
Subject:	ST JAMES CHURCH, WOOLCOMBER STREET DOVER
Meeting and Date:	CABINET – 7 OCTOBER 2019
Report of:	Martin Leggatt, Head of Assets & Building Control
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Trevor Bartlett Portfolio Holder for Environment & Commercial Services
Decision Type:	Non-Key
Classification:	UNRESTRICTED

Purpose of the report: *To alert cabinet to the present condition of St James Church Dover, to advise on work needed to stabilise, protect and conserve the structure to allow the former leisure centre to be demolished and to seek approval to proceed with this work.*

Recommendation: *To approve a project that undertakes essential works to safeguard the structure in the short to medium term and allows the former leisure centre to be demolished.*

To delegate to Strategic Director (Operations & Commercial Services) in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Environment and Commercial Services to take all necessary actions to deliver the project, including awarding of relevant contracts

1. Summary

- 1.1 The goal of this project is to undertake repairs and work to arrest the deterioration of the fabric of St James church, Dover. The project will safeguard the heritage value of the remains and protect the public from the potential of falling objects. This allows time for a sustainable solution to emerge that will conserve and enhance this important heritage site for the long term. Such a solution will also seek to enhance both the setting of the ruins and the treatment of the site boundaries. Both the present and the long-term proposals will contribute to the positive visitor experience within the town.

2. Historic Background

- 2.1 St. James' Church dates from the 12th century. In the 14th century an extension was added on the south side of the nave, and this was used as the courthouse for the Chancery, Admiralty and Lodemanage Courts of the Cinque Ports. In 1862 a new church of St. James was opened on Maison Dieu Road, and this church began to be used by French Protestants. A restoration of the church took place in 1868 which replaced the pointed-arched window over the west door with a rose window and two smaller windows that survive today. Shelling in 1942, 1943 and 1944 did much damage and at the end of the war the church was a ruin. In 1948 it was decided that the church should not be restored, but preserved as a "Tidy Ruin" in memory of the shelling of Dover. In May 1950 a further collapse of the tower took place and the walls were reduced and capped. The church and churchyard were bought by the Dover Borough Council in 1970 and has been used as a public open space since then.

3. Heritage Significance:

- 3.1 St James Church is covered by two separate heritage designations: the standing remains of the building were listed at grade II in 1949, and the ground on which the remains sit were designated a scheduled monument in 1950. These early designations recognise the historic and architectural value of St James at a national level as a heritage asset. The approved Dover District Heritage Strategy 2013 identifies the ecclesiastical heritage of the district to be of outstanding significance, providing valuable evidence of the introduction and evolution of Christianity in the district. St James Church is particularly notable for its preservation as a ruin and is an eloquent reminder of the impact of WWII on the town of Dover.
- 3.2 The setting of the church has been somewhat degraded in the past but it retains a strong visual relationship with neighbouring historic buildings, including grade II White Horse Inn and Castle Hill House. The attractive aesthetic of the ruin of St James Church contributes both to its value as a heritage asset, and the character of the Dover Castle Conservation Area within which it is located. The church occupies a prominent position, particularly in relation to the new St James development.
- 3.3 Due to the condition of the upstanding fabric St James Church was included in the Heritage at Risk Register for the first time at the end of 2018. The Register is compiled by Historic England, central government's heritage advisors, with the aim of identifying those high status heritage assets (scheduled monuments, grade I and II* listed buildings, etc.) that are most at risk of loss. Historic England provides advice, guidance and resources to owners including local authorities to assist in finding solutions. Ultimately it is the owner's responsibility to ensure the continued conservation of heritage assets, and in the case of local authorities there is an implied moral obligation to demonstrate appropriate care of historic structures within their care

4. Summary of current state of structure:

- 4.1 The standing fabric is a complex structure resulting from the substantial previous campaigns of repair that accompany the traumatic history of the Church. The surviving structure is generally self-supporting, even where elements are detached from one another. The majority of the structure is considered to be in a fair, if heavily weathered, condition but now requires a programme of targeted conservation followed by regular routine maintenance. The full report of September 2018, undertaken by Purcell's, contains much fuller information.
- 4.2 The structure is locally extremely poor and in places unstable. Local areas are in need of immediate intervention to repair, prop or support the fabric. Of particular concern are: the quoins and returns of the former North Tower; the Tower interior, and adjacent window mullion; the high level ashlar masonry of the West Front; and the quoins and returns of the West Front.
- 4.3 Proper repair will require substantial renewal of stone because, during the various campaigns of adaptation and repair that have gone before, parts of the fabric have become structurally disjointed. This, combined with natural material erosion, establishes parameters that do not readily lend themselves to the generally accepted monument repair methods, such as inserting wall ties, grouting and mortar consolidation. In order to achieve a long-lasting repair, it is likely to be necessary to replace a high proportion of masonry in key locations. The quoins to the North Tower and the North and South returns of the West elevation are in particular need of structural repair.

5. Impact of demolition of redundant leisure centre

- 5.1 St James Church sits adjacent to the former Dover Leisure Centre site. The former leisure centre now sits redundant and needs to be demolished and cleared to allow the site to be redeveloped.
- 5.2 The demolition of the former Dover Leisure Centre site will involve demolishing the main structure down to slab level as well as the removal of below ground structures including; foundations (strip and pad), pile caps, below ground floor structures (plant room) as well as both the learner and main swimming pools. It is proposed to leave the deep end of the main pool in situ and retain all piles on site (with their locations recorded).
- 5.3 Breaking out the below ground structures within 35 metres of the church and the general movement of large demolition machinery has potential to cause levels of vibration that could affect the stability of St James Church and it is the recommendation of Purcell that the structure is supported (as per Priority A works) before any demolition works commence.
- 5.4 Prior to the commencement of any demolition work Purcell will review the demolition contractors proposed method statement and advise any changes deemed necessary. Vibration monitoring will be in place for the duration of the demolition contract.

6. Proposed Works

- 6.1 This report concerns itself solely with works that stabilise the historic fabric and details the proposed medium-term stabilisation works. A later phase of repair and refurbishment to provide a sustainable long-term solution will be the subject of a further cabinet report. This report differs from proposals that were considered in April 2019 in that the intention to erect suitable perimeter railings have been omitted. The reason for this is that the design proposals for the former Dover leisure Centre site are yet to emerge and these will to a large extent determine the boundary treatment, which best serves the ruins of St James church.
- 6.2 The recommendations of the Purcell report of September 2018 are presented in terms of time lines for executing the particular works, split in to four categories: (a) immediate works; (b) works necessary within 12 months; (c) works that may become necessary within 24 months and (d) desirable works beyond 24 months. The focus of this report focusses on categories (a), (b) and (c) which will help stabilise the structure.
- 6.3 Purcell's have identified works which are immediately necessary (Priority A) as being: Install temporary works (scaffold girdle) to the North Tower. The scaffold should be designed giving consideration to the other repairs identified, and should allow for further inspections and works to be undertaken with minimal alterations; Partner central mullion to the Tower window with a new timber prop; Patch repair cementitious cap where failed; Treat vegetative growth to retard further growth; Remove any loose fabric found at this time; Remove build-up of guano at the base of the North Tower and undertake environmental clean.
- 6.4 Purcell's identified that the following works (Priority B) were necessary within 12 months of the date of the report (which has now passed): Clean out & re-point cracks to abutment of West elevation with North and South returns. Monitor for further cracking as a sign of continuing structural movement; Re-point all loose and open joints generally, including deep pointing to voids; Remove all remaining vegetation at high level; Re-bed all loose capping and high-level ashlar masonry to the North

Tower and West elevation; Replace existing cementitious capping with new lime flaunching. All work will be subject to obtaining scheduled monument consent and any necessary Planning consents.

- 6.5 Purcell's identified that the following works (Priority C) were likely to be required within 24 months; to avoid substantial ongoing undermining of the west elevation, a conservation and structural repair package should be prepared, to include replacement of those stones which are missing or have structurally failed, and allowing for full repointing of all masonry joints. Assuming no repairs are undertaken with the girdle arrangement, proper consolidation of the North Tower quoins should be planned for this period also. This will involve the dismantling and reconstruction of the quoins.
- 6.5 In January 2019 D R Nolan were commissioned to prepare a cost plan (see Appendix 1) and this provided indicative construction costs for priority (a) work as £60k, priority (b) work as £84.5k and priority (c) work £68.5k. Total cost of priority (a), (b) & (c) works is estimated at £213k.
- 6.6 Within the £213k works there are potential cost savings to be made; within the priority (a) works a saving of around £20k could be made if the all works are carried out within a year of each other (saving on scaffold checks and maintenance costs which have been projected over a 5 year period). By working with Purcell it is proposed that a defined budget of £190k would be worked toward to carry out essential repair work only and to put money where it is best served to protect the structure.

7. Identification of Options

- 7.1 **Option 1:** Carry out work identified in the Purcell report as priority works (a), (b) and (c) whilst working within a budget of £190k. Allowing the priority (a) work to take place will mean the former leisure centre can be demolished and redeveloped. Furthermore, carrying out priority (b) and (c) works will secure the short to medium term future of St James Church allowing time for a longer term solution to be found to conserve and enhance this important heritage asset.
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Carry out work identified in the Purcell report as immediate works, priority (a) Total cost £66k. Allowing this work to take place will mean the former leisure centre can be demolished and that the temporary structure (scaffold) can be purchased, maintained and monitored for a period of 5 years. There is no allowance within this sum for removal of the scaffold.
- 7.3 **Option 3:** Carry out work identified in the Purcell report as priority works (a) immediate works; (b) works necessary within 12 months. (total cost £145) Allowing this work more remedial work can take place and the former leisure centre can be demolished and that the temporary structure (scaffold) can be purchased, maintained and monitored for a period of 5 years. There is no allowance within this sum for removal of the scaffold. The (b) works carried will help to slow down the deterioration of the building.
- 7.4 **Option 4:** Carry out no works and let the structure erode. This has the potential for sections of the building to collapse. The remains of St James Church abut public highways on the West and North elevations. Dover District Councils structural engineer is currently carrying out two weekly inspections of the structure to monitor any movement. If no works are carried out it is believed that in the near future the Church would have to be fenced off to prevent access on the grounds of public safety, this may result in the need to close both the public highways.

8. Evaluation of Options

- 8.1 **Option 1** - this is the recommended option as it removes the immediate risk of falling masonry, protects the structure to allow the former leisure centre to be demolished (to allow the redevelopment of the site) and allows priority works (b) and (c) to take place within 6-9 months (of the protection being installed). These works will arrest further deterioration of this heritage asset, allowing time for a longer term solution to be found to conserve and enhance the church.
- 8.2 **Option 2** – this is not recommended as whilst it will allow for temporary protection of the structure (which in turn will allow the former leisure centre to be demolished) and for the immediate risks of falling masonry to be dealt with, it will not provide a long term solution for this heritage asset. Unless a longer term solution is found it means that scaffold will be in place for a number of years which will be detrimental to both the visual amenity of the area and the heritage asset itself.
- 8.3 **Option 3** – this is not recommended as whilst it will allow for temporary protection of the structure (which in turn will allow the former leisure centre to be demolished) and for the immediate risks of falling masonry to be dealt with, it will not provide a long term solution for this heritage asset. Unless a longer term solution is found it means that scaffold will be in place for a number of years which will be detrimental to both the visual amenity of the area and the heritage asset itself.
- 8.4 **Option 4** – this is not recommended. Although overall the structure of the church has been classified as being in fair condition, specific localised repairs have been identified as needing immediate work (these measures are now overdue). Further delaying such work is very likely to lead to acceleration in the rate of deterioration and much more significant cost in future years, it will also delay the demolition of the former leisure centre. Further, the structure abuts public highways on the West and North elevations and delaying work to stabilise the structure increase the risk of future falling masonry. This is deemed to be an unacceptable risk and could result in the closure of public highways.

9. Resource Implications

- 9.1 A total of £190k is required to carry out these works in full. A sum of £70k is included in the current MTFP for the purposes of investigating the nature of issues at St James Church, identifying measures to address these issues and implementing those measures. The release of the £70k would allow the temporary stability works to take place in order to allow the former leisure centre to be demolished. It is also proposed to use the £60k public realm works allocation to part fund the project. The additional requirement of £60k to increase the available budget to £190k is being put forward as a new funding bid for 20/21, however, this is subject to Cabinet/Council approval of the 2020/21 budget.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment. (DL)
- 10.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: “The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make”. (HR)
- 10.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications however in discharging their duties members are required to

comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>.

10.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – D R Nolan (Quantity Surveyor) report.

12. Background Papers

Purcell (Conservation Architect) report September 2018

Contact Officer: David Parish, Architectural Project Officer