



St Mary's going forward: “The Pineapple Project”

BACKGROUND

Following on from the Spring leaflet entitled ‘St Mary’s going forward’ you will know we have this year been engaged in a process of discernment and consultation about a possible building project here at St Mary’s Bourne St as part of our wider preparation for the celebration of our 150th in 2024.

A joint Away Day for the PCC and St Mary’s Trust earlier in the year led to a process of consultation with the wider congregation over two possible schemes, a larger and more expensive one over against a smaller and more modest one. Both addressed the requirements of a better provision of meeting and social space and (at least as important) better connectivity and access around the whole site with proper disabled access and a better provision of lavatories and other facilities as well. Possible plans were displayed, an open meeting was held, and written opinions were invited...

PROJECT UPDATE

We received fifteen responses: only one felt the status quo was adequate, none supported the larger scheme and, whilst four were concerned about the likelihood of funding, all the rest bar one were positively in favour of every aspect of the smaller scheme. The PCC and Trustees then subsequently met: all agreed that the status quo was unacceptable and that we should pursue the smaller scheme (a proportion of PCC members additionally hoped we could go further towards the larger scheme but that is off the table for now because of the funding challenges).

We have been advised that the new hall proposed to be created within the Presbytery is likely to be eligible for some outside funding because of its potential as a community resource and so would be a matter of public benefit and an avenue for external finance. This means we will be looking to you and to the congregation as a whole - for help with the finances of a part of the costs of the whole project, but only a part. And as well as improving the facilities for ourselves and future members of the congregation we will of course

be securing some additional income from the rental of the new hall during the week; and, moreover, since the use of the new hall should bring other groups and people onto Church premises who otherwise would not know that we were here we can hope for some mission possibilities as well as better community relations.

NEXT STEPS – THE ‘PINEAPPLE’ PROJECT

It was almost 100 years ago since the former Public House known as the Pineapple was acquired and converted into our existing Presbytery, the remodelling being completed by the architect HS Goodhart-Rendel in 1922. So in the run up to St Mary’s 150th anniversary we are looking to return the ground floor of the Presbytery to a more public and social space. Hence the name of our ongoing project.....

The more detailed plans for the proposed scheme are now displayed in the Presbytery dining room and comments, suggestions and alterations are all still possible to make – please do so in writing (email or letter) to the parish office over the next few weeks. We will be inviting our local Councillors and other church and civic bodies to comment at the same time.

Since outside bodies won’t make any grants until the necessary planning permissions have been granted our architect will begin that process whilst we establish any and all likely sources of funding. These are likely to comprise Community monies, Charitable Trusts and Livery Companies and local funds.

These next steps will be steered by an in-house committee comprising myself, and representatives of the PCC and of

the Trust and a co-opted member of the congregation. This group will be tasked to explore the viability of the scheme as it stands and its funding and will meet from this autumn until the end of 2020. Then the PCC and Trust will have to judge whether we can proceed or should look at some more modest scheme.

However, the Trust has spent, or is committed to spending, some £100,000 in order to reach planning permission stage, and we have already received two gifts from members of the congregation, one for £10,000 and the other for £50,000, so a good start has been made.

If you already have ideas of sources of funding, connections that might be of benefit or are in a position to commit a significant gift now towards this project do speak to me. Other fund raising opportunities will no doubt arise (!) but I hope we won’t lose sight of the fact in all this that our wider aim is that St Mary’s can continue to thrive for the glory and praise of God and for generations of worshippers to come, and that anything we do in terms of buildings and plant is to ensure that St Mary’s distinctive mission and outreach is embodied and energised for many more years to come. Which is why I would be grateful if you could all join me in praying, and continuing to pray, for God’s guidance with this project and His help in ensuring our shared charge always to witness to the Gospel be never forgotten.

May Our Lady of Peace pray for us too!

Fr Andrew Walker. Parish Priest

St Mary’s Bourne St SW1

Autumn 2019