



To: Executive Cllr Community Well-being
Report by: Trevor Woollams (Head of Community Development)
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services 25th June 2013
Wards affected: Arbury

Future Options for St.Luke's Barn

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report considers whether the Cambridge City Council (the Council) should continue to invest in St.Luke's Barn. The Barn is situated within the grounds of St.Luke's School in Arbury. It was built by the Council in 1987 on land owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and we have correspondence indicating that following completion the building was handed over to the Trustees of the Church Schools of Cambridge (The Old Schools) who own the access road to the Barn. Records show that the Council has agreed to pay for the maintenance and management of the building whilst it remains in community use. The Council can give notice to the Trustees if it no longer wishes to invest in the Barn, in which case the Trustees may decide to stop or restrict future community use and may require the Council to demolish the building and reinstate the land.
- 1.2 The Barn has been managed by St.Luke's School since 2004 through annual Service Level Agreements with the Council. It is primarily used for badminton (by the University and Bottisham badminton clubs) and by the school for activities and meetings. There are a couple of first floor meeting rooms which can only be accessed via a narrow staircase. The Barn generates around £21,000 of income a year which is used by the school to cover heating, lighting, cleaning and administration costs.
- 1.3 In 2009 and again in 2011 the County Council expressed an interest in taking over the Barn, first for use as a Children's Centre and later as part of plans to re-develop the school. After feasibility work, the County Council decided not to pursue either of the options.

- 1.4 The Barn now requires substantial modernisation, repair and decoration if it is to be retained for community use into the future. However, even after refurbishment the upstairs community rooms would still be inaccessible for people with mobility disabilities.
- 1.5 The report considers the current use of the Barn as a sports and community facility in the context of other sports and community facilities of higher quality that are available in the locality and recommends that the Council gives notice to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge that it does not intend to invest in the Barn in the future.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended that

- 2.1 The Council give notice to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge that the Council no longer wishes to invest in St.Luke's Barn as set out in paragraph 6.1.
- 2.2 If required to do so by the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge, the Council arranges for the Barn to be demolished.
- 2.3 Officers inform the community users of the Barn that they have given notice (as 2.1 above) and that if the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge decide to end community use, officers work with the school to support the users to help them find alternative venues for their activities.

3. Background

- 3.1 St.Lukes Barn is a community and sports facility. Records show that it was built in 1987 by the Council, under a building license, at a cost of around £180,000. It was built in the grounds of St.Luke's School on land owned by the County Council. Access to the Barn is via an access track alongside the school. The access track is owned by the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge which sits under the Ely Diocesan.
- 3.2 As soon as the Barn was completed it was handed over to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge on the 18th May 1987. Records show that the intention was for the County Council to lease the land upon which the Barn was built to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge but it appears that this action was not completed.

- 3.3 We have a copy of a draft Agreement from 1986 between the Council, the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge, The Governors of the St.Luke's Church of England Primary School and Cambridgeshire County Council setting out the terms on which the building would be constructed, used and maintained. However, it appears that neither this Agreement nor a subsequent draft prepared in 1991 were completed. This is probably because the County Council had not finalised the lease of the land to the Trustees.
- 3.4 The draft Agreement sets out conditions for community use of the Barn. These include a requirement for the Council to pay the running and maintenance costs of the Barn. The Council can give 12 months notice to the other parties if it decides to end the Agreement. If such notice is given, the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge can require the Council to demolish the building and return the land to its original condition.
- 3.5 Whilst we have no record of the draft Agreement being signed, the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge state in a letter to the Council dated 24th June 1986 that they gave their approval to the Barn being constructed on condition that the Council remove the building on request if it ceases to maintain it.
- 3.6 The Barn is constructed with large curved timber beams (Glulam beams) which are covered with corrugated aluminium sheets. The sheets have 150mm thick internal 'rock wool quilt' insulation fixed to their underside.



- 3.7 There is a large hall at the rear of the building which is the size of 2 badminton courts. There are toilets and changing rooms with de-commissioned showers accessed from the hall. At the front of the building there is a small foyer area and office and there are a couple of small meeting rooms and viewing gallery above them with a small kitchenette. The upstairs rooms are only accessible via a narrow internal staircase. There is also an external emergency staircase.
- 3.8 The Council managed the building until 2004. The Barn has since been managed by St.Luke's School under annual Service Level Agreements with the Council.
- 3.9 Towards the end of the last decade the Barn was clearly showing signs of requiring significant upgrading and refurbishment. However, in 2009 the County Council declared an interest in the Barn for use as a Children's Centre. The Council offered to support this use on the understanding that responsibilities for running and maintenance costs were taken up by the operator. Following lengthy discussion and feasibility studies the County Council withdrew their interest. In 2011 the County Council declared another interest in the Barn as part of the redevelopment plans for the school. Again, this did not progress.

4. Use of the Barn

- 4.1 When the Barn was built in 1987, the sports hall was an important facility for residents living in the north of the city as there were limited alternatives in the vicinity. However, over a number of years the Council has helped to fund a wide range of school sports facilities across the city which are also accessible to residents. Chesterton Sports Centre is very close to St.Lukes Barn and provides a wide range of sports facilities for local residents including a swimming pool, aerobics studio, fitness centre, tennis courts and sports hall where activities such as badminton, basket ball and football are played.
- 4.2 The current use of the Barn's sports hall is primarily badminton and it is used by clubs from the University and Bottisham. This use delivers most of the income which helps to cover the day to day management costs of the Barn. However, it is not clear whether either of the clubs will move to the new sports facilities being developed by the University in the west of the city when they open later this year.
- 4.3 The Head of Arts and Recreation has been consulted about the future options for the Barn and does not consider the facility to be of significant importance as a sports facility, given the availability of higher specification facilities in the area. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model for Indoor Sport 2008 stated that capacity exceeded

demand by just over 30% in Cambridge. The report said that the supply of facilities was good with considerable overlap in their catchment areas. It noted that Cambridge was a significant importer of demand (i.e. lots of people travel into the city to access indoor sports facilities). Since this study was undertaken, the major change in demand has been on major growth sites and these are delivering bespoke solutions as part of the planning process. This means we are able to be reasonably sure that the base line in terms of need and supply should be similar to those calculated in the 2008 report.

- 4.4 The hall has also been used in the past by the local Bangladeshi community living in the Darwin Drive and Akeman Street area to host occasional Eid celebrations (twice in 2012 and 2011 and once in 2010) and the school say that it is currently used once a fortnight by The Cambridge Islamic Youth Project. There is also a monthly 'Jumbo Toy Library' in the hall and it is used by the school for various staff meetings and activities for their children.
- 4.5 The 2 upstairs community rooms are both small. One is approximately 13m² and is currently being used as an office and store for equipment by an officer from the County Council's Youth Service. The other is 28m² and is available for hire. However, access to the upstairs is via a narrow staircase which makes the rooms inaccessible to anyone with mobility disabilities and presents a safety issue if it were to be used by some groups such as parent and toddler groups. There is also a small viewing gallery which overlooks the sports hall.
- 4.6 Again, there are more suitable community rooms available in the local area. Examples include St.Lukes Church Centre in Victoria Road which offers a number of rooms for hire including 2 halls and hosts many activities such as pre-school, Cubs, Beavers and Scouts, fitness and Pilates classes. The Neighbourhood Centre at 82 Akeman Street which has a small community room for hire (of similar size to the larger upstairs room at the Barn) and hosts various activities. Arbury Community Centre has a wide range of Community facilities and activities and is currently undergoing a major refurbishment of its small hall, funded by a capital grant from the Council.
- 4.7 The Barn was originally one of 5 'Joint Use' community facilities within the grounds of schools which were managed by Community Development staff (the others were at Abbey Meadows, Cherry Hinton, Shirley and St.Philips Schools). The Council withdrew from managing the other 4 facilities when the government placed a duty on schools to make their facilities accessible to the wider community in around 2008/09.

4.8 The income for 2012/13 was approximately £21,000 (mainly from badminton) which was retained by the school to cover general running costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning, bookings etc. There is a Service Level Agreement in place for 2013/14 which includes a contribution of £3,000 from the Council.

5. The future of the Barn

5.1 Over the past 9 months, officers have been in discussion with the Head Teacher at St.Luke's School about options for the future of the Barn. Meetings have been held at the Barn with Arbury ward councillors, the Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health (now Community Well-being) and the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher is keen for a solution to be found so that the school can continue to manage and make use of the Barn. However, it is in a poor state of repair and will soon need major capital investment to bring the Barn up to current day standards.

5.2 Following the meetings with ward councillors, officers commissioned TR Freeman Ltd to carry out detailed roof and structural surveys of the Barn to get an understanding of its condition, the work required to repair, refurbish and modernise the building and an estimate of costs. TR Freeman were also asked for a cost estimate to demolish the building and re-instate the land.

5.3 The roof survey identified numerous external and internal problems that require attention and which are causing leaking and condensation. TR Freeman estimate that the cost of these repairs will be in excess of £110,000. The roof will also require painting once the repairs to the roof are complete.

5.4 The structural survey of the rest of the building did not find any evidence of significant structural movement since remedial work to rectify some twisting on the main glulam arch beams a few years ago. However, many of the windows and doors require replacing, the toilet facilities need upgrading with new fittings and finishes and repairs are required to the sports hall floor. The general condition of the foyer area, first floor rooms and kitchenette was considered very poor and in need of modernisation with some work required to the kitchenette. The estimate for completing this work is around £100,000.

5.5 In summary, capital expenditure of around £250,000 will be required to fully repair, re-furbish and re-decorate the Barn. This figure would be subject to a competitive tenders process. Whilst this work would bring the structure and decoration of the sports hall, toilets, kitchenette and community rooms up to current standards in terms of their

condition, the EQIA has highlighted that the small upstairs community rooms would still be inaccessible to anyone with a mobility disability or anyone who has difficulty climbing stairs. Under the Disability Discrimination Act, the body providing public services has to take reasonable steps make the services it provides accessible for people with disabilities. It could well be argued that it would be unreasonable to spend this amount of money on a building where the upstairs community rooms remain inaccessible.

- 5.6 It would also not change the fact that the Barn is not in the best location in terms of accessibility for Arbury residents. As an example, officers have been in discussion with users of the Darwin Drive Community House who are looking for additional prayer space. They have in the past occasionally used the Barn for one-off large cultural and religious celebrations but they do not use the Barn on a regular basis because there is no direct access to the site from the north and it is too far for many of their community to walk on a daily basis.
- 5.7 In addition to the capital costs there would also be an on-going revenue obligation for the Council to cover future maintenance costs and potentially management costs should the school decide they no longer wish to manage the Barn. The Council's revenue budget for 2013/14 is £13,690. However, this budget will cease from 2014/15.
- 5.8 If the Council decides not to invest this amount of money in a facility that offers limited community benefit, the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge will need to decide whether they wish to maintain the Barn themselves. Should they decide not to do this, they can ask the Council to demolish the Barn and re-instate the land. Officers have received an estimate for the demolition work of around £15,000. This would be subject to firm quotations but could probably be met from the existing revenue budget (£13,690) plus other existing budgets within the service.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Given the above, officers are recommending that the Council give notice to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge that the Council no longer wishes to invest in St.Luke's Barn. In accordance with the condition referred to in paragraph 3.5 and set out in the draft Agreement, the Council will offer to demolish the building and reinstate the land. Alternatively, should the Trustees wish to maintain St.Luke's Barn themselves for use by the school (and to generate income through hire) the Council will offer to pay the Trustees a sum of £15,000, subject to completion of a written Agreement releasing the

Council from any further financial liability or other responsibilities in connection with the Barn.

6.2 A further option officers have explored at the site meetings with ward councillors is to offer to pay a capital sum of up to £250,000 (subject to tender) to the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge to refurbish and redecorate St.Luke's Barn. This option is not recommended and should only be considered if St.Luke's School or the Trustees of the Old Schools of Cambridge undertake to manage and maintain the building (once they have completed the works) for the local community for a period of at least 20 years. The Trustees would need to relinquish the Council from any further financial liabilities or other responsibilities in connection with St.Luke's Barn.

6.3 Officers do not recommend the option in 5.10 for the following reasons:

- This would require a significant capital investment for a facility that would still offer relatively poor sports and community space.
- There are a number of alternative and better sports and community facilities in the locality available for community use.
- The upstairs community rooms are small and would still be inaccessible to people with mobility disabilities and unsuitable for toddler or parent/baby groups.
- The building itself is located in a position that is not very accessible and not overlooked.
- The Trustees have the option of retaining the building for use by the school and the wider community if they wish.
- There is no budget for this work. A budget bid would need to be made and considered alongside other spending pressures and savings requirements.

7. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

These are set out in the report. If the officer recommendation is approved, there is likely to be a one-off cost to the Council of around £15,000 which would be met from existing budgets.

The revenue budget for St.Lukes Barn is £13,690 for 2013/14. There is no on-going revenue budget allocated to St.Lukes Barn beyond March 2014.

(b) Staffing Implications

The Barn is currently managed by St.Lukes School under a Service Level Agreement which is renewed annually. Should the school decide not to continue with this arrangement beyond March 2014, there would be no existing staff capacity within Community Development to effectively manage the building.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. This considered 2 scenarios.

- a) That the Barn is demolished or community use ends.
- b) That the Barn is refurbished

The impacts have informed this report and the main issues have been highlighted within the body of the report.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

The Barn is very poorly insulated and inefficient to heat. A dehumidifier is used in the sports hall to try and minimise the affects of condensation.

(e) **Consultation and Communication**

Arbury ward councillors and St.Lukes School have been actively engaged in the work to date with the previous Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health. The previous Labour Spokes was also engaged both as Spokes and as an Arbury ward councillor. The new Executive Councillor for Community Wellbeing met with ward councillors and the Head Teacher on 6th June and was shown around the Barn. The new Labour Spokes has also been briefed.

The Head of Arts and Recreation has been consulted about the relative importance of the Barn as a sports venue and her views are included in the body of the report.

Should the Executive Councillor agree with the officer recommendation, officers will work with the school to inform the badminton clubs so that they have plenty of notice that they may need to move and also advise them of other potential venues where they could relocate.

Community Development officers would also work with the Cambridge Islamic Youth project to help them find an alternative

meeting place if necessary and would inform the local Bangladeshi community that the Barn may not be available to celebrate Eid from 2014. Again, if required, we would help them find an alternative location.

(f) **Procurement**

If required to do so, the Council would need to seek competitive quotations and enter into a contract to demolish the Barn and reinstate the land.

(g) **Community Safety**

Historically there have been issues of vandalism at the Barn which is not overlooked and can be vulnerable. However, we understand that there have been few problems recently.

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Author's Name: Trevor Woollams
Author's Phone Number: 01223 457861
Author's Email: Trevor.woollams@cambridge.gov.uk

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