

Gotherington Church Centre – Q&A – 8 June 2017

Q. Has Gotherington Parish Council (GPC) formally agreed to purchase the Gotherington Church Centre (GCC)?

A. Yes – GPC councillors formally agreed to purchase the GCC on 6 April 2017 at an Extraordinary Meeting that was open to the public.

Q. Who presently owns the GCC and why are they selling it?

A. GCC is presently owned by The Countess of Huntingdon Connexion Trust and their current strategy is focused on supporting international Christian development activities and consequently they are looking to liquidate a number of their historic UK assets to provide additional funding for their new strategy.

Q. Why are GPC keen to purchase the GCC?

A. GPC have a responsibility to maintain and improve existing village community assets and also to take appropriate action that will be required over time to ensure that changing community needs arising from growth in the village population can be accommodated. GPC believe that the purchase and development of the GCC will support this objective.

Q. What condition is the GCC presently in and how do we know that the proposed renovations will be effective?

A. Contrary to various rumours, the GCC is not in a ‘dilapidated’ state of repair. The building does have a major damp issue that has not been appropriately addressed in the past and has resulted in a number of directly-related external and internal problems.

The GPC working group has consulted property experts and respected and well established builders to develop a fully costed and robust renovation plan that will fully address these long standing issues. The plan also provides for an improved internal environment which will enable residents (and visitors) to enjoy a range of activities in a pleasant and comfortable setting.

Q. Don’t we already have enough buildings?

We believe that all of the community buildings in the village are unique and therefore attractive to different type of users. We believe the GCC is an ‘iconic’ building and one that when successfully renovated will provide a venue for activities that may not be suited to either the VH, RRB or JWP.

Q. The GCC doesn’t have car parking. Won’t this make the building less attractive to potential users?

The GCC does not have immediately adjacent car parking. However, it has been proven, at recently well attended GPC meetings held in both the VH and RRB that the majority of attendees walk. As the GCC is situated more centrally than both of these buildings we do not consider that the lack of adjacent parking will be a major issue.

Q. What are the overall costs to purchase and renovate the GCC and how will these be funded?

- A. We have agreed a purchase price of £50,000 which will be paid in 3 stages over a maximum period of 20 months, with GPC having the option to pay any balance outstanding earlier, if preferred. In addition, legal fees are expected to be £3,000.

The overall renovation costs are still to be formally negotiated. Our present estimate is that these costs (including professional fees) will be in the region of £100,000 - £120,000 (excluding VAT, which we expect to be recoverable, either in part or in whole).

The overall funding will be found from 3 sources:

1. GPC
2. Parochial Church Council donation
3. Public Works Loan Board ('PWLB')

The final amount and term of the PWLB facility will be provided once the final renovation costs (including confirmation of VAT costs recovery) has been determined. Repayment of the long-term loan will be made ½ yearly on a capital and interest basis from the local Precept. Once confirmed, the Precept costs per household will be openly communicated.

Q. How will GPC ensure the project is well managed?

- A. The GPC have appointed a qualified legal firm to ensure the transfer of the property to GPC ownership is professionally concluded. Additionally, the GPC has appointed a highly respected firm of property professionals to ensure the renovation tender process and overall project management is successfully delivered.

Q. Have the key risks to the project been identified and mitigated?

- A. The working group has identified the initial key risks to the project and the optimum mitigation actions. In conjunction with the appointed professionals and the GPC will continue to monitor, update and take all corrective actions required, to ensure the risks are appropriately managed.

Q. Will the village residents be regularly updated on progress?

- A. Yes – the GPC will provide an update at each GPC monthly meeting. Key information will also be posted on the GPC website and village notice boards.