

Information

Date: 1st November 2018

Project: Govan Old Parish Church

Status: Pre-application

Case Officer: Susan Connelly

Applicant: Govan Heritage Trust

Architect: JM Architects

Presentation by: Phil Zoechbauer of JM Architects + Richard East of City Design Cooperative

The Site

The site of international significance and has a rich Viking and Christian heritage dating back to the 6th Century. The burial ground was the site of a Viking parliament 'Dunster Hill' and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The church was designed by Rowan Anderson, completed in 1888 and is Grade A listed. It houses a number of historical burial stones dating from the 8th to 11th century including Viking hogback stones.

The proposals are at an early stage and there has been limited pre-application discussions in advance of the UDP presentation. The Design Team have had a number of discussions to inform the development of their proposals with Collective Architects who are leading the wider masterplan for the area.

Proposals

The project is for the phased refurbishment and extension of Govan Old Parish Church in conjunction with the proposed development of a new office / workshop building, landscape and public realm proposals to create a 'campus' with Govan Old Parish Church at the centre.

The first phase proposed is the refurbishment of the church to provide office space for lease at the Lower Ground Floor, with sensitive reconfiguration of the nave to provide a flexible space that whilst providing space to view the stones allow the church to be used as a venue for a variety of functions including conferences, weddings, other events, etc. it is intended to remove years of paint and take the interior of the church back to the original materials of red brick and sandstone. A limited amount of public realm works are proposed to be undertaken as part of this phase - vehicular access is proposed to be from the west via Wanlock Street but it is proposed that once the second phase of the wider masterplan is completed vehicular access will be from the east.

An extension to the Church is proposed as the second phase to provide ancillary spaces including a stair, lift, toilets, and office accommodation. The location for the extension has been determined by the fact that the adjacent burial ground is a scheduled monument and it is not possible to build to the East of the Church. The architect advised that they had explored alternative massing studies including the potential to build a tower element as the original spire was never completed due to financial constraints. The proposed aesthetic is a folded façade with a series of random windows to create the perception of depth of reveal with the principal materials as weathered steel and glass.

An office pavilion is proposed on the riverfront. The height has been kept to single storey in order to maintain views to Govan Old Parish Church from the Riverside Museum. It is proposed to use the same material language as the extension. It was noted that proposed pedestrian crossing at Water Row to the Riverside Museum has the potential to increase the number of visitors to the site.

The final phase is the completion of the landscape works and public realm – the burial ground will remain largely untouched with exception of the removal of three cherry trees that block the view to the front entrance of the church, the management of existing mature trees and the planting of smaller trees around the perimeter path and wall which has been agreed with the Archaeologist responsible for the site.

To the north of the church it is proposed to create a hard-landscaped piazza similar to the cathedral precinct space. The proposals are at a conceptual stage and it will be developed to maximise the area for pedestrians. Due to the risks of flooding and the resulting requirement to achieve certain levels ramps and steps will be required. Whilst the proposals are at an early stage, cost plan has made allowance for sandstone flags & steps.

Panel comments and issues raised

- The panel commented that the architecture and urban response don't appear to tell the story of the heritage of the site.
- The architectural language of the extension is too playful with the random scattering of windows not sitting comfortably with the church. The proposals do not make any reference to the strong order, depth of reveal, verticality, materiality articulation of the façade of the original church.
- There was a wide debate with regard to the appropriateness of the material choice. Whilst it was accepted that the design should not mimic the church, the panel was split with regard to the selection of weathered steel (Victorian shipbuilding heritage) versus stone (medieval heritage).
- The interface of the extension with the church isn't resolved and the massing, materiality and detailing needs to be explored to create distance and separation between the two elements.
- Concerns were raised with regard to the potential of the carparking requirements of the office accommodation dominating the landscape and urban realm. It was commented that, whilst it is at an early stage, the landscape proposals need more clarity.
- The panel questioned whether it was possible to undertake the public realm works as part of the first phase, however Jude Barber from collective clarified that area to the east of the church was part of the second phase of the wider masterplan but there was no reason why the facilitation of an access route couldn't happen during this stage of the masterplan.
- It was questioned as to why the office building was only single storey and why the gable aesthetic of the wider masterplan had not been followed. The Architect advised that the height of the building has been kept to a minimum to maintain views to the church from the Riverside Museum.
- The panel queried if there would be any impact of underground tunnel upon the design. The Architect advised that SPT have been consulted and are not concerned and that the office pavilion will be constructed on the existing slab of the original Harland & Wolf shed.

Conclusion and recommendations

- The panel is supportive of the proposed development of Govan Old Parish Church, however the following aspects of the design should be considered.
- The massing and separation to the church needs to be developed further.
- The panel feels that a more rigorous architectural language is required as the current proposals are too playful.
- Whilst the panel was split with regard to appropriateness of the material choice, it is recommended that the team undertake detailed studies of the proposed material in conjunction with the development of a more rigorous architectural language.
- The landscape and design of the external spaces needs to provide greater definition of the public realm with more detail of how the parking works.
- The proposals should consider the historic context further.