations in the designs, but asked whether the main organ pipes (not the lead pipes below stage) and housing could be retained in-situ, as a feature of the space, and the console retained such that the option remains to reconnect the console to the main body of the instrument in the future. AS could support the console not being located within the sanctuary space. It was agreed that CPL would explore this approach on the plans.



3.04 Removal of Dais and Pulpit

AS had reviewed the information supplied and can support the principle of removal of the dais, to facilitate level access and underfloor heating. She supported the approach to keeping a section of fixed stage over the baptistry and have movable staging elsewhere to provide flexibility of layout.

AS asked whether the pulpit could be retained and relocated elsewhere as a feature, preferably within the sanctuary, but alternatively with the adjoining school hall.

MK had some concerns over the practicality of moving such a heavy item, which may also be fixed to the dais. The detailed construction of the pulpit is not clearly understood at this point and is likely to be difficult to move in one piece. It may be possible to move to another location, but this may require some level of dismantling and rebuilding. CPL to investigate whether there is space to locate the pulpit in the organ alcove in addition to the organ itself.

MK
CPL

3.05 Removal of Sliding Screens and overhead panels to hall

As at pre-application stage, this approach has been agreed by all.

3.06 Removal of dado panelling at base of sliding screens

AS has reviewed the photos supplied, showing the damage/poor quality of the panelling where a pew has previously been removed and agreed these panels do not need to be retained/reused.

3.07 Updated to balcony panelling

The principle has previously been agreed. DA explained that the design concept is to replace the panelling with solid timber (due to privacy) of a design that refers to existing panelling in the sanctuary.

MK stated that glass may be required over the timber to bring the height of the balustrade to modern safety standards without impacting on views from the balcony seating.

It was agreed that the design would need further consideration at the technical design stage and that this could be a condition of any Listed Building Consent.

3.08 Baptismal Pool replacement

AS had reviewed the photos and information sent previously and agreed that replacement of the baptismal pool can be supported. AS asked whether timber panelling to the stage area around the pool could be retained and MK confirmed that this is the church's intention.



3.09 Replace Lighting

This was accepted at the pre-application enquiry stage. Details could be conditioned if necessary.

3.10 Replace heating System

The principle of removing existing pipes and radiators was accepted at the pre-application stage. AS has reviewed the detail supplied for the proposed underfloor heating system. She confirmed she could support the removal and (if necessary) replacement of the existing floorboards and finishes to accommodate the new heating system.

3.11 Secondary Glazing

AS has reviewed the indicative information supplied. She would support secondary glazing in principle, but the detailed designs should be carefully considered and ideally include new frames fitted within the window recess/reveal, not face fixed to wall. Frame colour would need to be carefully selected to complement the tones of the space. AS was not supportive of white frames and suggested that the secondary glazing transoms and mullions should relate to the existing window tracery design.

3.12 New and modified openings between hall and new foyer

DA had previously circulated section and elevation drawings which showed proposed modifications to the openings between the 19th century hall and new foyer space. It is proposed to replace an existing poor-quality door and modify a window opening (reduce cill) to enable a second door to be provided which will be necessary for improved circulation, access and fire escape.

AS asked whether the already modified window to the 1970s kitchen block could be used to create the new door, on the basis that this window may already be modified. DA explained the design rationale for symmetry, with the chosen new door location relating well to the larger foyer space for circulation.

MK commented that the existing window adjacent to the 1970s building may have been retained in-situ and simply over-boarded. That being the case, the church could form a small opening (then make good) to ascertain the state of the existing window beneath the over-boarding. The aim is to reinstate this window as noted on the drawings. **(Post meeting note: it has now been confirmed on site that the window was over-boarded and the original leaded lights have been retained and are in good condition, suitable for reinstatement.)**

In summary, it was agreed that the new door opening and resultant loss of historic fabric could potentially be supported but would need to be justified in the DAS. The detailed design of the new doors could be subject to a planning condition.



3.13 Refurbishment/Replacement to external doors

DA explained that three existing external doors would benefit from refurbishment due to issues around draft proofing and energy efficiency. DA shared the proposed elevation drawings and doors in question.

It was agreed the double doors to the west lobby were of lesser historic significance and could be replaced. The vestry and doors to the base of the balcony stairs appeared to have interesting and assumed original hinge features. These doors should ideally be retained and refurbished, rather than replaced.

3.14 East facing elevation design to the extension

DA had previously circulated two alternative design approaches. One features 3 'punched' openings and the other one opening subdivided into four elements, each separated by a stone mullion.

AS felt that both approaches could be supported.

SFL felt that both approaches could be supported but slightly favoured the design with 4 elements, noting this made contemporary reference to the large church gable window, which is also subdivided into 4 elements. SFL commented that the design worked well but asked whether the coping would benefit from being more substantial in height. CPL agreed to explore this detail further.

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4.00 Any Other Business

4.01 DA thanked SFL and AS for their time and feedback.

5.00 Distribution

All Present and Apologies