

## NOTES FROM MEETING HELD

Cllr Alan Hedley, Josh Robertson, Julia Gooch, The Clerk and Town Forman visited the site of Cemetery Lodge and viewed externally, taking note of the shared entrance with the Chapel & Mortuary.

Concerns were raised with the steep slope from the highway, the Clerk gave an overview of issues pertaining to difficulties entering and exiting a narrow steep access and historical events that caused damage to the grade 11 gate pillars.

Action Neil – to identify the location of the services to the chapel/lodge, feasibility of re-positioning the entrance to the cemetery.

Action Josh – to find out if chapels have been de-consecrated and the feasibility of de-consecrated the land to the front of the chapel and location of the cross and pulpit that have been removed from the chapel.

Action Julia – valuation of Lodge selling and rental value

Action Steve – to identify storage space & workshop space requirements for improved facilities.

Feb 2024

## CEMETERY LODGE

The Lodge was previously used as the council offices, it was vacated approximately 10 years ago due to concerns regarding mould and damp.

Previous councils have been unable to reach a consensus and the Lodge has been left vacant.

Two past public consultations have been exercised to ask public opinion on selling or keeping the Lodge both supported keeping the Lodge.

A previous working group explored potential uses for the Lodge which resulted in seeking advice from a Foddc planning officer and a listed building/conservation officer in November 2021 (copy held at the office)

It was found that the Lodge, Cemetery and Chapels were unregistered, without deeds, a land registration was completed on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (copy held at the office).

Following the two pieces of work mentioned above the council agreed to seek the advice of a surveyor and obtain a building condition and conservation assessment for the Lodge. (copy held at the office)

The Surveyor consulted holds qualifications, BSc (Hons) MSc, FRICS C, Build E FCABE MAPM chartered building surveyor/Engineer his report was presented to the 2019-23 council on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, minute below.

*16.1 To review, discuss and forward plan actions from the Cemetery Lodge Condition & Feasibility Survey Councillor Mrs J Gooch called for a named recorded vote.*

*A discussion occurred regarding the condition and feasibility survey. Various options were presented based on the report's findings and historical knowledge of the site, alongside previous council discussion and decisions.*

*Proposed by: Councillor Mrs M Duffield Seconded by: Councillor Ms C Stone*

*For: Councillors Mrs C Howley, Mrs M Duffield, Mrs G Moseley, Ms C Stone, Mr R Beard, Mrs S Marcovecchio, and Mrs K Draper*

*Against: Mrs J Gooch Abstain: Mrs K Selwyn*

*The council resolved by a majority decision to put the Cemetery Lodge onto the market with immediate effect, preferably by auction, through a local agent.*

The delays actioning the resolution are due to resignations, locums, staff changes, new appointments, and a busy workload. After the May 2023 elections the council considered the information before them, and a small working group was formed to bring forward a proposal for consideration.

The current working group began by perusing historical information, advice obtained from planning and listed building officers & the Surveyor. A visit followed & further professional advice as was sought from a Local Agent and firm of solicitors.

The Surveyor advised NTC to consider the following legal issues.

Rights of access/egress, shared use of the entrances and ongoing maintenance costs.

A valid EPC – unable to action due to the condition.

A detailed listed building consent – there is a cost involved.

Asbestos record, electrical tests, water supply, below ground drainage maintenance. The Estates Team have conducted a non-invasive asbestos test and have recording asbestos in the toilets.

The electrics have been turned off as well as the water supply.

A separate Title deed – there is a cost involved.

The working group consulted with a local property agent who advised If NTC considered selling the property “as is” to attract developers/builders, he would recommend a guide price of £100,000 and consider auctioning the Lodge to test the market and therefore the market will find it is true and correct value. He went on to say the access and lack of parking alongside the Grade Two listing and general state of the Lodge would be limiting factors on the open market. I doubt if a mortgage could be obtained against the property currently.

The Surveyor also suggested the same price guide bearing in mind the condition of the property.

The local Agent suggested that if the property were renovated with a view to selling suggested the ceiling price for a two-bedroom detached home with limited parking and access would be £295,000.

The Agents fee for selling by auction would incur cost of 2% of the selling price, based on £100k – fees £2k +Vat.

In addition, there would need to be legal fees to draw up the seller’s legal pack which would be £1k - £1,500 plus Vat.

A local firm of Solicitors provided costs for drawing up the contracts, undertaking searches Legal fees £1250 - £1500 + disbursements + Vat.

Total selling cost estimated at £5k + a contingency to cover unidentified cost/disbursements say £3k.

The Lodge is listed on NTC asset register for £232,633.

A public consultation would be necessary, as the Secretary of State would need to grant consent should council be minded to sell.

The Lodge may not reach a reserve of £100k and NTC would still have to pay Agents fees and some of the legal fees.

## **Renting**

If the property were in a habitable state with the current layout (two receptions and kitchen downstairs and two bedrooms and bathroom on first floor) heating installed and a small area of designated garden, the Agent suggests the rental value would be £895 per calendar month. £10,740 per annum, if this sum were realised it would pay for the refurbishments and after 20 years the rental would generate an income. It may be possible to obtain grants as the Lodge is a heritage asset.

Three Councillors (Two newly elected) attended the site visit with the Clerk and Estate Foreman, following the visit a meeting was held to discuss how to proceed.

.

So far there has been no evidence brought to light that substantiate the Chapels have been de-consecrated, the land outside of the fenced Lodge Garden is marked out with plot numbers, there is no evidence either way that the plots are vacant – enquiries ongoing.

It is imperative that council decide on the future of the Lodge as it is an important heritage asset that cannot be allowed to continue to deteriorate. As stated by the listed buildings officer the Lodge is a fine assemblage of Victorian structures at the entrance to the cemetery and this close relationship to the gates, wing walls and cemetery chapels adds to its overall character and significance.

A little further investigation into the architect John Jacques b1800 – d 1868 & Son (William) Other buildings he designed include.

- The Mariners Chapel at Gloucester Docks
- Hucclecote Church
- The Church of St Bartholomew, Coaley
- Phillpotts & Albert Warehouses at Gloucester Docks
- Black Friars restored 1865.
- Gloucester workhouse later the Royal Infirmary
- The Church of St Nicolas Westgate St, Glos. restoration following a fire
- (further information is being gathered)

We discussed whether there was potential for a wider scheme that included a new access to the Cemetery, bringing the Lodge, Chapel & Mortuary into a use that respects the historically valued architecture as a whole project as suggested by listed buildings officer. A good scheme may be attract heritage funding or funding from other sources to be explored.

NTC has a valuable group of historical assets that has potential to not only be improved for the community but to eventually provide an income and could be added security for the cemetery and Chapels.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Council considers allowing the working group to continue and includes the Cemetery, Chapels/Mortuary with the Lodge to investigate potential uses that respect the heritage and setting.

The working group to provide the council with monthly updates and to keep a tracked record of the work undertaken.