



AMS

Defending Historic Buildings

ST ANN'S VESTRY HALL, 2 CHURCH ENTRY, LONDON EC4V 5HB

Patron: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, KG KT

Anne Griffiths
Closed Churches Division
Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ

Your reference : RC08/40CL
1st February 2013

Dear Anne,

BIRCH ST PETER, DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD

Thankyou very much for your letter and enclosures of 2nd January.

The Ancient Monuments Society wishes to make formal representations against the draft Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme providing for the complete destruction of the listed church of St Peter's Birch.

Although this has been one of the longest unresolved redundancies since the 1968 Measure, we are not persuaded that the drastic step of fullscale loss is the only way forward.

It bears repeating that St Peter's, even in its current state, is the dominant landmark in the village. The architect responsible, S.S.Teulon (1812-73) is a figure of national importance (of whom I happen to be the biographer). He is known principally for his "roguish" employment of the Gothic language -- which makes the repose he achieved at Birch all the more telling.

As you will know from our interim response of 7th December 2012 (attached for ease of reference) we urged the convening of a local meeting to pool constructive ideas on the way forward. We are not aware that that has happened at any time since the declaration of redundancy in 1990 and we feel that this has great potential for finding a solution . We offered suggestions for those to be invited in the December email. To this I am delighted to add the Bartleet Trust which has intimated to us that its willingness to provide financial assistance towards the earlier proposal advanced by the Birch Spire Arts Trust still stands especially in respect of the tower and spire.

Your Memorandum doesn't mention Mr Yates -- but if he remains willing to inject a substantial sum into repair and conversion, that too renders the proposal to demolish premature.

We represent against the confirmation of the Scheme and stand ready to assist in convening the meeting referred to above.

Yours Sincerely


Matthew Saunders
Secretary

ANCIENT MONUMENTS SOCIETY

Founded in 1924. Registered Charity No: 209605 In partnership with the Friends of Friendless Churches

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Ancient Monuments Society

From: "Ancient Monuments Society" <ancientmonumentsociety@btconnect.com>
To: "Anne Griffiths" <anne.griffiths@churchofengland.org>
Cc: "tom ashley" <tom@victoriansociety.org.uk>
Sent: 01 February 2013 11:30
Attach: AMS Birch 2013.doc
Subject: Fw: Closed church of St Peter, Birch, Essex
Anne

Thankyou for your letter of 2nd January.

Please find attached formal representations against the demolition of St Peter's Birch.

A snailmail signed version of the letter follows but receipt of this email today makes us of course compliant with your deadline of 3rd February.

Matthew Saunders
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----- Original Message -----

From: Ancient Monuments Society
To: Anne Griffiths
Cc: tom ashley
Sent: Friday, December 07, 2012 2:24 PM
Subject: Closed church of St Peter, Birch, Essex

Anne,

I took the issue of St Peter's to the meeting of the AMS Casework Committee at its last gathering and was asked to write in the following terms.

You won't be surprised to learn that trustees felt that the demolition of St Peter's would be a tragic outcome and that they were anxious that all possible constructive ways forward be explored.

To that end :

1. They hoped that as long as Mr Yates was proving a serious possible purchaser that no draft Pastoral Measure Scheme providing for demolition would be pursued. It remains essential that he agrees to the employment of a conservation architect and that his conversion project respects the listed building and is viable - but at present he appears the best last hope for the building.
2. We gather that there is a considerable civic sense and appreciation of conservation in the vicinity and this should be tapped. Colchester Civic Society has a good reputation - as does Sir Bob Russell, the local M.P, who is a noted Heritage Champion.
3. We feel that there is scope for a practical local workshop, involving the local authority, the village school (which is looking to expand), the Civic Society, Sir Bob and the village. This would be along the lines of the concentrated workshops sponsored by The Prince's Regeneration Trust - which have proved very useful in finding solutions to knotty conservation challenges elsewhere (as at Bradford on Avon and Margate). Essex County Council might be able to supply names of developers who are active, and trustworthy in the county (Colchester, as a District Council, doesn't consult with the County as a matter of course but the conservation team at the County is among the most respected in the country).

if we can assist in convening such a gathering do come back

Matthew Saunders
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