

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 6TH SEPTEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

**LYE & WOLLESCOTE CEMETERY CHAPEL – RESULTS OF THE
OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Committee with an update on what has been agreed to date by Stourbridge Area Committee in respect of the future of Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapel.

Background

2. A members question was raised at the 12th September 2006 meeting of this Committee seeking an update on the future plans for Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapel. In response, this report has been compiled in order to provide members with an update on the past and present actions that have been approved by Stourbridge Area Committee in respect of Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapel.
3. At the meeting of Stourbridge Area Committee on 13th February 2006 (report dated 30th January 2006) the Director of the Urban Environment was endorsed to work in partnership with the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) to accept the financial assistance of the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) in order that an Options Appraisal could be undertaken on Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapel. The purpose of an Options Appraisal is to properly appraise the different options available for the future use of the building.
4. Specialist ecclesiastical building conservation architects Brownhill Hayward and Brown carried out the Options Appraisal. They were commissioned to explore possible future options for the buildings, to consult the public on those options, recommend the most beneficial option and establish the likely viability of the project.
5. Once a first draft of the Option Appraisal was completed the public, the Diocese of Worcester and various external organizations were then consulted upon the options being considered for the future use of the building.

6. At last night's meeting of Stourbridge Area Committee (dated 5th September 2007) a report was presented to them with the results of the Options Appraisal, alongside results of the consultation undertaken on the Options Appraisal with the public, the Diocese of Worcester and with external organizations and they were then asked to consider the future actions required to move the project forward.
7. A verbal update will be provided to this Committee of what was agreed by Stourbridge Area Committee at its meeting of 5th September 2007 however by way of background, outlined below is a brief summary of what Stourbridge Area Committee was asked to consider, for a full account please refer to the Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 5th September 2007.

Way Forward

8. It is evident from the advice provided from various external organizations and from the results of the public consultation exercise and conclusions reached in the Options Appraisal that in order to secure the long term future of Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapel the following have become evident:-
 - It will be necessary to find an alternative, sustainable new use for the building.
 - That use has to be sympathetic to the fact that Lye & Wollescote Chapel is a Grade II listed building located within an operational, consecrated graveyard.
 - Using the building as an alternative to Stourbridge Register Office is not an option under the rules of the Civil Marriage Law (due to the fact the building contains religious elements and is a chapel).
 - Using the building for residential or a nursery purpose is strongly opposed by the public.
 - Using the building as offices or a community use however has the support of the public.
 - The involvement of a Building Preservation Trust (BPT) such as the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) is welcomed as this provides the most likely way of securing the future of the chapel and the necessary external grants.
 - The only way a BPT can obtain the necessary external grant-aid is if they are the owners of the building. If therefore disposal of the Chapel did become the only option for the Council, the disposal of it to a charitable organization such as a Building Preservation Trust would be supported by the public.
9. The evidence from the consultation exercise suggests that to use the building for office/community use is most supported and in the context of ongoing viability it is the office use that has most likelihood of being successful.
10. In order to fund the repair and restoration of the building and its conversion to a new acceptable use it is vital that external grant aid be obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The next step towards

obtaining external grant aid is to prepare an application and in order to do this it is proposed that an application be made by the WMHBT with the support of the Council to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) for a series of four separate grant packages: a Project Administration Grant, a Business Planning Grant, a Project Organiser Grant and a Project Development Grant.

11. These grants cover the necessary areas of work that have to be undertaken in pursuit of a full application to HLF for the repair and renovation works including building the business case and preparing detailed drawings.

Finance

12. It is estimated that the costs of preparing the four discrete plans is £56,500. The maximum grant available from AHF is £51,500 thus requiring the Council to provide £5,000 towards these costs. This amount can be found within budgets held within the Council's Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Law

13. The relevant provisions regarding listed buildings are contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
14. The Council's powers to manage and improve Cemeteries are contained in a variety of legislation, including Section 214 and Schedule 26 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Cemeteries Order 1977.
15. Section 123 of the Local Government Act enables the Council to dispose of property for the best price reasonably obtainable or, if not, with the consent of the Secretary of State.

Equality Impact

16. The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policies and should in no way have any impact of different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

17. That the Halesowen Area Committee notes that Stourbridge Area Committee are recommended to request that the Director of the Urban Environment approaches the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust requesting that they apply to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) for a Project Organiser, Administration, Business Planning and Development Grant for Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapel with a

view of submitting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, in due course.



.....
John B Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officers: Duncan Lowndes – Assistant Director of Culture and Community Services
Telephone: 01384 815500
Email: duncan.lowndes@dudley.gov.uk

Jayne Pilkington – Senior Conservation Officer
Telephone: 01384 814168
Email: jayne.pilkington@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

1. Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 15th September 2003
2. Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 9th February 2004
3. Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 14th November 2005
4. Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 30th January 2006.
5. Stourbridge Area Committee report dated 5th September 2007.
6. Letter from the Heritage Lottery dated 8th July 2004.
7. Correspondence from DCMS dated 8th March 2005 confirming that that Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapel has been added to the Statutory List of buildings.
8. Copy of the feasibility study specification sent out Consultants on the 26th August 2005.
9. Correspondence from AHF to the WMHBT confirming the success of the application for an Options Appraisal Grant.