

North Wallasey Catholic Community

[SERVING THE PARISHES OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES, LEASOWE,
ENGLISH MARTYRS, WALLASEY VILLAGE & SS PETER & PAUL, NEW BRIGHTON]



An Option Paper — Ss Peter & Paul's, New Brighton

February 2007

The purpose of this consultation

Following on from our time of prayer, this paper has been prepared and distributed to the people of Ss Peter & Paul's Parish and the North Wallasey Cluster, so that the feelings of individual parishioners can be collected and presented to the Diocesan Trustees for their consideration. The Trustees have to make the final decisions about what will be the best way forward for the Parish and in particular how the Parish will be housed for liturgical and social activities for the next 10–20 years.

The Option Paper will try to present the options open to the community in New Brighton, with a commentary on their impact pastorally and practically. You are invited to respond with your thoughts and feelings on the options. That response will be collated into a report to be presented to the Trustees after Easter. There will not be any attempt to arrive at a single solution rather the purpose of the Paper is to help you to advise the Trustees of your feelings so that they can come to an informed decision.

Where are we up to?

There is a story that has been part of the history of the current church of Ss Peter & Paul, for many years. The story may or may not be true, but why spoil a good story.....! The story goes that when Fr Mullins was in the process of bringing together his dream of the construction of a large church, he expressed the desire for the design to incorporate a large copper clad dome. This was not seen as wise by Diocesan authorities and for lots of sensible reason was not included in the final designs. However, when Bishop Moriarty arrived to celebrate the opening of the church he was not just a little "miffed" to discover the new building dominated by a large dome. The power of the Parish Priest in those days!!



The Parish has witnessed lots of changes over the years, and for many well rehearsed reasons, the Diocese, like all across the Country, now finds itself in a time of renewal and is attempting to face the future with realistic eyes.

That process began with a Property Review in the middle 90's which was followed up by the beginnings of the Diocesan Pastoral Review launched in April 1995. The response in Wallasey to that initial review was to suggest that such a review "should be looked at as an opportunity" and the "merging of parishes inevitable".

Three years later the Diocese continued that Review process and consulted every Parish as to how they would see their own future. In October 1998 a parish meeting in New Brighton concerning the Review stated "It was generally agreed that the existing church building was too big for current parish needs" and made two proposals one of which stated, "Spending on maintenance and repairs could be suspended, abandoning the building to gradual dereliction and concentrating efforts and finance on a smaller, multi-purpose construction adequate for current numbers attending masses and for social, community and church business functions and meetings". The second proposal suggested that "the buildings could be adapted to meet the perceived parish needs".

The White Paper emerged from these consultations in July 2000, and by that time voices in New Brighton were raised in an attempt to sway Diocesan opinion towards a process of Parish renewal and the retention and repair of Ss Peter & Paul's church. The White Paper took on board the local feelings and recommended a Feasibility Study be undertaken to include Ss Peter & Paul's, "with a view to advising on alternative uses within the present church building". The Feasibility Study was presented to the Trustees in December 2002.

The Feasibility Study

In December 2002 the Trustees received the recommendations of the Study:

1. Convert the internal areas within the church structure to provide accommodation for parish social activity
2. Internal areas of the existing church may be considered suitable to provide additional accommodation for the Primary School. This accommodation could be shared with any area proposed for parish social activity
3. The church to be sold to a developer for conversion, possibly into apartments or as a Conference Centre.

From the proceeds of sale construct a new multi purpose church to include areas for social activity.

Since the recommendations of the Feasibility Study, the Ss Peter & Paul's Church has been spot Listed as a Grade 2 Building. While the local Historic Churches Committee would have to be consulted the Listing does not preclude any of the above.

What has the Bishop and the Trustees said to date?

In his Foreword to the White Paper of July 2000 the Bishop highlighted the Trustees position on the Renewal process.

"It has always been our intention that the Review should be much more than a paper exercise. Its purpose has been to pave the way for decisions which will help to address a new and challenging situation. A glance at the statistical information provided in our Introduction reminds us again of the facts we face. However it is not our opinion that the Review and the following decisions are negative or a sign that faith and hope are lacking. On the contrary. As we have frequently stated, our aim is to be able to use our limited resources in ways that are appropriate as we positively address the future".

Further, both in discussions with members of the Parish and in an open letter to the Parish, the Bishop has stated on several occasions that the Trustees wish the Parish of Ss Peter & Paul to remain in New Brighton. There is no intention to close the Parish down.

While the Trustees have discussed the St Hillary's Deanery as part of their on going Review and agreed ways forward for a number of parishes in the Deanery, no final decision has yet been made about the parish of Ss Peter & Paul. That is why they have asked for this consultation to take place.

What the Trustees have stated is that the Status Quo is not an acceptable solution.

In saying this the Trustees are clear in that they will not approve a spend in excess of £ 1M simply to repair the current church building. Such a spend might solve short term problems on the church building but the Parish has insufficient funds to undertake the work. The Parish would also have the ongoing problem of maintaining an old building, with enormous energy costs, in future years, and leave the parish with no social/catechetical facilities for the growth of the church's mission.

The Trustees have stated that if they are to invest in church buildings they would want to ensure that what is created will leave a parish with liturgical and social facilities and reduced maintenance costs. To do other than that would be hard to justify in the context of the White Paper Review.

The Primary School

Our Primary School is a popular school and numbers are expanding. In considering the Options presented the Trustees will ensure that the future and the safety of the Primary School, the children and staff are not compromised by any decision they ultimately take. The Trustees will work closely with the school Governors to agree a way forward.

What state are the buildings in ?

On 1998 Davis Langdon Everest completed, on behalf of the parishes, a comprehensive survey of all the Diocesan buildings. The surveys were designed to provide costed estimates for ongoing maintenance over 15 years. These figures, over the years, have proved to be remarkably accurate when tested against tender. The surveys indicated at that time that by 2008 over £1m would need to be spent on maintaining the buildings over the 15 years. This survey included the presbytery.

On the 16 & 17 January 2007, Simon Hairsnape MRICS MBEng of Socio Building Surveying Consultancy undertook a dilapidation survey of the church to provide cost maintenance figures for the next 10 years. The complete survey is available on the website.

His findings are, in summary:

“Generally speaking the church is in good structural order with no major concerns for the type and age of construction.

The key elements requiring remedial action can be summarised for simplicity as follows:

- Replace defective leaking asphalt roof coverings and flashing details
- Concrete and lintol repairs to structural elements where corroded
- Rebuilding of parapet details to guarantee weather tightness
- Repainting of brickwork, masonry walls and parapets
- Replacement of corroded steel window frames
- Overhauling and decoration of cast iron rainwater goods
- Internal replastering following leaks and replacement of acoustic tiles.
- Cyclical redecoration over a ten year period

This report highlights the repairs necessary over a 10 year period to initially return the church to a condition which will then allow future routine and basic cyclical maintenance to keep the building in good order”.

The cost put to these necessary works is £ 1.027M inclusive of VAT and fees, with the cyclical elements subject to inflation.

The survey makes no allowance for any redesign works to the heating system to the church to make the system more efficient nor does it include any repair costs for the Presbytery.

The Trustees have also asked that a local Architect should be retained to provide a report on the feasibility, through discussion with the Borough Planners, of using the church building for a residential development. The Architect will also advise on the potential of the building for such development. The will provide more information for the Trustees to make their informed decision.

And financially?

At the end of December the Parish of Ss Peter & Paul New Brighton holds:

£ 325K in Central Funds lodged with the Diocese

Approximately a further £ 20K is held in Parish Accounts.

So what options are open to us?

The Trustees have always made it clear that they would welcome initiatives for the future development of Parishes to come from the Parishes themselves. These initiatives, however, do have to fit in with the Trustees wider vision as indicated in the White Paper. They must reduce future ongoing maintenance costs, provide for the actual liturgical and social needs of to-day's reduced congregations and be affordable. On the basis of these criterion lets look at some Options.

Option 1

Repair the current Church building and create, internally, social space to meet the parish needs.

PASTORALLY

This is without doubt the most convenient solution. Not only does it see the current church remain and continue as a Church, the Parish would have for the first time, social facilities to assist its development.

PRACTICALLY

It is simply not affordable. We know the cost of the necessary repair is over £ 1M. We also know the cost of the facility provided at St Joseph's in Seacombe. Such a scheme in Ss Peter & Paul's would be very costly. The height and width of the building alone creates its own problems. Even so the creation of social space in the church which would satisfy the requirements of the Historical Churches Committee who oversee any alterations to Listed Church buildings would cost in excess of £ 300K.

This does not address the problems that are already evident with the Church heating, and there would also need to have money available to fund the re-ordering of the sanctuary to meet the liturgical needs of to-day's liturgy in a church reduced in size.

This Option would require funding in the region of £ 1.4M and that would not see any savings in future maintenance costs.

Option 1a

As above but include in the internal reconfiguration space to allow the Primary School to expand it's teaching /extended school provision.

PASTORALLY

On paper this is an even better solution. To house within the church liturgical, social and educational facilities would be an exciting proposition. The educational facility could attract grant from the DFES.

PRACTICALLY

It is hard to see how suitable educational facilities could be provided in the church and whether the DFES would consider the church building suitable for the Primary School is questionable. Grant funding would have to be found from within the LcVAP budget and would be limited.

The scheme would not be affordable and again building maintenance costs would not be reduced.

Option 2

Sell the current church building to a developer and use the funds received to construct a new dual purpose church/social facility on the site of the Presbytery.

PASTORALLY

This is possibly the most pragmatic option. It would provide a new church for the parish which would accommodate all the social facilities the parish would need for its future development. A new church building would be maintenance free and designed to be economic in its management.

While the current church building would no longer be used as a church, it would still dominate the skyline of New Brighton as a witness to its history.

PRACTICALLY

Initial soundings would suggest that Developers might well be interested in purchasing the church building. This could only be tested if the Trustees were to commit themselves to this option.

We have current costing for a planned new dual purpose church/social facility for Warrington, and while each building is different indicative costs are around the £ 1M . With what we already have and what might be realized this Option is affordable.

Careful consideration would have to be given in any sale on the site to ensure that the integrity and safety of the Primary School is not compromised. The school is near to its capacity and there might be a need to increase the size of the school in the future. This could be achieved with the addition of a second storey.

In the long term a new build church/social facility would be very attractive.

Option 2a

As above, but sell the whole site to a Developer who would provide an alternative site in New Brighton for a new dual purpose church/social facility and space for a new Primary School.

PASTORALLY

This is attractive in that a new school and church would provide prestigious accommodation for the Catholic Church in New Brighton. People would no longer have to struggle up the hill.

PRACTICALLY

Is there a suitable alternative site in New Brighton and would the sale of the current site realize sufficient to achieve all the aims of this option?

Option 3

Share facilities with other Christian communities within New Brighton.

PASTORALLY

This Option makes a huge statement about the unity of Christians. Do we, as the Catholic Church in New Brighton, pay lip service to that unity or are we prepared to make a statement by showing that, in sharing premises and facilities with other Christian communities in the area. After all, we are not the only community in the area struggling to cope with buildings in need of maintenance. As the Bishop stated in his recent Pastoral Letter "Given our limited resources, co-operation rather than duplication must surely make sense".

PRACTICALLY

Considering the amount of money we would need to spend on our building and its on going maintenance costs, we would have to look to others for those facilities. We would need to enter into discussions with the local churches to see what might be possible.

Option 3a

Sell the current church building to developers and construct a social facility on the Presbytery site which could be used by other churches in joint ownership, while using the liturgical facilities of other denominations

PASTORALLY

A real witness to the unity that can exist.

PRACTICALLY

The major investment would be in the social facility and its future management. The cost for the use of liturgical facilities would be on a fixed rental with both communities benefiting from the extra usage of the property.

The attraction is in the witness that can be given in the local community.

option 3b

Abandon the current church building and ask the Diocese to follow the required procedure to have the building de-listed with a view to releasing land for the school development.. Share facilities as in Option 3.

PASTORALLY

A difficult option as the building would have to be boarded up for a considerable time while due process were to take place. In time the school would benefit and there could be income from the LEA purchase of part of the site for sports facilities and green play space at the school.

However, the impact of a Joint Faith venture of this nature in the Town might outweigh the distress of losing the church building from the area.

PRACTICALLY

The parish could invest, in the short term, from its current resources to develop with another Christian community the necessary joint use liturgical/social facilities needed for the furtherance of its mission in New Brighton.

Option 4

The final option is any other constructive idea you might have in mind for the Trustees to consider.

As with all the above options whatever you might like to suggest must:

Show the potential for reduced maintenance costs over future years

Be reasonable

Provide suitable liturgical/social facilities for the congregation

Be affordable from within the Parish resource.

Listed Building Status and VAT

The impact of the building having a Grade 2 Listing is a hindrance rather than a help in considering these options. As the building has the lowest listing it would struggle to attract any grant from English Heritage, however, the Historic Churches would require the same historical input to repair as if the building were Grade 1. Repairs to historic buildings are, of their nature, more expensive than those to unlisted buildings.

Equally VAT cannot be reclaimed on repair works. VAT can be reclaimed retrospectively on those elements considered to be alteration.

Some photos!



St James' Parish Church an ecumenical option?



The Primary School is on a tight site!



After 71 years the roof covering has given way to the elements and is in need of replacement.



Holy Family Pensby a dual purpose church/social facility constructed in 1998.



How do I respond to this Option Paper ?

The Bishop and Trustees want to hear your feelings about the Options suggested in this Paper or even those suggestions not in the Paper.

The best way to respond is in writing to the address given at the side of this page. By responding in writing you have the opportunity to think through your response and to lay out clearly the reasons behind your response.

That written response can be forwarded by email to the email address at the side of the page.

I would be happy to talk to any individual who wants to clarify any of the points made in this paper to help in forming their response.

All that is asked is that in making your response you are :

Positive and constructive

Your proposals are manageable and affordable

They are in accord with the Trustees aims

For those who do not wish to put their response in writing there will be the opportunity to meet. This will be an opportunity for you to state your response to the Option Paper. It will not take the form of a debate and your opinion will be recorded but not responded to.

Your responses must be received by **31 March 2007**. They will then be collated and summarised in a report which will contain a précis of your responses. Included in that report will be my personal recommendations to the Trustees, along with all correspondence received.

You will see that report and have the opportunity to comment before it is forwarded for the Trustees consideration.

The report will request that the Trustees make a decision, on the future of the buildings at Ss Peter & Paul's, as quickly as they can, so that we as a Parish can face the future together and respond positively to whatever the Trustees ask us to do.

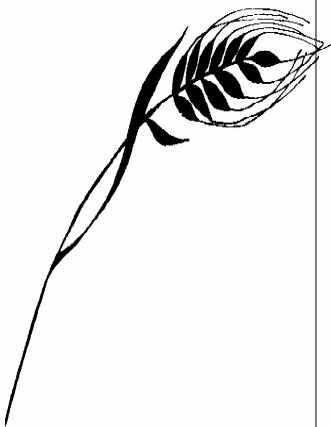
In responding to the report, please ensure that you include your name and address, as we would wish to consider the response of Parishioners differently from that of others who may choose to contact us. Anonymous responses will be disregarded.

The Parish Consultation

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
1 Gardenside
Leasowe
CH46 2RR

Phone: 0151 638 3066
Fax: 08452991768
E-mail: cluster@nwallaserc.org

WE ARE ON THE WEB
AT
WWW.NWALLASEYRC.ORG



Lord, we turn to you knowing that you are close and always care for our every need.

Bless the parish of Ss Peter & Paul in this time of renewal.

Help us to be open to whatever you want us to do, or be, or become.

Give us a Spirit of Trust that is willing,
a Spirit of Hope that is welcoming and a Spirit of Love that is accepting.

Let your will be done.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen