Design and Access/Heritage Statement

Proposed conversion of the former St Leonards Church, Wolborough Street, Newton Abbot to a Museum, Town Hall and Community facilities for Newton Abbot Town Council.

This Design and Access / Heritage Statement accompanies an application for Listed Building Consent for proposed alterations to the former St Leonards church to create new museum premises, community facilities and offices for the Newton Abbot Town Council.

This statement has been written to meet the requirements of Article 4C of the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended) and Policy HE 6 of Planning Policy Statement 5.

HERITAGE

The Property

The property to which this DAS/HS relates is a Grade II Listed building formerly St Leonards Church which was decommissioned in 1983 and listed grade II on 22 March 1983. List No. 1256721.

This imposing 19th century Grade II listed building is constructed with walls of blue lias rubble and sandstone detailing to the nave and local dressed limestone with bath stone detailing to the chancel. The nave roof is natural slate and the chancel, chapel, organ chamber and vestry is asbestos cement slates. The building contains many of its original features and was purchased privately following being decommissioned and used as an antiques emporium for a number of years. It has lain empty for the last 5 years before being purchased by Newton Abbot Town Council in 2016. It is a prominent recognisable landmark for the community and visitors to the Newton Abbot, located on Wolborough Street, adjacent to the main shopping area and public car parks and on one of the major routes through the town.

St Leonards Church was built in 1835 to a design by Architect Richard Millward. The chancel and interior alterations were added in 1876 to a design by JW Rowell.

The first St Leonard’s was built as a chapel of ease to Wolborough church and was in existence by 1350. It consisted of a nave and tower but fell out of use in the 1830s and the nave was demolished in 1834 leaving the tower which now forms a centre-piece for the town. The foundation stone for the new church of St Leonards was laid in 1834 on land given by the 10th Earl of Devon and the building was completed in...
1836. It had a wide rectangular nave with a rose window in the south wall and galleries on three sides running straight across the side windows and carried on thin cast iron pillars of quatrefoil section. The capitals were unusual, being in the form of four heads of sheep, cherubs, kings, dogs or foliage and the gallery front had a cornice along its lower edge and rectangular moulded panels. The nave and galleries remain in their original form except for some additions and alterations carried out in 1974 to subdivide the space and to add a kitchen and toilets beneath the gallery. The ceiling over the nave is slightly pitched and divided into eighty-one square panels by moulded ribs with small foliate bosses at the intersections. The central ridge is interrupted by two circular ventilation roses.

The church was extended southwards in 1876 by the addition of a chancel designed by Joseph William Rowell (1827-1902) who had settled in Newton Abbot in 1855 and designed a considerable number of buildings in the area under the patronage of the Courtenay family who were significant land owners. The chancel is of three bays and is described in the decommissioning report as being ‘in the slightly French 13th-century style typical of the 1860s and 70s’. The eastern bay houses the organ and the western bay has the baptismal font and forms an access route to the vestry positioned to the rear of the altar wall. The chancel floor is raised on four steps with further steps at the altar rail and altar position. Much of the floor surface is paved in red, green and buff encaustic tiles set within stone steps. Paired arches link the side bays to the sanctuary these being carried on flat responds and on paired shafts with foliate capitals in the middle. The ceiling over the chancel is a five-sided cradle vault with twenty square panels between moulded ribs. The panels were painted in 1881 and feature a variety of plants and other decorations.

The altars, reredoses and the lectern referred to in the decommissioning report no longer remain. The pulpit and font however, do remain. The former being polygonal, of Bath stone with trefoil niches in each face carrying statues of St Leonard, St Joan of Arc, St Martin of Tours, King Clovis and Bishop Remigius. It also features a vine trail cornice designed by Walford Locke who succeeded JW Rowell in his practice. The font is octagonal stone with a moulded base and small trefoil arches on the stem, leaves on the underside of the bowl and quatrefoils round the bowl carved alternately with a shield and a fleuron. The font is of 15th-century, and was given by the Earl of Devon in 1877 from the Salcombe Church which he had recently restored.

The majority of stained glass within the church is in the chancel and dates from the late 19th-century by Frederick Drake, an accomplished local stained glass artist, however there is some older stained glass pieces in the tracery lights of the windows in the north/principle façade one of which shows the arms of Courtenay, Earls of Devon dating from 1836. The latter is considered to be of particular importance.
The organ was built by Hele & Company of Plymouth in 1909 and is the last of a number of organs positioned variously within the church.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

The design principle for the conversion and alterations to the church are to carefully insert a new and modern structure into part of the nave of the building whilst retaining the existing gallery together with one of the existing timber access staircases. The new structure will be supported on circular columns within the nave and the new floor will sit above the gallery so that the latter forms a feature in the museum space below. Similarly the nave ceiling will be renovated and redecorated as a feature within the existing and new accommodation.

The concept is to use the rich architecture of the interior as a backcloth for the new museum. To retain, restore and protect most of the elements of the church so that they become part of the museum and the story of the town.

The Proposals

The Applicant wishes to carry out alterations to the building to provide additional accommodation for its intended new use. These alterations comprise the following:-

- The sensitive insertion of an additional floor within part of the former nave to create three meeting rooms, offices and support facilities.
- The replacement of the existing floor construction throughout the nave area to allow for new foundations for the columns supporting for the first floor, improved insulation and underfloor heating.
- The construction of new offices and public toilets beneath the existing gallery at ground floor level.
- The reinstatement of the former external entrance on the eastern side of the main Wolborough Street facade providing disabled access from pavement level.
- The installation of a lift within the building to provide disabled access to all public areas.
- The removal of part of the existing gallery on the eastern side of the nave to allow for the insertion of a new staircase.
- The construction of internal ramps and raised floor levels to provide for disabled access to all parts of the museum space.
- The partial removal of the timber wall to the centrally entrance lobby and its replacement by a glazed screen and glazed doors.
- The removal of the organ and the construction of a new floor and staircase to provide for museum storage space.
- The renovation and repositioning of the baptismal font.
The renovation and replacement in position of the statues to the pulpit
The installation of the listed Templar Screen to be removed from the existing museum facility at the Town Hall on St Paul’s Road, Newton Abbot.
The renovation of the existing lath and plaster ceiling to the nave area.
The careful removal of the existing acrylic paint from the interior wall surfaces and redecoration with a breathable paint.
The replacement of the existing 20th-century window on the western side of the Wolborough Street façade with a new window fully glazing the arched opening which was originally an external door and reinstating the granite steps.
The removal of asbestos cement slates from the chancel and vestry roofs and the re-slatting all of the roof areas with natural slate with a type 1F felt underlay.
The removal of cement pointing from part of the Wolborough Street façade and repointing in lime mortar.
The renovation by specialists of the historical stained glass to the northern elevation only.
The renovation by specialists of the glazing to the windows in the east and west elevations together with repairs or replacement of damaged window mullions.
The replacement of the majority of rainwater goods with cast iron fittings.
The repair of stone copings generally where deteriorated.
The installation of two metal support frames for external banners fitted to the towers on the front façade.

ACCESS

Inclusive Access

The existing principle access to the building is up four steps to the two entrance doors positioned in the centre of the Wolborough Street façade. Secondary access is available from two doors onto St Leonards Road on the west side of the building. Both these doors have three steps.

It is clearly of fundamental importance to provide for full disabled access to all public parts of this new facility and we propose to achieve this by installing a new fully compliant disabled access lift providing a wheelchair accessible link from the entrance area at pavement level to both the ground floor museum space and the first floor committee rooms and offices.

A ramped access compliant with current Building Regulations will also be provided within the museum space linking between the nave and chancel (600mm) and within the chancel area.
FLOOD RISK

St Leonards Church lies on the boundary of an area which is known to flood from the River Lemon. A study of the indicative maps published by the Environment Agency show that Zone 3 extends up to the north façade of the church. The Environment Agency has available on the public register the results of a flood study for the area and the 1% probability levels of flood water in this location are estimated to be 7.5m AOD.

A detailed level survey of the site was completed by Quadrant Architectural and Topographical Surveys in September 2016 which shows that the floor levels within the church are 8.09m AOD in the nave and 8.70m AOD in the chancel and rear vestry areas. These levels show that there is more than 500mm freeboard in the event of flooding to 7.5m AOD.

Furthermore in the event of a flood preventing exit through the front of the building there is alternative exit at the rear of the building onto St Leonards Road at a pavement level of 8.11m AOD.

It is also advised by the EA that flood resilience measures should be incorporated for building in or adjacent to flood areas. In this case the floor of the nave will be of solid floor construction and electrical sockets will be positioned 1m above floor level with wiring fed from above.

All surface water drainage will remain, as existing and discharge to the public surface water system. It is not considered that this proposal will increase the risk of flooding to others.

This planning proposal complies with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, with regard to the avoidance of liability to flood.

SUPPORTING STUDIES

Ecological Survey

An ecological survey has been carried out for the building focussing principally on the presence of Bats within the roof areas. The report accompanies this planning submission.

Stained Glass Survey

A survey of the stained glass has been carried out by Stephen Clare ACR. FMGP. from Holy Well Glass, Somerset. The report accompanies this planning submission.

Structural Condition Report

A report on the structural condition of the building has been carried out by Paul Carpenter of PCA Structural Engineers firstly in 2016 to inform the feasibility study and
identify areas for further investigation. The report which accompanies this submission has been revised following the completion of further detailed investigations.

**Stonework Condition Survey**

A survey of the condition of the external stonework has been carried out by Mark Baker MSc. PDD (Bldg. Cons) from StoneCo Ltd. The report accompanies this planning submission.

**Building Regulations and British Standards**

Consultation has been undertaken with Devon Building Control (Mike Evans) to inform the design with particular attention on means of escape, disabled access and disabled facilities. A summary of this consultation accompanies this submission.

**The Organ**

Research has been carried out on the history and condition of the organ which is proposed to be removed as part of the conversion to allow the space to be used for museum storage. A copy of this research including consultation with an organ specialist accompanies this submission.

**The Templar Screen**

The Templar Screen is to be relocated to this building from its present position in the current museum at 9 Devon Square, Newton Abbot. The screen was restored with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund and is a listed piece in its own right. A report on the screen accompanies this submission.

**STATEMENT**

It is considered that this proposal to convert a redundant church to a new public facility which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and using materials and a design sensitive to the building will not have a detrimental impact upon the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and will preserve and enhance its character.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The main North Elevation onto Wolborough Street. The two modern windows to the former side doors are to be replaced. The western door will become a disabled access. Repointing in lime mortar is required to the central bay below the string course.
East Elevation showing the former abutment with the adjacent building and the parapet to be reformed to match the adjacent eaves detail.

West Elevation onto St Leonards Road.
The chancel extension by JW Rowell viewed from St Leonards Road.

The chancel viewed from the east side.
View of the nave and gallery from the chancel.

View of the chancel from the gallery.
Position of proposed new entrance externally replacing the present window and internally replacing the kitchen area.

Existing entrance lobby showing gallery staircases to be partially retained.
The pulpit and railings to be retained and the statues to be restored by specialists and re-fixed around the pulpit.

The west chapel with the font to be repositioned and the organ to be removed.
The ceiling over the nave. Note the decorative bosses and ventilation rose which are to be retained and refurbished.

Vestry to the rear of the altar wall and one of the decorative capitals of the gallery columns.
Old boiler flue to be removed.  

Tower capping to be repaired.  

Cast stone window mullions to be repaired or replaced.  

Stone details to be repaired.
Asbestos cement slates to chancel roof to be replaced with natural slate. The main nave roof is to be re slated reusing existing slates where appropriate.

Repair works required to stonework and replacement of parapet with eaves detail.