

HOLY CROSS BINSTED

MINUTES OF REORDERING COMMITTEE MEETING

19 March 2021 at 3pm on zoom

Present: Andrew Hunter Johnston (Chairman), Yann Dubreuil, Kay Hunter Johnston, Nick Carter, Kathy Ogilvie Thompson, Angela Dunne, Helen Macdonald, Piers Wilson, Stella Croom-Johnson, Ben Macdonald (co-opted) and Claire Fargeot (co-opted).

Prayer: Yann Dubreuil opened the meeting in prayer.

Apologies: Christopher Ogilvie Thompson and Ron Neil.

1. Protocol for meeting: minutes and recording

It was proposed that the minutes should be recorded to facilitate minute writing and for any absent members to listen to. The recording would then be erased. **Unanimously agreed.**

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were **unanimously approved.**

3. Matters arising

All minutes approved by the committee will be sent to the PCC for information. After which they will be put on the Benbinfo website. The website will ask for any feedback to be sent to a specific email address: reorderingfeedback@benbinfo.co.uk. There will be an opportunity at the beginning of the following committee meeting to inform the committee of any feedback. The Bentley and Binsted magazine will contain a monthly update on the progress of the committee. **Unanimously agreed.**

4. Proposed reorganisation of benefices in Winchester Diocese – impact on Binsted

Yann Dubreuil explained that over the past year there have been discussions at senior level in the diocese and that due to financial constraints, the number of stipendiary clergy in the diocese will be reduced by 22, including two in the Alton deanery through retirement. Covid has accelerated this inevitable reduction. It is proposed that East Worldham and Kingsley will be incorporated into our current benefice. This will result in an increase in lay-led services and activities. It is envisaged that the new larger benefice will be overseen by a single PCC. Individual parishes will continue to be responsible for the upkeep of the fabric of their church building with local community involvement. All will contribute to cover the costs of mission, discipleship and administration of the new benefice.

There will be no obvious effect on the church building, except that with an increasingly aged and therefore diminishing congregation it is even more important that the local community engages in the future upkeep of the church. There is no immediate effect on the reordering plans and timing, as funding for any reordering will come from the local community, and

each church in the benefice will be expected to offer space for their community to engage with God and show Hospitality as they welcome people into their respective church buildings. At this stage there are many unknowns as to how this new benefice will work together and although Binsted would be the largest of the three churches in the southern part of the enlarged benefice, Kingsley may be the “go to” church to grow links with the school, as so many school children come from the Kingsley area, and family services could be held in Kingsley in the future.

5. Location of proposed toilets and baby-changing facilities – consideration of options

It was emphasised at the beginning of the discussion that all committee members should participate, be respectful and listen. Although there are at present two sets of plans for the toilets for consideration, these may not represent the best options as alternative venues for the toilets could still be considered, e.g. by the porch, in a pod at the back of the church or in the tower.

It was also emphasised that, at this stage, the critical issue was to identify the location for the toilets which would best suit the church, both now and in the future. The design and finish was a secondary issue.

The two proposals currently on the table were then described and explained in turn. Following this, questions and discussion ensued.

1. Toilets beside the Westcote Chapel

- Close to existing services (water). Toilet drainage would need to be dug.
- Convenient for disabled access – close to the road, the entrance to the Westcote chapel without door and hinges is 806mm wide (minimum 800mm.)
- Fabric removed: door to the Westcote chapel and hinges removed and the creation of a channel (1000 mm wide and 5 ins deep) with two right angles dug through the Westcote chapel and chancel floor to the north aisle for level disabled access. (Shown in green hatching on diagram)
Part of the pew platform to the west of the organ.
- Two toilets, one fully accessible for disabled, with a separate lobby. Allowing for privacy.
- Proposed exterior design similar to vestry in modern materials.
- The new extension wall would protect part of the west wall of the Westcote chapel.
- Electric water heaters in the toilets.
- Proposal to replace the two sinks in the Westcote chapel.
- Access to the north chancel would be via a covered passageway from the existing Westcote chapel entrance 2.3m high and 1 m wide.
- Reconfiguration of part of the full height partition between the Westcote chapel and the north chancel to allow for two doors (in place of one at present), one from the covered passageway and the second to enable access back into the Westcote chapel. Part of the organ platform would be removed to allow for this.
- Cost approximately £50,000.

2. Toilets outside the north-west corner of the church

- The least obtrusive position to site the toilets. They would be partially hidden from the road (the main access to the church) by the three yew trees and hardly noticeable.
- Access to existing services (water) and toilet drainage would need to be dug. Access is relatively easy.
- Easily accessible for disabled access with an entrance 1000mm wide.
- Additional emergency exit point from the main body of the church.
- Fabric removed: lower part of the Victorian window at the west end of the north aisle and the masonry below it. The upper part of the window would be retained.
- Two toilets, one disabled, with a separate lobby.
- Designed originally in stone in a similar style the church but subsequently altered to oak cladding with a slate roof to reduce costs and to comply with the perceived diocesan requirement that any addition to a Grade I church should be identifiably different from the original building.
- Heating and water heating would be provided by the boiler already in situ.
- An additional storage area for cleaning materials etc would be available.
- Access to the north aisle would be on one level through a wide, light and welcoming entrance, allowing for the advised width of 850mm plus through both doors. The glass roofed lobby would allow for extra light into the lobby and west end of the church.
- No further reconfiguration or change of levels would be needed.
- The toilets would be invisible during services and the congregation would be able to visit them discretely and privately. This would be less embarrassing for the user and would not divert the attention of the person leader of the service.
- The boiler would be resited for easy access. The plans would provide for storage space in the roof.
- This location for the toilets does not affect or alter the Westcote chapel in any way, thereby leaving it fully available for future plans, development or changes of use as required.
- The committee has previously shared, discussed and invited comments on the location of the toilets with the DAC and various advisory and amenity societies over a four-year period. They were broadly in favour of this proposal and position for the toilets.

3. Questions and discussion on the relative merits of the two proposals

A) Westcote chapel position

- It was noted that both plans would involve digging in the churchyard, with the possible consequent disturbance to burials.
- If the Westcote chapel were to be developed in the future and used for other purposes, access to toilets there would be discreet.
- Concern was expressed that the main disabled access would be through the existing Westcote chapel doorway, which is only just within DPA legislation, at 806mm wide

at its widest point with the door and hinges removed. It was suggested that some of the medieval masonry round the doorway could be removed to make it wider.

- Concern was expressed as to how the step down from the north chancel to the north aisle would be dealt with. It could look strange to have a channel and split step, with the left half lower and the right half higher in an obvious position when seen from the body of the church. It was asked how this could affect future plans. It was suggested that the step could be pushed back across the whole width of the aisle (although this would impinge on the stone grave slab in the chancel).
- Concern was expressed that the covered walkway and the alterations to the floor level could effectively prevent any future development of the Westcote chapel as originally proposed by the committee. The siting of a glass doorway and glass partition as proposed would no longer be possible. Thus the idea of light flooding from the Westcote chapel into the chancel, and the church being reunited as a whole again after more than 100 years, would not be viable. A new partition, solid below and glazed above, in the place of the existing partition, was proposed.
- The covered walkway, together with the two doors and the solid wall, would continue to obscure any view of the statue Richard de la Bere de Westcote (1333) from the chancel and the Lady chapel. This view would be further obscured by placing a proposed double sink very close to the statue. Even if a glass partition were possible in the future, the covered passage would still obscure the statue, a heritage feature of the church, and reduce the church's options for the Westcote chapel in the future.
- The piano would certainly, and the keyboard would probably, need to be repositioned.
- If the toilets were positioned by the Westcote chapel, and disabled access to the chancel, Lady chapel and Westcote chapel was needed in the future, it was proposed that a ramp could be built in the South aisle leading to the Lady chapel.
- Concern was raised that wheelchairs, even if they do not get any wider, are getting longer eg the wheelchairs used at Treloars, and so the covered walkway and turning area in it, while complying with the current minimum legal requirements, may become too small for wheelchair users to navigate safely and easily.
- It was suggested that people would be happy to go forward to the toilet block in front of the congregation in the middle of a Sunday service, wedding or funeral even if in a wheelchair.
- The discussion as to whether the design is traditional or contemporary would depend on cost and the view of the diocese.
- Concern was expressed that the position of the toilet block would be very obvious from the road and from outside the church as it will be flush with the north wall of the Westcote chapel and extend right up to the first medieval window in the north aisle.
- The entrance and covered walkway are lit by one small glass window which may have stained glass in it. This could make the lobby and enclosed passageway very dark.
- The Westcote would only have one point of emergency access, rather than two as at present. The planning consequences of this was not known.
- The statue of Richard de la Bere de Westcote would be obscured by the walkway and sinks in the Westcote Chapel.

- Concerns were raised regarding how one might be able to develop the Westcote Chapel in the future, with the access from the toilets and the multiple split level accesses from the nave the chancel limiting the options.

B) North-west corner position

- It was suggested that a discreet position for the toilets at the back of the church would be preferable taking all criteria into account, allowing for private and easy access to the toilets when the church is being used by large numbers at weddings, baptisms, funerals and other community events etc. The back of the church location is more elegant and straightforward, less fudgy. The key is what works for the users. It would also be close to the proposed coffee station at the back of the church for after service or event refreshment and for the bellringers. Some concerns were expressed about privacy issues with the glass doors to the entrance to the toilet block at the back of the church and there was an element of the toilet area being visible. The glass doors would be the frosted type rather than clear.
- The glass lobby could get dirty and might be broken if something were to fall off the roof. It does, however, allow more of the original wall of the church to be seen, thereby reducing the overall impact of the toilets.
- Concern was expressed that the prayer corner would need to be moved. The prayer corner has only been in this position for three or four years, and an alternative location could be found, either back to its original position in the Lady chapel or to the back of the south aisle.
- At present the design clearly differentiates the toilet block from the rest of the church. This would be reconsidered as part of more detailed planning if the north-west option was preferred.
- It was noted that the DAC representatives, at the first meeting with the reordering committee in 2016, recommended that the best location for toilets in a church is at the back of the church if possible.
- The footprint of the proposed location on the northwest corner was originally trying to stay within the space of the tower buttresses. Expanding the area to provide a larger toilet area could be explored.

Coffee station in the north-west corner of the nave

- It was noted that the natural place to congregate, both after services and after other events in the church is at the back of the nave. This is the most friendly and welcoming area and does not involve walking down to the Lady chapel at the far end of the church, which could be intimidating for non-regular church members and guests. It is hoped that the number of regular worshippers will grow, and the Lady chapel is already too small to accommodate everyone and some people remain in the main body of the church, necessitating servers carrying trays with full cups of coffee around the church and into pews. A coffee station installed at the back of the nave, with a number of pews removed from the area, would solve this problem, provide a much larger area for congregating and improve the welcome and

hospitality offered. Visitors are more likely to linger and join in with 'after service refreshments' if they can easily see where they are being served.

General

- An outdoor tap and light were requested.
- Wherever the toilets are positioned, it was suggested that flower arranging should continue to be done in the Westcote chapel.
- In both scenarios some pews would most likely need to be removed.
If the toilets were sited outside the Westcote chapel, certainly part of the plinth would need to be removed to provide sufficient and safe disabled access and if the piano and the keyboard were to remain near their current position then some of the pews would need to be removed. The original pew plinth on which the organ sits would need to be cut right back on the west side.
If the coffee station were to be installed in the north-west corner of the nave, pews would need to be removed to accommodate after service gatherings.
- Updated and detailed costings for both proposals should be prepared and compared.
- We need to find something that works for and with the building and also for the users of the building

6. Communication with church membership and the wider community

It was recognised that proper communication, so that no one can say that do not know what is happening with the reordering, is essential. The proposals put forward under matters arising were unanimously agreed. They are that:

- the reordering committee minutes will be put on the Benbinfo website.
- The website will ask for any feedback to be sent to be sent to reorderingfeedback@benbinfo.co.uk.
- There will be an opportunity at the beginning of the following committee meeting to inform the committee of any feedback.
- The Bentley and Binsted magazine will contain a monthly update on the progress of the committee. Stella offered to do this.
- Information will also be put on the Parish Council website.
- All committee members welcome and would like to hear the views of any member of the church or the local community.

7. Next steps

- The CAD drawing of the church, prepared by St Ann's Gate Architects at the request of the reordering committee, would be sent to all new members.
- Both proposals to be updated, taking comments raised into consideration and thoughts and ideas for where to serve refreshments from. How might changes impact on special services such as Baptisms and Weddings? Try to compare like for like and so easier for people to make a more informed decision.
Claire kindly offered to help draw us up some sketches with the important points.

- Helen will forward the letter about the Prayer Corner and Prayer ministry to all on the committee.

8. Date of next meeting

TBA by doodle poll for the last week of April.

9. Any other business

None.

Prayer: Yann Dubreuil closed in prayer.