

Project Inspire

Multi-use of the ringing chamber for bell ringing and meeting room

'And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose' Romans 8:28.

This note is to explain the reordering proposals as they impact on multi-use of the bell ringing chamber. We outline the necessary measures to secure the bell ringing equipment when not in use and the procedures needed for sharing the use of the room.

1. Modern needs and mission

The reordering proposals support our future worship and mission for St Lawrence for the next 100 years where ringing of bells will continue as an integral future use of the church, working together to make best use of all available space within the church. We are grateful to have a dedicated and committed band of bellringers and we know that the bells bring much joy to local people, whether they are churchgoers or not.

2. DAC advice

Following the initial consultation with the church community in 2018, there was a firm direction from the DAC in 2019 to test the feasibility of including all the facilities required for future worship within the church. Any proposed new build for these facilities outside the current footprint of the grade 1 church would be difficult and were most unlikely to be approved.

3. Feasibility study

We commissioned Chedburn Codd in September 2019 to carry out a feasibility study for including all facilities, currently in the church and the adjacent cottage, within the church.

Chedburn Codd produced a report¹ and drawings in February 2020 with detailed proposals to include all facilities within the church footprint. They concluded that this can be achieved, provided that groups share spaces to enable optimal use of the building, for example in the chancel area, the vestry and the bell ringing chamber.

The proposals also include sharing the bell ringing chamber with church groups to provide a second meeting room. The third meeting room is proposed in the base of the tower. The architect concluded that there was sufficient space in the tower and bell ringing chamber for small meetings. He had recently modified a tower room of similar size at Holy Trinity Church, Bradford on Avon for small meetings.

The architect concluded that this would be feasible provided that security measures are in place and protocols are agreed between users; for example, bell ropes and equipment will be made secure.

4. DAC Comments

In January 2020, the DAC Bells advisor at that time commented that

¹ Feasibility Study Report and Drawings, Chedburn Codd, February 2020

A high percentage of ringing areas are accessed by spiral staircases providing difficult access so generally the use of these areas as multi-function spaces is not considered a viable proposition. Where access can be improved then it is certainly possible to use these areas for meetings etc. as at Bradford-on-Avon where a major reordering has given easier access to a gallery and limited use for hire for small meetings (I believe up to 10 people) can easily be accommodated. Within the Gloucester Diocese the recent installation of a new ringing gallery with easy access stairs at Newnham-on-Severn is certainly somewhere which I expect will also be used for meetings and small groups in the future. Where ringing takes place from the ground floor, then it is very common for the areas to have many different uses.

The DAC commented (April 2020) that

The Committee was rather impressed with your submission to date and the careful and detailed analysis of the options and complications by Chedburn Codd Architects. Members were pleased to see that their earlier advice to try and achieve the PCC's objectives within the existing building footprint was taken on board. They were in agreement that the scheme has potential to become an excellent and exciting project.

There was a specific comment related to the use of the bell ringing chamber. We had met representatives of the bell ringers on 14th February 2020 at the time the informal submission to the DAC. The DAC asked us to meet with the bell ringers again to formalise the logistics and security arrangements of multi-use of the bell ringing room to the benefit of all users.

A satisfactory confirmation of an agreement with the bell ringers and the scheme will need to take account of the logistics and security proposals for ringing the bells and confirmation of an easy access to the bells for maintenance. Fittings, with provision of necessary traps as may be required.

We accept security of ropes will be needed and easily accessed.

The DAC further commented that

.as the space is to double as a meeting room, the seating should be light with an ability to be stored neatly at this level, without the need to carry it downstairs.

We accept the need for the meeting room users to clear any tables and chairs from the room on completion of their meeting. This will be covered in a protocol for use of the space. The tables and chairs will normally be placed on the gallery.

Members of the DAC visited St Lawrence to be appraised of the plans; no objections were raised to plans for the tower and the overall development of multi-use spaces within the church in order to accommodate Church Cottage facilities within the existing footprint of the church were lauded.

The main issue for multi-use of the bell ringing chamber related to security measures and a protocol with users so that all can benefit from this shared use.

5. Meeting with the bell ringers

An initial meeting was held with representative of the bell ringers on 14th February 2020. It was not possible to arrange a further meeting until May 2021 because of the COVID-19 restrictions. The meeting² focused on detailed arrangement for the security of facilities and how shared use of the area

² Notes of meeting with the bell ringers, 28 May 2021

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can work. Following the meeting, the representative advised us that she had stood back from representing the bell ringers.

6. Examples of shared use of space

At St Peter's, Peterchurch, Hereford, the bell ringing area shares space with a community library. The vicar advised us that there were no problems with this arrangement and a faculty was approved with no issues. The spider is secured to the wall adjacent to the window opening.

Right: Bell rope arrangements within the tower library at Peterchurch.



Our architect advised us of two churches in the Winchester diocese, All Saints Church, Upper Clatford and All Saints Church, Dogmersfield, where, in both cases the 'ringing chambers' are kept open and so in reality both are accessible to all, with the ropes being suspended up out of the way when not in use. Both are used for generally accessible storage and control panels.

When required, Dogmersfield can also allow a 'west access' through into the church via the west tower door. In both cases the font is positioned under or in front of the tower arches, so the ringing chamber is used for 'overflow' for larger groups attending the baptisms. The bell ropes are suspended and pulled up out of the way when not in use. In Upper Clatford, the rope to lift and lower these bell ropes is then wound round a cleat within a lockable cupboard so reducing the risk of unwanted tampering.

A similar approach to that used at St. Mary's Church, Moseley; while the room is only currently used by the bellringers; the PCC is at an early stage of reordering including the potential shared use of the room.

7. Technical advice

A specialist from John Taylor & Son of Peterborough visited the church in September 2021. He reviewed the arrangement of ropes and spider and concluded that the bell ropes can be lifted to provide a clearance of 8ft above the floor. Appropriate security arrangements can be readily put in place to enable shared use of the area. The spider rope or chain can be securely housed in a wall box fitting and locked.

8. Specific Proposals

The proposals for multi-use of the chamber for bell ringing and meeting room are set out below.

- (i) The chamber: The features of the bell ringing chamber including the wall plaques will be unchanged.
- (ii) Maintenance: access to the bells for maintenance is unchanged.
- (iii) Removal of bells: in the unlikely event of removal of any bell, there is no change to current arrangements.
- (iv) Access: access will be up the staircase from the proposed ground floor lobby to the gallery and into the bell ringing chamber. The gallery route will be the only way for users of the multi-

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functional space as the spiral staircase is not considered suitable for users other than those needing access to the tower. The existing spiral stairs in the tower will be securely locked.

- (v) Door: a glass doorway, which can be locked, will be built within the stone arch between the gallery and bell ringing chamber. The glass doors between the bell ringing chamber can be closed to allow conversation or open. Visibility into the church may be partly obscured by the gallery glass balustrade.
- (vi) Security of ropes: ropes to be contained within the spider, with the rope securely locked; this is a common practice in churches. An 8ft clearance from the floor to the lowest position of each rope can be achieved.
- (vii) Electrics and lighting: complete rewiring of the church is proposed. The temporary cabling will be removed. Specific lighting requirements to be discussed.
- (viii) Ventilation: to be addressed by the building services consultants at detailed design.
- (ix) Storage: We are asking all users of the church, including the bell ringers, to review their storage needs to make best use of the spaces. Storage in the room will be only for bell ringers' essential storage. Details to be discussed; and
- (x) Furniture: Where the room is used for a meeting, a table and chairs will be brought in from the gallery and removed from the chamber as and when needed for bell ringing. A protocol for use of the room will be agreed with all users. Booking of the room will be through the Parish Office.

9. Response to comments from the G&BDACBR

We have prepared a response to the submission received on 12th August in the document 'Project Inspire response to comments log bellringers v1'.

Project Inspire
Lechlade St Lawrence PCC

28th September 2021