



Our ref: 13722/PBC/lc/Reports

6<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Jeremy Newcombe  
LSN Architects  
45 Devon Square  
Newton Abbot  
TQ12 2HH

Dear Jeremy

**Re: ST LEONARDS CHURCH, NEWTON ABBOT**



Further to our interesting visit the church on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, we thought it would be helpful to write and set out some initial thoughts, as discussed on site, for consideration by relevant parties.

1. The church is Grade II Listed, and was listed in 1983. It was originally built around 1835, and subsequently extended with the chancel, ancillary rooms, together with internal alterations undertaken in 1876. Since this time, various alterations, maintenance and repair works have obviously been undertaken in order to protect the longevity of the building. This includes upgrading the construction of the bell turret adjacent to the northern gable parapet wall, and the formation of the transverse gallery parapet wall over the ground floor screen.



**Bell Turret**

2. The general construction of the building is very typical of the local Victorian vernacular.
3. The roof is generally pitched west - east and covered with natural slate supported on battens, rafters, purlins and principal timber king post trusses, set at regular centres, also supporting the vaulted faceted ceiling.



**Principal truss and purlin roof structures covered with natural slate**



4. It is thought that the principal roof may have been re-covered once in its life, possibly early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the roof coverings over the southern elements having been replaced with asbestos or fibre cement slate, probably in the middle to latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
5. All the ceilings are generally timber laths and lime plaster supported off ceiling joists at regular, probably nominal, 450 centres.
6. The principal walls are constructed of local random rubble limestone, built with a lime mortar, and windows and doorways dressed, probably with Beer Stone, but possibly Bath Stone and limited Red Sandstone.
7. It is thought that the tiered first floor balcony is probably original, but may well have been modified in the 1876 alterations, with the transverse parapet wall to act as a head to a ground floor folding screen arrangement obviously added, probably in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This later parapet should be able to be removed without compromising other elements of the original structure.



Transverse parapet wall, 20<sup>th</sup> century

8. The ground floor structure is a combination of boarding on suspended timber joists, presumably over a nominal void, with joist supported off probably original stone substructure walls, with solid areas of masonry floor between the original pew areas.

9. Generally, we consider the building in its original form to be in quite fair condition, with the principal walls reasonably true to line and no significant undulations or distortions.
10. It is thought that the original roof structure is probably quite weak and there is evidence of a marginal dip in the roof slopes, but this is unlikely to be of structural concern.



**Marginal 'dip' in roof slopes**

11. As part of upgrading the building and reordering it for its new use, we feel it is essential that the roof covering is in good order and probably re-slatted in its entirety. As outlined, currently the principal roof has no felt under the slate, and it is noticeable that there are defects within the principal roof covering.
12. The loadings on the roof are unlikely to change significantly, potentially including upgrading the insulation etc., and therefore further major works are unlikely. This, however, will depend on a more detailed inspection, together with establishing the general condition of the original timber lath and lime plaster ceilings, and whether or not these need to be upgraded.
13. As discussed, the current pigeon population within the roof void needs to be cleared out, and the area cleaned to a degree, prior to a more detailed inspection of the roof void being undertaken.



14. The principal walls are probably founded at a relatively shallow depth, with the masonry substructure walls widening onto reasonable bearing strata, as there is little evidence of significant subsidence or settlement of concern.
15. Repairs will be required, in areas, to the external walls, with sporadic lime repointing, together with renewing elements of render.



**Render and leadwork repairs required**

16. We have not inspected the Boiler Room at this stage
17. It would be helpful to try and obtain as much of the historic record relating to building as is practical, which potentially would help date various repairs and works undertaken to the building, including roof covering works etc. We would have thought that there should be a records kept by the Diocese, or potentially in the Devon Record Office, which may be able to provide further information.
18. With respect to the ground floor, it is also probable that a completely new ground floor structure should be introduced, allowing for insulation, an effective damp proof membrane and potentially underfloor heating. This formation can, on occasions, exacerbate any tendency for rising damp and defects within the external walls at low level. Means to minimise this can be designed-in to ensure that any groundwater is adequately taken away from the base of the wall both internally and externally.
19. The detailed construction of the balcony structure should be further investigated, particularly the malleable iron posts, which are inset within the wooden moulded posts. It is likely that the structure, at least in part, will be asked to be retained by the Conservation Officer as part of the proposed

scheme, and therefore the potential new first floor structure will need to be designed to be sympathetic with the retained elements of historic structure. As discussed, there are potentially a number of ways of achieving this, which will need further review and discussion at the appropriate stage.

20. Further investigation will also be required as to the construction of the substructures, founding depth and quality of the bearing ground in various localities, particularly where alterations are being undertaken as part of the proposed scheme, together with areas of wall which may be required to take additional loads from a new first floor structure.
21. In terms of the overall scheme and the building's setting, and in order to make best use of the required accommodation, together with access and egress, we feel that there is very considerable merit in endeavouring to pursue the potential of acquiring the land adjacent to the building on the eastern side. This will allow the building to have a bit of space, also to potentially facilitate lift access to the required levels, and provide further community space, both internally and externally.
22. In order to be able to make a better assessment of the external aspects of the building, particularly at high level, it would be useful to undertake a further limited inspection of the external aspects of the building, with the benefit of a platform lift.

In the meantime, depending on how the scheme develops, if required we can prepare some structural feasibility work as appropriate.

We hope that our initial comments are of some help, and should you have any queries or require any further information at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul B Carpenter', written over the words 'Yours sincerely'.

Paul B Carpenter  
**PCA Consulting Engineers**

Copy: Philip Rowe, Town Clerk, Newton Abbot Town Council