

Draft
Amending Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme

This Scheme is made by the Church Commissioners ("the Commissioners") this th day of 20 under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011.

BACKGROUND:-

By a Scheme of the Commissioners made pursuant to the Pastoral Measure 1983 on the 9th day of March 2006 ("the 2006 Scheme"), the Commissioners were empowered to sell the closed church building of Saint Elisabeth, Eastbourne in the Diocese of Chichester ("the building") and the land annexed or belonging thereto for residential purposes with an office only in the crypt of the building and for purposes ancillary thereto subject to and with the benefit of a lease dated the 31st day of May 1973 between the Reverend John Roger Brown Clerk in Holy Orders Incumbent of the Benefice of Saint Elisabeth, Eastbourne and his successors in title of the first part, the Commissioners of the second part, and the South Eastern Electricity Board and its successors in title of the third part.

The said uses have not been implemented and it does not appear to the Commissioners, after consultation with the Church Buildings Council, that the building is of such historic and archaeological interest or architectural quality that it ought to be preserved in the interests of the nation and the Church of England.

NOW, it is provided as follows:-

Future of the church building and annexed land

- 1 The provisions of the 2006 Scheme are hereby revoked.
2. The Commissioners shall demolish the building and shall dispose of the materials arising from the demolition.

Disposal of the Site

3. The Commissioners are hereby empowered to sell, exchange or lease the site of the building and the land annexed or belonging thereto (together referred to as "the property") shown hatched on the annexed plan subject to the reservation described in Schedule 1.

Contents

4. The contents of the building, excluding the monuments and memorials, shall be disposed of as the Bishop shall direct subject to listed building consent being granted.

Coming into operation of this Scheme

5. This Scheme shall not come into operation until such date or dates as the Commissioners shall determine following the making of this Scheme and different provisions of the Scheme may be brought into operation on different dates and the Commissioners shall not

EASTBOURNE ST ELISABETH



Drawn by
Gwen Jones

Scale
1:700

Date
25/03/2014

© Crown copyright and database right
Ordnance Survey lic no 100040148

File Pathname / Project / Drawing No.
Z:\General\S3073P_Eastbourne wor

Schedule 1: Reservation of Existing Rights and Easements

The disposal of the property is subject to and with the benefit of a lease dated the 31st day of May 1973 between the Reverend John Roger Brown Clerk in Holy Orders Incumbent of the Benefice of Saint Elisabeth Eastbourne and his successors in title of the first part the Commissioners of the second part and the South Eastern Electricity Board and its successors in title of the third part.

Schedule 2: Conditions

- (i) That the intended recipients of the property are financially able to implement their proposals including for the demolition of the building.
- (ii) That terms of the disposal of the property have been approved by the Commissioners.
- (iii) Not to make the Scheme until 1 September 2018 or such date (whichever is the sooner) as it is confirmed that the proposed recipients of the murals by Hans Feibusch located in the crypt of the building have secured adequate resources to enable the removal and relocation of the murals.



EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

MISSION AND PASTORAL MEASURE 2011 DRAFT PASTORAL (CHURCH BUILDINGS DISPOSAL) SCHEME

CLOSED CHURCH OF EASTBOURNE ST ELISABETH

DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER

This Memorandum explains the contents of a draft scheme under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 which provides for the future of a closed church building, The Church Commissioners provide this information so that anyone who wishes may write to the Commissioners either in support of or against any of the proposals or to request further information.

The Current Proposals

The accompanying draft Scheme provides for the closed church of Eastbourne St Elisabeth to be demolished. If the Scheme takes effect, it is proposed that the site, together with the adjoining former Vicarage, will then be redeveloped for housing. The existing church hall building will continue to be used as the parish centre of worship.

Location and Setting

The church of St Elisabeth is a large Grade II listed building standing alongside Victoria Drive in a residential area to the north-west of Eastbourne town centre. The church occupies a large site on the eastern side opposite its junction with Downs Avenue, flanked on each side by a hall and Vicarage, both of red brick built in a neo-Georgian style (both listed Grade II).

The Building

St Elisabeth's was constructed to the designs of local architects Peter D Stonham and Sons and Fenning in 1935-8. It consists of an aisled nave of five bays with two-storeyed transepts, chancel with north chapel and south staircase and vestry leading to ancillary rooms and the crypt below, all constructed in red brick. The roof is tiled. There is no tower or spire. Internally, the nave and chancel form a single large space with no structural division, with subsidiary spaces formed by the aisles, porches, transepts north chancel and south vestry. The remaining furnishings and fittings were contemporary with the building and an example of a virtually unaltered example of the style of the period. The crypt chapel is a windowless space of minimal architectural interest, except for containing a series of wall paintings by Hans Feibusch. The building has suffered from ongoing vandalism in recent years.

Condition of the building

The building is in poor structural condition as a result of fundamental flaws in its construction which had been identified as early as 1943. This has led to significant water penetration resulting in deterioration of the fabric caused by rust growth. It is also understood that as a result of bomb damage in WW2, part of the roof was exposed to the elements for a number of years, protected only by roof felt. The size of the building made it difficult and expensive for

the parish to carry out routine repair and maintenance such as clearing gutters and repointing brickwork over many years. As a result of constant water penetration the internal wall plaster is much disfigured by water staining, efflorescent salts and probable condensation. A Structural report commissioned in 2012 included costings for repairs to the building shell only at around £3.5million excluding fees and VAT.

The search for an alternative use

The future of the building has been under consideration for a number of years with closure being proposed in 1983 and 1992. However, this did not proceed and the building continued in use until the building was declared closed for regular public worship with effect from 1 July 2002. The parish relocated its worship space to the adjacent church hall.

The building was placed on the market with the benefit of a Planning Brief by Eastbourne Borough Council adopted in November 2003. Marketing produced little interest in the building except for one offer for conversion into apartments. A draft Scheme was published for this proposal in August 2005 and the Scheme was made in March 2006. However, planning permission and listed building consent were subsequently refused in January 2011. This decision was upheld at Appeal in August 2011 and the purchaser withdrew.

In the light of the continuing deterioration of the building resulting mainly from the structural design flaw, the failure over an extended period to find a suitable alternative use for the building, and that the parish of St Elisabeth's mission and pastoral needs are effectively being provided in the adjacent church hall building, which is to be retained for this purpose, the Commissioners have agreed with a proposal from the Diocese of Chichester to take forward a draft Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme proposing the demolition of the church. It is likely that the site will be made available for development in tandem with the development of the adjacent former Vicarage property (which is not subject to the provisions of the Mission and Pastoral Measure and therefore falls outside this consultation).

The Views of the Commissioners' advisers

The then Advisory Board for Redundant Churches advised when closure was first proposed that the church was a good example of the architecture of the period, but the exterior was not considered to be remarkable except perhaps in its sheer bulk in the townscape. The church was not considered to be in any way outstanding and in view of the serious structural problems from which it suffered since it was built, the Board could not oppose demolition. When closure proposals were revived, the Board advised in February 2002 that even though the church had been listed Grade II, in view of the estimated repair costs in excess of £3 million, finding a viable alternative use was inherently unlikely and agreed that it would raise no objection to demolition. It advised that the chancel paintings by Tristram and the Feibusch murals were works of notable historic interest and artistic quality which should be relocated in another church or a suitable museum. In June 2005 the Board was "content with the general nature of the proposals" for conversion to residential use.

Following the withdrawal of the residential proposal, and as no suitable alternative use had come forward during an extended use-seeking period, the "final" advice of the Statutory Advisory Committee (SAC) was given at its meeting in December 2013. Given the long history of deterioration to the fabric and the findings of the 2012 Condition Report and the anticipated cost of repairs to the building, the SAC agreed that although it would regret the loss of the building, it was not minded to object to demolition. The SAC did not feel that the building was worthy of vesting in the Churches Conservation Trust in the last resort. It further advised that a full photographic record should be made and that conservator's advice should be sought on the potential for preserving the murals.

The Feibusch Murals

The principal heritage concern surrounds the future of the murals in the crypt which were painted by Hans Feibusch in 1944 with the support of the then Bishop of Chichester. They

depict the story of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, following the journey of Christian and Christiana from their hometown, the "City of Destruction" (this world) to the Celestial City (Heaven). Some of the drawings for the mural are kept at the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester. The murals are a registered War Memorial.

In order to assess options for the preservation of the murals, the Commissioners obtained a Condition Survey from McNeilage Conservation and advice from Mann Williams, Civil and Structural Engineers. Trial investigations by McNeilage Conservation have established that the removal of the murals (using the Strappo technique) is a realistic possibility. They recommended mounting the murals onto Aerolam boards, (glass fibre reinforced honeycomb sandwich panels), an exercise that would take 3-4 months. The murals would be divided into the existing 25 delineated panels. The cost of removing the murals is estimated in the region of £300,000.

The Commissioners then commissioned the fine arts consultancy Matassa Toffolo to undertake a study into possible bodies to take on the murals. Their report of August 2016 identified a number of possible new homes for the murals. Follow up of the more promising leads, however, has produced only one realistic option to date. This involves relocating them to Leaf Hall in Sea Road, Eastbourne which would enable the murals to be retained in the town and available for public viewing for the first time in many years. The Commissioners have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the trustees of the Leaf Hall Charitable Incorporated Organisation to allow them time to raise funding for the conversion and renovation of their building to receive the murals.

Burials and the Churchyard

There are no burials in the curtilage, except for a garden of remembrance with cremated remains below the east end wall. These will be reinterred within the grounds of the adjacent hall building.

Policy Framework: Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

Church of England church buildings which are closed for regular public worship and which are the subject of a Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme providing for demolition in pursuance of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 are exempt from listed building control by virtue of section 60(7) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, under an agreement made in 1978 and modified in 1986, the Commissioners have agreed to ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he wishes to hold a non-statutory public hearing or inquiry into any such proposal for demolition where Historic England, the Statutory Advisory Committee, the local planning authority or a national amenity society have lodged reasoned objections to such a draft Scheme. The Commissioners have agreed to accept a recommendation from the Secretary of State following such an inquiry.

Making the Draft Scheme

Before they allow the Scheme to proceed the Commissioners will need to be satisfied, as outlined in the Conditions to the draft Scheme, that:

- (1) the prospective purchaser of the site will have the resources necessary to undertake the demolition and redevelopment of the site.
- (2) the intended recipients of the Hans Feibusch murals have had a sufficient period of time to secure funding for the rehousing of the murals to Leaf Hall.

Correspondence

Further information about the proposals may be obtained from the Case Officer, Adrian Browning by e-mail at adrian.browning@churchofengland.org or by telephone at 01722 438664 .

Representations in support of or against the draft Scheme

Anyone may make a representation for or against any provision of the draft Scheme.

Representations should be sent to:

**Representations
Closed Churches Division, Church Commissioners
Church House
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3AZ**

Or by e-mail to: closedchurches.reps@churchofengland.org

Any communication received after Monday 8 January 2018 cannot be treated as a representation.

If we receive representations against the draft Scheme, we will send all representations, both for and against, to the Bishop, whose view will be sought. Individual representors will then receive copies of our correspondence with the Bishop (including copies of all the representations) and they may comment further in writing to us in light of the diocesan response if they so wish.

If no representations against the Scheme are received the Commissioners shall make the Scheme and bring it into effect as provided for in the scheme and explained above.

Information on the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and its procedures can be found on the Church Commissioners' web-site at www.ccpastoral.org where there are also links to download copies of these notes and the draft scheme.

A M G Browning
November 2017