

Ref: 2020-055079 **Church:** Whitburn
Diocese: Durham **Archdeaconry:** Sunderland
Created By: Mr Michael O'Brien (30/09/2020) **Contact Tel.:** 07714401164
Status: Pre-formal consultation review

Statement of Needs

General information

Section 1. General information

The parish church of Whitburn is used as a place of worship weekly with up to four regular services including Family, Communion and Evensong . It has a regular weekly attendance of 90 people which expands for Family services and at festival times when schools and other organisations take part in community services. The church is busy for weddings, funerals and baptisms and is often used for community concerts and events. The congregation is predominantly elderly who have expressed their concerns over draughts. It is very important to our worshipping community that the repairs are undertaken.

What is needed?

The PCC have worked to ensure that the conditions of the Faculty (Reference 2019-045557) have been met and that the removal of the plaster has taken place as specified and that the analysis of the plaster has been undertaken by our architect Tony Barnes of B3 Architects.

As required under the conditions of the above faculty, further testing has been undertaken to ascertain the type of damp and moisture content of the walls and as a result of this, it has been concluded by the architect that there is no dampness in the walls rather, moisture absorbed from condensation within the church tower.

Discussion and recommendation for re-plastering the walls has taken place with the architect, representatives from the church and the contractor responsible for the work of removing the plaster to date. A report for this has been filed and enclosed as part of this application by Tony Barnes. In his report we are aware that he will recommend a lime-based plaster which will allow the walls to 'breathe'.

The discussions and investigations have concluded that whilst the insulation of the first floor of the tower as specified under Faculty (Reference 2019-045557) would help in retaining the heat in the lower tower, the heating of the lower tower would benefit from more sustained heating in the form of piped central heating as is in use throughout the rest of the church building.

The church and the architect are agreed that whilst in the short-term the use of the oil-filled heaters was of value in assisting the drying-out process, a more synchronised form of heating would be better value for money and would help to maintain a constant temperature throughout the whole building. This would then mean extending the existing gas-fired boiler heating system with the addition of two 2KW radiators installed in the tower (one on the North wall and one on the South wall).

The proposal

The Proposal:

The re-plastering of the lower tower wall

The proposal is to reinstate breathable walling, to allow any moisture passing into or through the wall to escape to atmosphere, protecting the structure from further deterioration, and improving the internal vestry space.

After discussion and consideration, the preference is to provide a lime plaster mortar finish, rather than a dry lining, in line with the initial report. This is in keeping with the historic fabric.

It is expected that the stonework would be carefully cleaned of all residue and any 'hard' mortar in the stonework joints chopped out. The joints can then be raked out, and repointed in a lime mortar, any deep holes, wide joints or pockets dubbed out in thin layers of mortar. Preparing the background will achieve a surface that can take a first coat of consistent thickness. The quality of preparation is vital to the quality of the finished job.

A lime plastering mortar finish can then be applied in two or three coats using NHL 3.5 in a 1:2 ratio with well graded sharp sand 3.5mm down, for the first and second coats. The finishing coat of NHL 2 in a 1:1 mix with fine silica sand.

It is proposed that a lime-based casein(breathable)paint can be applied to the fully dry and set works.

We envisage that the above specification is a guide and subject to further discussion between the architect and the appointed contractor.

Installation of adequate heating to maintain a moisture-free atmosphere.

We propose that the existing hot water heating system be extended in two legs, one from the south aisle and one from the north aisle each terminating in a quality and efficient radiator (Hudevad), to match the other Church radiators; fitted with an adjustable thermostatic valve, to provide low level background heating.

We propose that the pipework be routed via core-drilled holes at low level through the South east and North east corners of the Tower walls. This would require two 50 mm holes, drilled diagonally through the lower wall at a height commensurate with that of the existing radiator pipes to enter the base of the tower. The holes would be suitably filled and sealed in keeping with the existing plasterwork.

Given that the age of the tower in places is circa 13th century covered by Victorian plasterwork on the walls of the body of the church and would enter the tower through either the stonework or soon to be rendered lime-based plaster, we would be mindful that any such drilling would require care and attention.

Conclusion

Re-stating the need.

If the church building is to continue as a centre for worship, and in order to maintain its good state of repair and maintenance, we believe that managing the level of moisture in the Church is crucial. Drying rates are mainly affected by the level of sunlight entering the building, the movement of warmed air and the permeability of the fabric and good ventilation.

Intermittent occupancy, with no heating in the Tower base, and limited air circulation provide conditions for the condensing of water vapour on cold walls. Low level background heating will help to raise the internal temperature above the point where water vapour will condense within or on the fabric surfaces. A dry wall will preserve the fabric and improve the insulating value of the building.

Steps towards maintaining the above have already been taken with the work outlined under the terms of the previous faculty. We view this new faculty application as being the concluding part of our phased faculty applications to maintain the status of our historic building and to ensure its use as a place of worship for the community well into the future.

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Justification

There will be no significant harm caused by the proposals. If anything, the building will be warmer, free from damp and draught and continue to serve as a well-maintained place for worship.