



25 June 2002

Our Ref: HF-99-00841/2

Mr A P Bartleet
Chairman, Working Party
Birch Spire Arts Trust
Bucklers Farm House
Buckleys Lane
Coggeshall
COLCHESTER
CO6 1SB

Dear Anthony Bartleet

St Peter's Church, Birch

We have now had the opportunity to consider carefully your application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. After assessing your project against our criteria for support, I regret to inform you that we have decided not to offer a grant towards this scheme. I realise that this will come, as disappointing news to you and everyone who has been involved in the project, and I will therefore try to outline the reasons behind the decision.

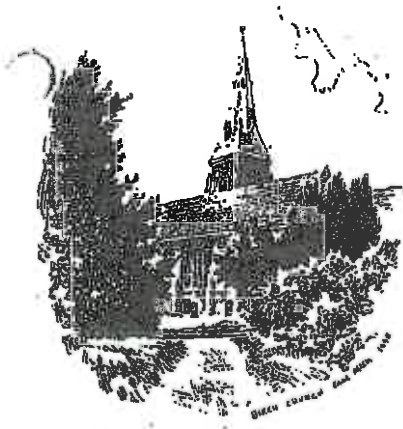
The total project costs and grant request figure represented a major increase over the Stage 1 pass figure and would have constituted a significant proportion of the East of England annual regional budget. The Committee considered that costs could increase further given the absence of a detailed specification and allowance for inflation calculated for a start date next year. Since statutory permissions were still outstanding and a proportion of partnership funding unsecured the project imposed risks for HLF. In addition the Committee considered that the project did not provide value for money in terms of the balance between the level of funding required and the extent of predicted conservation and public benefit. Unfortunately therefore the Committee was not able to approve a Stage 2 award.

The Committee recognised that this was a difficult decision given the long history of the case, the risks to the building in the absence of HLF support and the evidence of long term viability which had been provided.

I am sorry that we have been unable to help you on this occasion, but I hope that the above advice is helpful. If you would like us to return one copy of the information you submitted, please write to Sara Grosvenor by 24 July.

*Yours sincerely
Sylvia Collier*

Sylvia Collier
Acting Senior Grants Officer
Direct Line: 020 7963 8671
Direct Fax: 020 7963 8661
Email: sylvia@hlf.org.uk



The Birch Spire Arts Trust

St Peter's Church, Birch

The Trustees of the Birch Spire Arts Trust (BSAT) regret to announce that their application to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been turned down.

The HLF application was for repair and conversion of the redundant Victorian church building into studios and teaching space.

The Trust appears to have satisfied HLF regarding the on-going arts related project. However, during the course of the application the repair and conversion costs escalated, partly as a result of long delays in the HLF application process as well as the resultant damage to the fabric from two of the wettest winters on record. Earlier estimated costs of £750,000 increased to £1,200,000 in recent months. In the light of this, HLF felt that the project no longer represented good value for money.

This Trust has had no option but to return to the Church Commissioners with this news, and in the view of the Trustees, demolition of the whole building is the likely consequence. BSAT Trustees have always believed that this Grade 11 building should be retained as an asset for the community, and the spire as a notable landmark around Birch. Too many 'difficult' redundant buildings continue to be lost in Britain, usually to the regret of following generations.

CONTACT Mr Geoff Russell Grant 01206 330 235