

MORRISTON TABERNACLE OPTIONS STUDY

2.0 CONSTRAINTS & ISSUES

There are a number of challenges that need to be considered on an options study which might entail a part redevelopment or change of use. A number of these are discussed below and include details on statutory designation, ownership and management, parking and transport, conservation area, approach and principal access to the site, and interior movement around the building.

2.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATION

Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural and historic interest which make up Wale's historic environment. They are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and alterations or demolitions require Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority before they can proceed. Morriston Tabernacle was awarded Grade I listed building status in September 1993, for its pre-eminence as perhaps the most ambitious grand chapel in Wales, its striking exterior presence and its virtually unaltered interior and fittings. Currently, fewer than two per cent of buildings listed in Wales qualify for Grade I listing; which recognises buildings of exceptional, and usually national, interest. The front boundary walls and gates are covered by curtilage listing under test set out in paragraphs 84-90 of Welsh office circular 61/96 (Planning and the Historic Environment). Tabernacle and the proposed alterations to the building will need to consider this.

Grade I

Grand chapel of 1870-72. Known as 'The Cathedral of Welsh Nonconformity'. By John Humphreys, architect, of Morriston; builder Daniel Edwards, builder and tinplate manufacturer, of Morriston. Originally known as New Libanus Chapel.

Interior

Magnificent interior includes shallow elliptical ceiling with ribs on polygonal corbels and elaborate panelling. Intruded corners to staircases (front). Continuous gallery with balustrade supported on iron columns with crocketed capitals, stencilled decoration to coving, boarded front surmounted by filigree work; gallery sweeps down behind pulpit; organ console to front of choir benches, organ to rear with Gothic case, further detached banks of organ pipes to corners of chapel; entrances to staircases beside. Stained glass to windows to sides of organ. Large convex pulpit with pierced arcading and balustraded stair to each side; convex balustrade to set fawr enclosure. Pitch pine benches, those to front arranged round pulpit concentrically: To rear of pulpit doors to service rooms. Basement schoolroom.

Exterior

Brown rock-faced stone, pale freestone dressings and string courses, slate roofs. Eclectic style with references to Classical, and Northern Italian medieval styles. Slightly advanced pedimented temple front has three bays with giant order of 4 pairs of unfluted Corinthian columns; wider central bay has elliptical arch, round arches to outer bays, medallions in spandrels. Heavily dentilled pediment has freestone band, and pierced roundel in tympanum and is surmounted by tabernacle as pinnacle. Central arch of front encloses two

2.2 OWNERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

The tabernacle chapel building is owned by the trustee(s) of the Tabernacle Building Trust (Tabernacle Chapel Morriston Trust, registered charity number 1164521) which has held the same since 1876, when ownership was transferred from Richard Hughes Esquire for the cost of £640. Hughes had purchased the land from the Morris Family, specifically Sir John A. Morris, Baronet and Robert A. Morris, Esquire in 1875.

The charitable objects of the Tabernacle Building Trust are as follows: The premises and land transferred under the 1879 deed is to be used, occupied or enjoyed as a place for the public worship of Almighty God according to the usages of Protestant dissenters of the Congregational denomination commonly called Independents being Anabaptists under the direction of the Church for the time being assembling for worship in the Church building and for the instruction of children and adults and for the promotion of such other religious or philanthropic purposes as the Church shall from time to time direct.

Management of the Tabernacle Chapel Building is undertaken by the congregation CIO (Tabernacle, Morriston congregation registered charity number 1152614) a charitable incorporated organisation

2-light upper floor windows with arcading below; round arch of main entrance encloses 2 round-headed doorways and has round window in head. Outer arches of front each have single round-arched window to upper floor, and round-arched doorway with arcade of windows above. To L of temple front is tall round-headed window to projecting staircase tower. To R of front is engaged square tower with octagonal steeple, round headed 2-light windows to upper stage, clocks, aedicules with Italianate 2-light round-headed windows with louvres; lowest (stair tower) stage has tall, round-headed window to front, and paired tall round-headed windows to side; also to side, entrance doorway with stone surround.

This entrance doorway links to forecourt by ramped stairway with pierced balustrade, archway to storage/service area beneath. Similar arrangement at N staircase tower.

Side elevations have pierced parapets and four tall shallow arches each enclosing, at upper floor level, two 2-light round-headed windows (pierced roundel above); at ground floor level, triple round-headed window, at basement level, segmental arches with paired segmentally-headed small-pane sash windows. End bays to E are narrower with single upper floor window below which is shallow projection overlapping with adjacent bay and containing paired windows, and entrance doorway with stone steps (pierced balustrade) down to ground level.

Rear of building has 2 pairs of small windows in gable; central shallow projection with monopitch roof, two 2-light windows to each side at upper floor level; round-headed windows to ground floor level.

established for the purpose of providing an incorporated legal framework for the congregation to be properly registered as a charity with the charity commission and to protect individuals from personal liability as trustees. The congregation CIO is now the sole trustee of the Tabernacle Building Trust and through the decisions made by the charity trustees of that CIO (the deacons) has general control and management of the Tabernacle chapel building and is responsible for the proper administration of the Tabernacle Building Trust. As a result of this trustee role, the congregation CIO is responsible for the maintenance of the structural fabric of the historic chapel building, but this is a secondary concern to the buildings primary function as a place of Christian worship. As trustee of the Tabernacle building Trust the congregation CIO has taken on the responsibility of undertaking quinquennial inspections, with the next survey due in 2019. The survey will set out the next five years of maintenance and repair, and whilst works may not be required to be undertaken straight away, the potential need for further funding is a significant resource factor to be considered.

The congregation has the stated aim of divesting itself of the trusteeship and operational responsibility for the tabernacle chapel building, as it is realised that this responsibility will affect its ability to carry out its own primary charitable purpose of advancing the Christian religion for the benefit of the public. Trustees have taken legal advice on this matter, and have made clear that the CIO cannot continue as the legal owner of the Tabernacle. This is the key challenge going forward and the issue of ownership and governance needs to be embedded in any thinking about the future of the building, whatever options are preferred.

In summary, the building needs to be adopted by a group who have the resources, availability, experience and energy to invest in the next phase of the Tabernacle's future. This is a priority. If the issue of ownership and responsibility is not addressed, the congregation CIO will run out f funds for maintaining the building and become insolvent leaving the tabernacle chapel building in limbo, legally owned by the Tabernacle Building Trust which will have no trustee(s) and therefore no structure for management of governance. In short it appears the building will revert to the crown bona vacantia but with its charitable trusts as to permitted use still attached. This would be a complicated legal situation that would act as a constraint on taking action to safeguard the future of the Tabernacle.

2.3 PARKING & TRANSPORT

Within a 500m radius of the Tabernacle there are a number of provisions for car parking. This is demonstrated on the plan to the right of this page, in summary this includes four main car parks, two of which are within 250m, a third within approximately 400m, and another just outside the 500m radius offering short term parking facilities. In addition to this, the majority of Woodfield Street and some of Crown Street offices short term parking, Woodfield Street is a main route for several bus services with links to Swansea city centre and Singleton. There are several bus stops along Woodfield Street, two of which are within very close proximity to the tabernacle. Should the Tabernacle require a greater level of parking facilities to cater for large functions, there would be a need to rely upon car parking facilities identified on the map below, as there is limited capacity on-site for parking.



Car parking and transport location diagram

Morriston Tabernacle Site

Car Parks

- 01 Glantawe Street Car Park (18 spaces)
- 02 Treharne Road Car Park (90 spaces)
- 03 Castle Bingo Car Park (100+ spaces)
- 04 Sway Road Car Park (20+ spaces)
- 05 Short Stay Road Parking
- 06 Bus Route
- 07 Bus Stop