

BIG NEWS

Update 13

Where are we now?

An enhanced side entrance

A Church Council Decision

Where are we now?

We currently have approval for the following:

- In the rear premises, relocated toilets, a wide link corridor with coffee facilities, quiet room and stage room.
- In the Sanctuary, the replacement of the pews with chairs and a central aisle, alterations to the communion area and pulpit without changing the look from the front to improve usability, alterations to improve comfort of the gallery pews, fully glazed doors and window above into the sanctuary from Bank Street.

We do not have approval for the glazed porch, although flush glass doors have are acceptable.

The Steering Group have looked into the possible ways forward and it is now time for Church Council to decide what is right for our church. Two questions need to be answered:

Should we go to appeal over the refusal to approve the external glazed porch?

Should we seek planning permission for an enhanced side entrance?

Go To Appeal?

Our consultation of Spring 2007 concluded that the porch was "small, cold and dark" and that it "needed to look more welcoming both from the outside and within it." 14 people suggested glass doors and 10 more suggested a central door and aisle.

The glass doors from Bank Street and from the porch to the sanctuary will certainly make the porch lighter and more welcoming and, because of the central aisle, will make it feel larger. It will give an excellent view into the sanctuary with the pulpit being visible from the street. However, if Church Council feels that the approved plans do not improve the porch as the consultation required, they can appeal the decision.

Methodist Conference 2009 approved a new process for appeals for Trustees (Church Council). Our case would be put by 4 people: the minister, a trustee, a professional advisor and a legal representative. We would be responsible for our own costs which would include payment for professional and legal representatives and travel. The process would take approximately 6 months and the decision would be final.



An enhanced side entrance

The plan extract shows a new side entrance porch with external glass doors at the edge of the current outside overhang and internal automatic sliding doors into a good sized meeting and greeting area with large windows.

As a light, spacious and easy to access entrance near to the car park, many people may find it a good way to enter the Sanctuary as well as it being a good place for people to have informal meetings and light refreshments.

We do not expect to have any problems with planning permission for this as it does not involve any alteration to the historic part of the church buildings. Full details of the plans and the costings can be seen on the BIG notice board in the main hall. The cost is expected to be very similar to the earlier version with the exterior front porch.

What does the Steering Group recommend?

Members of Steering Group are disappointed by the refusal for the porch, but have been excited by the plans for an enhanced side entrance and encouraged by the interest and enthusiasm shown for it by members of the church family who have discussed the idea with us.

Having carefully read the paperwork that we received from Manchester (Church Council members each have a copy of this), Steering Group agreed unanimously that an appeal had little chance of success and was not their recommended way forward in the light of the alternative plans for the side entrance. Steve Potts, our architect, advised us that, in his view, an appeal was unlikely to be successful.

Steering Group are therefore in favour of having the already agreed glass doors into the Sanctuary and having the newly proposed enhanced side entrance.

A Church Council Decision

Members of Church Council must decide the way forward. To enable them to reach their decision they will each have a full copy of the paperwork from Manchester, the latest plans and costings from the architect and a full report from Steering Group. **But they would also like to know what you think as this is a project for the whole church.** You are all invited to a 'question and answer' session with the Steering Group after the morning service on Sunday 17 January to find out more details. Then please let a member of Church Council know what you think.

Church Council will meet on Thursday 28 January.

LET US PRAY

Dear Lord, we have worked hard together to get to this stage in our Reaching Out project. Be with the members of our Church Council as they make this decision about the best way forward. We pray that we will all feel able to support them, whatever decision they take. We pray that You will be with each one of us as we support the next stage of our project. Amen

