



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ACOCKS GREEN BAPTIST CHURCH COMMUNITY FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

1: THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH AND HALLS

Why are the church and halls being redeveloped – what is the vision?

- The Acocks Green Nehemiah Initiative is a £2.5 million scheme to create a dynamic facility for community and enterprise activity on the site of Acocks Green Baptist Church on Yardley Road.
- Jointly led by Acocks Green Baptist Church and Stockfield Community Association, the project will enhance the spiritual, physical and mental well being of local people and the vibrancy of the community in Acocks Green by:
 - refurbishing and updating the church buildings for community use and the congregation's worship
 - developing and managing well designed, high quality, affordable facilities for hire to local people, groups, organisations and businesses
 - supporting enterprise initiatives that provide training, learning and employment opportunities for local people
 - working in partnership to provide health, welfare and recreational services that respond to the needs of the local community

Why not keep things as they are? Why the need to change?

- Much of the site is in need of attention and repair (some spaces cannot currently be used because of disrepair) and we are keen to see them restored and well used. Leaving things as they are is not a practical solution, and would be likely to see the buildings deteriorate further and become less usable.
- At present, because of the way the site has changed over the years, the buildings do not work together as well as they might, presenting some challenges to use, maintenance and accessibility. Making some changes will bring about a significant improvement to the facilities on offer to the local community, and enable the buildings to be sustained and looked after.

Who is leading the redevelopment?

- Acocks Green Baptist Church is working closely with Stockfield Community Association on these plans, with professional support from architects and other advisers.
- The church has been established on the site for over 100 years. The church buildings have developed a lot over the years, and have been a centre for community activities for a long time, used by a range of people, groups and organisations. The church members want to continue to serve the local community and have long wanted to see the site used for the benefit of local residents.
- Stockfield Community Association is a local charity and company established specifically for the regeneration and redevelopment of the local Stockfield neighbourhood. Since the 1990s, the Association has led on the redesign and rebuilding of the estate, and continues to provide housing for local residents. As a charity, the Association's aims are to work for the benefit of the local community, and in doing this the Association has worked closely with a range of

organisations and groups. Stockfield Community Association has long wanted to see good quality community facilities provided for local people.

Won't the proposals need planning permission?

- Yes – the proposals will need planning approval, not only in relation to practical considerations such as parking, but also because two buildings on the site are nationally listed. From the early stages of this project, conversations have been held with Birmingham City Council planning officers (including conservation focus) and with those involved in planning changes for Baptist church buildings, including representatives from English Heritage. Whilst the church itself and the Arthur Moore Hall are nationally listed, all of the other buildings are not. However, alterations to these buildings will need Listed Building consent because they are on the same site as the nationally listed building.

2: ABOUT HOW THE SCHEME WILL BE MANAGED AND OPERATE

Who's going to manage the building?

- AGBC and SCA are working together to develop plans for the buildings, including producing a detailed business plan and reviewing the management of the site. The buildings will remain the property of the Baptist church, but it is likely that SCA will work closely with the church to manage and run the facilities.

Will this be available only to church members and Stockfield Community Association, or is it available to the wider community?

- The vision for this project is to provide facilities which serve the needs of the church and the local community. We hope that many groups, individuals and organisations use the site, and that those who use it at present continue to do so. Both SCA and the church will use the site, but it will definitely be available to the wider community, as well as to organisations and services which benefit local residents.

Will existing users still be able to get space in the redeveloped scheme and at the same price?

- We want to ensure that groups currently using the site can continue to do so. The planning for the proposed redevelopment has taken all current users into account, so that they can all be accommodated. We have commissioned a business planning exercise which will be looking in more detail at usage, and also discussing factors such as pricing with users to ensure that the venue is sustainable but also meets the needs of users and is affordable.

What are you doing to ensure that this project is sustainable, and that the local community won't be priced out from using the facilities?

- We want these buildings to be well used and looked after for many years to come. As part of the development of these proposals, a detailed business plan has been commissioned to ensure that this is possible, and that any development can be afforded and not create a financial burden in the future (for example, we will need to be able to meet all the costs of running the site).
- Care is being taken in our planning to ensure that the facilities will be a genuine resource available to the local community, and that pricing for hire will be affordable and appropriate. Both the church and the Association are charities, so the aim of this development is not to create large profits, but to serve local needs.

Will the church still be able to have the space it needs on a Sunday for all activities (Sunday Schools, church lunches etc)?

- Again, the planning for the proposed redevelopment has included extensive review of current usage by church members and groups. While some of the rooms and spaces may be a bit different, the church will still have the space to accommodate all the activities they have identified. Clearly, church usage will be the major focus for use of the site on Sundays.

What restrictions will there be on usage?

- The whole site is owed by the Baptist Church, and much as at present there will be certain conditions placed on appropriate usage of the facilities. These are partly because the church will continue to use the buildings for Christian worship, and partly in order to minimise disruption and inconvenience for the local community.

Will gambling be allowed on site?

- The church in principle is not in favour of gambling, and would not permit this generally on the site. Charitable fundraising activities such as raffles however would be allowed.

Will alcohol be served/ allowed in the redeveloped scheme?

- The facilities will not be licensed premises for the sale of alcohol, and in order to ensure that local community is not disrupted by anti-social behaviour, care will be taken over alcohol consumption on site.

Will other religious groups be able to use the facilities?

- The facilities will be open to groups from the local community for social events and meetings. As a church site, the facilities will not be available for non-Christian religious worship or activities.

What will the opening times be - is it going to cause a nuisance to residents?

- We will take care to ensure that the usage and opening times of the facilities will be conducted with local residents in mind. The church site is already used for evening and weekend meetings and events, and we will continue to ensure that noise and disruption is kept to a minimum.

How do I register my organisation's interest in using the redeveloped scheme on a regular basis?

I'd like to use the buildings at the moment – are they still available for use at present, and who do I need to talk to?

- The church halls and facilities are still definitely available for use at present – please contact John Lewis on 0121 628 1702 for more information if you would like to use them.
- If you are interested in more regular use of the facilities in the future, please contact Jon Miles on 0121 212 7457 to discuss this. We are keen to ensure that local groups and organisations can use the facilities to benefit the local community. If you have specific uses or requirements, it would be helpful to discuss these as the plans develop.

3: ABOUT THE DESIGNS

Why is more space being built when the current facilities aren't being used all the time?

- The design proposals have been developed following research into local community and organisational needs. This research showed that the current buildings are not suitable for all the uses that people and organisations have told us about. This is to do with the types of spaces available, the quality of spaces available and the types of facilities available. For example, there is little space available for meetings of small local interest groups, say for 8-10 people. There are no 'interview' room type spaces that are attractive to a range of welfare/ health related services. The quality of environment is limiting the potential for the buildings to

attract private functions. Up to date Audio-visual provision, and wheelchair accessible facilities are expected these days.

- A number of new uses have been identified for the site that address local issues but need specific facilities. These include social enterprise development, small business workshops/studios and other employment related advice and training provision.
- Based on our research, if the right type and quality of facilities were available, the local community need demands more space than is available by converting the existing buildings alone. Due to the Listed status of the Church and Arthur Moore Hall, there are restrictions on how these buildings could be altered and therefore much of the additional space has to be accommodated elsewhere on the site.

Design – why is it like this?

- The internal layout of the space has been designed to maximise light, to provide a larger, more useable courtyard and to join together all the buildings on the site in a coherent way.
- Presently there are several significant differences in floor levels. Entering the buildings often involves several steps, and the individual buildings have a variety of ground floor levels. The proposed scheme interconnects all of the buildings, with the need for only one change in floor level, and this is where the lift is proposed; so as to assist those who have difficulties with steps. New ramps, with gentle falls will provide access from the public pavement. Every part of the finished scheme will be easily accessible for wheelchair users.
- Buildings of this type can sometimes be intimidating to people who have never visited before as they are neither public nor private. By positioning the community cafe (to replace the existing one) in the most prominent position for passers-by and using a transparent frontage, the aspiration is that people feel comfortable to pop in, and once inside will be able to find out about the whole range of facilities available for them to access.
- The exterior of the building has been designed to respond to the surrounding Victorian aesthetic, in its scale, proportion and use of materials. Its external form reflects the rooms inside. It is intended to represent the church and community association's current aspirations, with an inclusive, new addition to the streetscape. It is an honest contemporary interpretation of the local style, rather than a superficial pastiche of local buildings from a different time. Whilst respecting and acknowledging the past, the new architecture is intended to be unashamedly modern in appearance; a celebration of the present age and an announcement of the future sustainability of the site by and through serving the needs of local people.

Why is the Glynn Edwards Hall building being replaced?

- The long-term viability of the whole site is critical to the future of all of these buildings. This is dependant upon the site meeting the Church's, the Community Association's and the local community's needs today and in the future.
- The current buildings on the church site have developed over time and do not always work together as well as they could. The current layout presents some challenges to current users, and also limits what could be achieved if looking at the site as a whole. From a detailed appraisal of the site and the needs and aspirations of user groups, we believe that in order to safeguard the future of the listed buildings and provide something that genuinely responds to local needs, the best way forward is to replace the Glynn Edwards Hall.
- Certain users have also been put off by access restrictions, particularly for people with disabilities or people with buggies/ prams.
- The Church and Arthur Moore Hall are Nationally Listed buildings, and therefore cannot be altered very much. The scheme does not need 3 large spaces to meet the needs identified, but subdividing either the main church space or the Arthur Moore Hall would not be acceptable or desirable to safeguard the integrity of these significant buildings. These two buildings are to be renovated and updated sympathetically to their original designs, but also to meet current standards of accessibility and expectations of quality.
- Three design options were explored that included retention of the Glynn Edwards Hall building, but none of these could meet the needs identified in the brief due to the restrictions on space and layout of the existing building.
- It was identified that by replacing this building, a fantastic opportunity could be realised to provide a new, high quality two-storey building that would not only meet the spatial needs

identified, but open up a much more welcoming frontage to Yardley Road and a useable, attractive internal amenity courtyard.

Aren't we losing our community hall?

- There are 3 large halls on the existing site, but the Church space is inflexible and the Arthur Moore Hall is in need of upgrade. The Glynn Edwards Hall is currently in the best condition for use for large groups. However, with the redeveloped scheme, both the church space and the Arthur Moore Hall will be substantially upgraded for use as community halls. All of the activities currently accommodated in the Glynn Edwards Hall will be able to be relocated in both of these spaces. Moreover, the redeveloped scheme will also include a large variety of differently sized meeting rooms for lots of local community groups who do not necessarily want or need a large hall space.

What consideration is being given to addressing parking concerns?

- We are looking to provide some parking on site, and additional options are being explored. Parking is a long-term local issue, and is something which already affects church members and users as well as local residents. Discussions are underway with Planning Officers to explore how these concerns can best be addressed within the proposals.

Have the designs taken into account the local community's views?

- The project team undertook much consultation and research with the local community at the outset of the project. Once the designs were developed, open sessions were held in January 2011 to which local residents were invited. Comments have been taken on board and some alterations have been made to the proposals.

Who has designed it?

- APEC Architects is a Birmingham-based architectural practice, with a wealth of experience, and accolades for work with Listed Buildings and in the specialist field of Historic Building Conservation (one of the directors is an Architect Accredited in Building Conservation). APEC's other specialisms include community and church architecture, making them well-placed to handle this kind of project.
- APEC's successes include St Nicolas Place in Kings Norton (the BBC Restoration project), St Martins in the Bullring, and Sheffield Cathedral Community Resource Centre. See the website www.apec.ac

How do the new designs help preserve the local heritage?

- The two listed buildings on the site are at high risk of deterioration. The Arthur Moore Hall is already in quite a poor state of repair, and if nothing is done, risks having to be closed for safety reasons. By extending the services and facilities the site can offer, the renovation and preservation of these two buildings is financially sustainable in the long-term and could attract the funding needed to undertake the work. Whilst the new proposals involve the replacement of the Glynn Edwards Hall, without this sacrifice, the long-term viability of the two more precious buildings on the site is jeopardised.
- The proposed plans seek to preserve the two listed buildings (Arthur Moore Hall and church) as faithfully as possible whilst improving the overall site as a whole. Working within the context of church conservation planning requirements, the members of the church will be considering whether to make any alterations to the interior of the church to improve access and usability and availability for some other functions during the week.

Won't it get too hot with all the glazing at the front?

- The detailed design will have to address issues around overheating as part of the Building Regulations approval process. The amount of glazing proposed has been reduced in the most recent redesigns in response to comments from community members, and solar shading will be provided by the overhang of the first floor at the hottest times of the day. If necessary, additional shading devices and natural ventilation will be incorporated into the detailed design as the proposals are developed further.

Isn't it a security and vandalism risk having all that glass on the front?

- Experience has shown that in all but the most high-crime areas, providing glazing on highly visible frontages is not very vulnerable to security or vandalism risks, when coupled with good lighting and a good alarm system. This is due to the high-level of natural surveillance provided by the volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Yardley Road.
- At detailed design stage, contact will be made with the local Police Architectural Liaison officer and should the risk be considered high, laminated glazing can be specified which can resist all attempts at breakage.

Are there examples of similar developments?

- St Nicolas Place in Kings Norton (by APEC Architects) involved the replacement of one of the buildings on the site in order to secure the long-term sustainability of the site's Grade II* Listed mediaeval buildings. The replacement building was considered to be a sensitive but contemporary appropriate addition to the Listed Buildings and was Highly Commended in the Civic Trust Awards.
- The St Nicholas Centre in Ipswich (by APEC Architects) involved a 'link' extension between a Grade I Listed Church and Diocesan offices. The redeveloped scheme provides a conference centre and restaurant, alongside community facilities. The new extension comprises a simple, single-storey heavily glazed building with a lead roof and houses the cafe/ restaurant.

4: HOW THE DEVELOPMENT WILL TAKE PLACE

When is work likely to start?

- It is hoped that work on the redevelopment will start some time in 2012, but this is dependant upon gaining the necessary permissions, and raising funds. The work will be undertaken in 3 phases, starting with the renovation of the Arthur Moore Hall.

When are you planning for the new facilities to be completed and open?

- As the work will be done in phases, it will take longer than if it were to be done in one go. However, it is hoped that if funds can be raised, the phases could occur consecutively, and work would be completed some time during 2014.

What happens during building work- where will we go?

- As the work will be done in phases, the intention is that disruption to existing users will be minimal, and most users will be able to be accommodated in other parts of the site whilst works progress.

Will all the buildings be closed whilst you are working on them?

- No, the work will be done in 3 phases so that about two thirds of the site will remain open at any time.

How will you manage changes in demand, and ensure that current users aren't disrupted too much?

- One of the aims of the proposals is to ensure that the site is flexible enough for several activities to happen together, and to accommodate different levels of demand. We will work closely with those groups and organisations currently using the site to ensure that they are not disrupted too much, and will aim to phase any work so that the whole site isn't unavailable all at once.

Won't this be a big disruption for local residents?

- Clearly, any building work can be disruptive, but care will be taken to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum. In particular, it is likely that any work will be phased, so that as much of

the site can be kept open as possible at any one time, and to ensure that users and local residents are not overly disrupted.

How will it be paid for?

- We are looking very carefully at the costs involved not only in the physical work to develop the buildings, but also to ensure that any scheme is sustainable and affordable in the long term, to ensure that the buildings can be well looked after and maintained. Professional business planning advice has been sought to make sure that any plans are robust, and to help identify appropriate sources of funding for the work. We have already been in discussion with funders about the proposals, and will be exploring further options as the plans develop. We are also keen to ensure that the buildings are well used, so that there is regular income, and our business planning advisors are working on this too.

Will lottery money be used for the scheme?

- As noted above, we are looking at a range of potential funding options for the proposals, taking into account the church and heritage elements of the site as well as the requirements of funders. Lottery funding is one potential source of support for the scheme, and may be explored for parts of the development.

5: HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

How do we find out more about how the proposals are developing and how our views are being included?

- We will provide regular updates and newsletter articles to keep people informed. You can contact either Stockfield Community Association or the Baptist Church leadership to find out more, or look on the website at www.stockfield.org.
- As the plans progress, information will be available at the church – why not pop into the coffee shop to take a look?

How can I register concerns about the scheme?

- If there are aspects of the proposals that you are concerned about, please let us know – you can write to the church or SCA, or speak to church leaders or SCA Directors. There will also be further open sessions where you can find out more and speak to someone about your concerns.

How can I support the scheme?

- If you would like to make use of the site, either now or to express an interest in using the new facilities, please contact us.
- If you like the scheme, please write to us and let us know! We'd particularly like to know if there are specific aspects you like, or think will benefit the local community.
- If you are interested in getting involved more generally in either the church or SCA, please contact us to find out more.