

St Mary's Future Use Seminar 1st Feb 2018

Meeting Report

Event summary

Around 60 people gathered at St Mary's to participate in a public meeting to consider St Mary's Future use following the publication of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP).

A presentation was given outlining the main findings of the CMP and the categories of significance applied to various aspects of St Mary's setting, building and fixtures.

The wide range of possible uses suggested for St Mary's future were outlined and the top eight uses identified by consultation through St Mary's Devises Trust, St Mary's Future Use Group and the Parochial Church Council were offered to those present for their consideration.

A time for questions and discussion followed the presentation (various questions and comments from this outlined below) before a red/green sticker exercise, indicating support or otherwise for each of the eight options on white boards headed with each option and a black white board for alternative suggestions. This was followed by the placing of post it notes on the boards giving thoughts and suggestions for each option from those present. Those who wished were also offered a SWOT analysis chart for each option to complete.

Questions/Comments

On the concept of a dedicated theatre space the question was raised about the security of the future of the Wharf Theatre site, due to it being on prime development land alongside the canal.

One person suggested that we should consider the multi-use concept within the existing footprint of St Mary's Church building, being practical and convenient, avoiding the need for planning permission and simply using what we have been given as it were, rather than building on and out.

Others suggested that external facilities were required and that the existing vestry might be extended to provide them.

The point was raised that external facilities were required because otherwise a big enough auditorium would be impossible. [250 seating capacity being a key element in any future use as a performance space]

It was noted that while some changes need to prove benefit that outweigh any harm, other changes can be regarded not as doing harm to but improving the building.

Church Building Council officer present at the meeting suggested that we have a round table meeting of all the statutory/interested parties to consider the significance criteria outlined in the CMP and find agreement on them.

A comment was made that it would be good to see St Mary's space seen as a "power of attraction": using the space for good activities drawing people in. [n.b. just as we have done in recent years with TITCO productions, concerts, exhibitions etc].

Alongside this was the judgement from some that the space cannot be used so long as it does not have any facilities. [with reference to the ugly/not the most pleasant Porta-Loo provision for some previous productions at St Mary's]

Suggested Use White Board Contents

Use	Red spots	Green stars	Comments
Art Gallery	28	6	+ve Gallery space made available as part of multi-use hub +ve Can be part of a multi-use centre +ve why not? If the artists can take control and bring in outside talent to display, it could become a focal point
Cafe	31	3	+ve can be part of multiuse concept -ve café art gallery arts centre - no
Central home for charities	27	4	Could work as part of a multi-use project
Church for another cong.	28	4	+ve A mosque is needed in Devizes
Craft workshop	35	7	
Dedicated theatre	35	8	+vs Theatre options as part of a multi-use project
Drop in centre	32	9	+ve Could be complement to current local facilities in the area. -ve Plans well ahead for a night shelter for next winter & a “moving on” residence to follow for Homeless & Rough Sleepers. <i>Miriam Smith</i>
Multi-use	1	57	+ve Multi-use community space incorporating theatre. Devizes needs this facility. +ve Multi-use will work if there are outside facilities including a kitchen, rooms and toilets. +ve Toilets must come first. Occupancy varied- some permanent. Theatre good, exhibition space, Music workshops. +ve Multi-faith church +ve Café National Trust have successful cafes in their historic buildings – cost efficient – improve the experience. +ve We liked the original design! Please try another semi-circular cloister. +ve Any venue for hire must have a professionally employed manager plus a café. +ve May seem a small technicality – dual use of multi-use? Are people voting for it just church + community space or multi-use space to include all the other uses in the same shape or form? +ve Sell “history of St Mary’s” booklet to visitors. +ve This will work but is likely to be staff intensive especially in relation to manager who can ensure the smooth running of the

		<p>venue. Totally supportive of the hard work being done to preserve & develop this wonderful building</p> <p>+ve Church / multi-use space – yes Theatre</p> <p>+ve A multi-use facility including a café and areas suitable for short term art displays would enhance viability. As independent options, the latter 2 would be a financial problem. Viability is also a function of demand and a multi-use facility is clearly the only financial sound idea versus closure.</p> <p>+ve Multi-use: Will cover all aspects of the towns needs and benefit al small clubs associations. Needless to say toilets and a café (& hot drinks) would be a necessity. <i>JMD</i></p> <p>+ve Many organisations. Many artefacts. Mobile space/facilities. Expand to variable display space. Domestic facilities. Don't leave as a pile of stones.</p> <p>+ve Most suggested uses seem to disrupt the space which is the glory of the church. The multi-communal use seems much the best in that it should make use of the special features of the church.</p> <p>+ve The building clearly excels as a fine musical performance space. If it gained a wider reputation for that object, a demand for its use for musical performance might drive the developments which are required and establish the building as a multi-use space as well as a church.</p> <p>+ve Dual uses: Worship. Performance space – music/singing/dance/theatre/social dances/club shows/exhibitions. temporary art gallery/AGMs/ public meetings and other community uses – xmas shelter /kitchen all need toilets + offices + refreshment facilities <i>Malcolm Cox</i></p> <p>+ve Multi-use Film, art, craft, theatre, choirs; music, café; meetings.</p> <p>+ve Keep its focus as a multi-use area to enable all groups in society use. Keep it flexible have a café but when art is being shown or workshop being held. Open at Christmas like St John's. Keep it simple.</p> <p>+ve With kitchens and loo facilities it could make money as a wedding and celebration venue.</p> <p>+ve The use of this beautiful and inspirational space to be used as a centre for worship; silent meditation art; the arts, workshops and performance, craft workshop. Also history. To be a centre and resource for local schools etc. <i>Robin 07711812149</i></p> <p>+ve Suggest a slightly different approach: "Project identification". Identify main features of attractive operations/uses Then evaluate feasibility and cost benefit. And iterate. Preferably obtain proposals from potential operators. <i>Richard Ormerod Trust for Devizes.</i></p> <p>+ve many of the options are viable part of multi-use.</p> <p>+ve Theatre use should include music and concerts</p> <p>+ve From a musical point of view, it deserves to be widely known that this building has one of the best acoustics in the regions. It would make for an excellent concert venue, as demonstrated by the many and varied events that have taken place here over the last few years.</p>
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			+ve Visiting children (via Browfort) used to go on the heritage trail. Main attraction was to go to the top of the tower of St Mary's. -ve Multi-use space can be achieved within existing footprint of church if some basic facilities provided kitchen/servery, accessible WC, other WCs, small storage, should consider digging down for WC in undercroft/new floor. Many examples exist . <i>Stevebull@tesco.net Architect</i>
Total	217	98	

New ideas from the unlabelled White Board

+ve Multi-use – including storage space to provide secure storage of resources. Pop up e.g. 1 month at gallery, next month theatre etc. Build a self-contained “cube” with insulation heating electricity +water without the disruption of the architecture of the church. *Megan Rundell-Evans*

+ve Multi-use area – obvious facilities – water heat loos café – specialist + books; art gallery concert area provide moveable staging, Stage II cloister

+ve Extension of Devizes Museum as exhibition/display space. Offer to museum as extension.

+ve Film club as part of multi-use venue

+ve Very radical - three screen multiplex cinema

+ve Consolidate “Heritage Trail”, link Assize Court, Wharf / canal St Mary's /Shambles Market Sq. Must offer refreshment and loos.

-ve NO to overnight sleep over. Rough Sleepers?

-ve Must not be allowed to become derelict.

SWOT papers on Multi-use

Strength	Community Support. Attractive to tourists / visitors. Part of town tourist offer
Weakness	Not clear who would operate / manage the facility. Not clear about funding for development. Very long and drawn out process
Opportunity	New facility for the town. Flexible uses will attract different user groups.
Threat	If not paid for by Poor Lands Trust, then maintenance costs need to be met

Philippa Morgan – Trust for Devizes

Strength	Fits Community aspirations. Not too ambitious / expensive	1 3
Weakness	Vague. Lack of operational detail. Uncertainty over extent of new external building	3 1

Opportunity	Flexibility. Scope for development	2
Threat	Operational feasibility e.g. is there enough revenue to keep staffing	3

Richard Ormerod, Trust for Devizes.

Conclusions and Comments on the above

- 1 The Multi-use concept has overwhelming support from the community. However as a minimum it must have toilets; kitchen/ catering facilities and a meeting room.
- 2 Many of the other suggested uses could be incorporated in the multi-use concept. As stand-alone uses they would not be viable.
- 3 Once a definitive plan has been produced, specify how to run the venue and establish financial viability.
- 4 The acoustics are very good.
- 5 Aim to get St Mary's on the Devizes Heritage Trail

Action points

- 1 Set up a meeting to confirm the assessments made in the Conservation Management Plan. Invite the DAC; Wiltshire Development (Conservation, planning); Historic England; Church Building Council; Victorian Society; Church Care.
- 2 Contact the Wharf to discuss their plans. Ensure contact maintained with Wiltshire Museum in Devizes

The next steps

A meeting will be sought with relevant preservation bodies (see above) to ensure the CMP is robust and agreed by all.

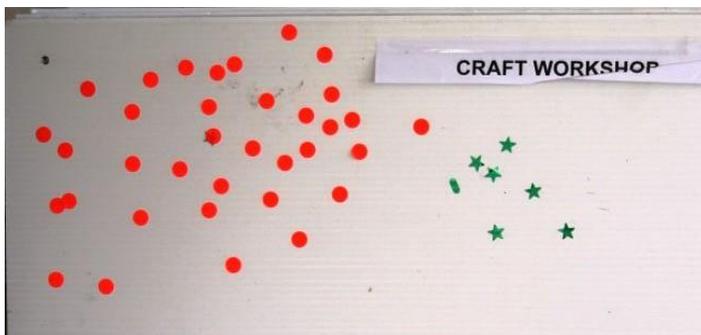
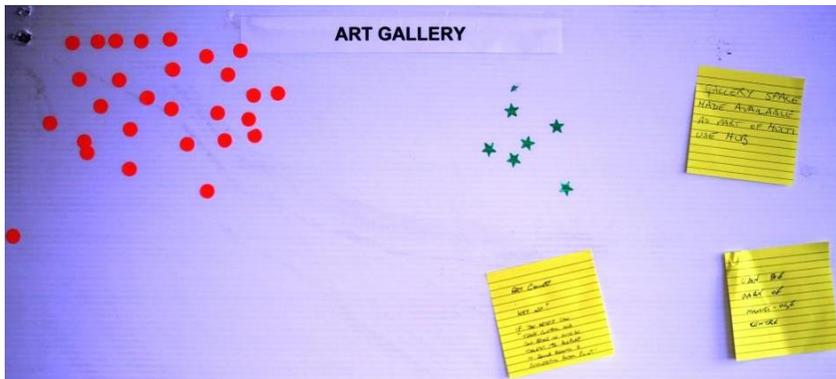
In this, the last try, the aim of the StMFG is still to find an alternative to redundancy. The earlier analysis of all suggested new uses, and the results from FUS18, showed the idea of *church and community use* had most public support. With this we can move on to working out what work needs to be done inside and outside the church and how much this affects the assessments made in the CMP.

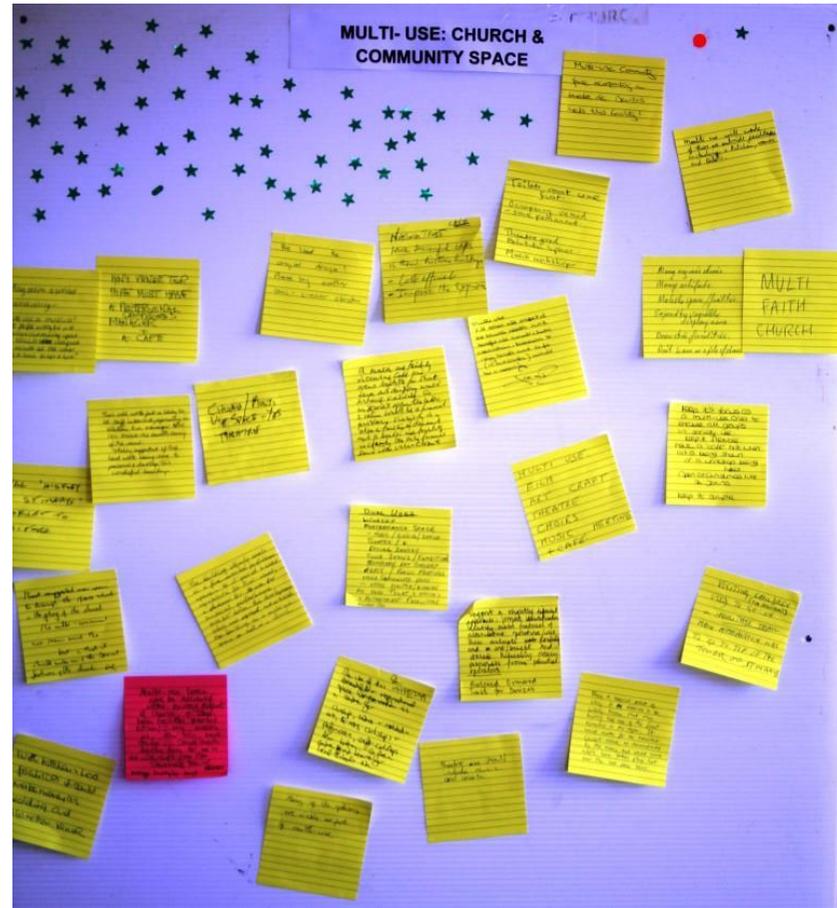
Meetings with the relevant authorities will hopefully show a way forward internally and externally. A Heritage Impact Assessment can then be produced and the business plan changed to reflect the new scenario.

The Parish is confident that if a new use is found that meets popular approval, then it should be possible to maintain the church for future generations and allow public access and to make it part of the Towns heritage trail.

The alternative is to recommend redundancy, in which case the Church of England authorities will be responsible for the future of the church.

White board results





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