

## 23.041 – RAMSEY, ST. THOMAS A BECKET – REORDERING

Feasibility Report

FRR Ltd – November 2023

*(Read with drawings 23.041/S-001 to S-014)*

### 1.0 THE PROJECT BRIEF

*(Read with drawing 23.041/S-001)*

1.1 The project brief for the reordering works at St. Thomas a Becket, Ramsey, has been confirmed as follows:

- a) New glazed doors to the main entrance (west doors) in the Tower; replace leaded lights of the inner doors/screen with more transparent glazing to provide a draught lobby while also making the entrance more inviting.
- b) Removal of pews from the Nave and Aisles; new flooring.
- c) Removal of existing choir stalls and various other furniture and fittings.
- d) Consideration of levels in the Chancel to make the space useable as a Chapel.
- e) New raised dais and new altar in the Nave (including short ramp for universal access).
- f) Pulpit to be re-positioned.
- g) Font to be moved away from its awkward location next to the pier; the existing stone steps are unsafe.
- h) New seating layouts to be explored, including rows to replicate the existing pews, as well as layouts for concerts/performances in the Nave and potentially in the North Aisle, together with consideration of a dais in the North Aisle.
- i) Provision of an AV screen at the east end of the Nave.
- j) New room for Sunday School activities.
- k) The Memorial Chapel (including movement of the holy sacrament to the Chancel).
- l) Treatment of floors where pews have been removed.
- m) Display of historical items with interpretation.
- n) Alterations to the heating installation (incl. the potential for air-source or ground-source heat pumps)

## **2.0 RE-ORDERING OF THE CHANCEL, NEW DAIS AND NAVE ALTAR**

*(Read with drawings 23.041/S-003, S-004, S-005)*

Drawing S-003 illustrates proposed alterations to the Chancel and at the east end of the Nave, including the following:

- 2.1 Alterations to levels in the Chancel to create a larger level surface to make the space useable as a Chapel and for other activities. The work would require a new stone base to the monument on the north wall, work to the external walls where the floor is lowered, and re-positioning of the reredos on the east wall. See also building sections on drawing S-004.  
The potential presence of an existing below-ground vault under the east end of the Chancel would impact on this element of the proposed work and should be explored further early in the project.
- 2.2 It is proposed to form a new raised Nave dais (materials (stone/timber) to be confirmed as part of the next design stage) with a new altar. The semi-circular shape shown on our drawings would be providing generous space on the new dais for the new altar and for the choir, while also respecting the Nave piers and relating well to a variety of seating and performance layouts in the Nave and Aisles. Removable communion rails are shown with dashed lines on the plan.
- 2.3 The new position for the pulpit has been carefully considered to balance space on the Dais, impact on views during services and concerts, and proximity to the congregation.
- 2.4 The curved new ramp in the South Aisle responds to the shape of the new dais and would provide step-free access.
- 2.5 Drawing S-004 shows a retractable motorised projection screen that could be mounted at tie beam level and lowered in front of the Chancel arch as required for different seating layouts and activities.
- 2.6 Drawing S-005 explores three different layouts for the choir (Options A/B/C). Option D shows a rectangular shape for the new dais with a straight ramp in the South Aisle as an alternative to a semi-circular dais.

## **3.0 A NEW SPACE FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL**

*(Read with drawings 23.041/S-002, S-009, S-010, S-011)*

- 3.1 Drawing S-002 shows the existing floor plan with the Vestry at the east end and a room for the Choir/Music at the west end to the north of the Tower. Layout Options 'A' to 'D' explore potential locations for a new Sunday School Room.
- 3.2 Option A: Choir/Music are integrated into the existing Vestry at the east end. The room to the north of the Tower becomes the new Sunday School room (note stepped access).
- 3.3 Option B: Existing rooms for Choir/Music and the Vestry are retained. A new Sunday School Room is formed in the North Aisle. Note potential impact on chair layouts for services and concerts, and the requirement to construct tall, glazed screens in the North Aisle to enclose the new activity space (see drawing S-009).

- 3.4 Option C: The Vestry remains unchanged. The Sunday School moves into the room to the North of the Tower, and a new space for the Choir/Music is created in the North Aisle. See drawing S-010 for details. A new raised timber walkway and new steps at the west end of the Nave provide step-free access to the new Sunday School Room.

The new space for the Choir/Music would be formed with freestanding cupboards and without a ceiling, with careful detailing around the decorative stonework of the Nave piers and along the north wall (minimal junctions to minimise potential damp issues).

- 3.5 Option D: Similar to Option C but with a larger Sunday School Room. See drawing S-011 for details. The existing modern partition wall would be removed and replaced with tall, glazed screens to enclose the western bay of the North Aisle.

#### **4.0 SEATING LAYOUTS**

*(Read with drawings 23.041/S-006, S-007, S-008)*

- 4.1 Drawings S-006/S-007/S-008 show seating layouts for services, concerts and performances. Note the potential impact from new enclosures in the North Aisle (Sunday School Room; space for Choir/Music). The existing pews provide space for approximately 250 persons.

- Option A: Seating in rows, similar to the existing pews (approx. 260 chairs).
- Option B: Semi-circular layout with focus towards the central bay of the North Aisle (approx. 135 chairs).
- Option C: Circular layout around a performance space at the centre of the Nave (approx. 190 chairs).

- 4.2 With all pews removed, chair seating arrangements will become much more flexible.

- 4.3 The proposed chair storage cupboard in the North Aisle next to the Organ is shown in greater detail on drawing S-012. A second cupboard of matching appearance could be placed elsewhere in the church; this is to be explored further once a location for the new Sunday School room has been found and seating capacity/requirements have been confirmed. The cupboard shown would hold 120 HOWE '40/4' chairs (metal frame) or 90 'Theo' chairs (wooden frame).

#### **5.0 NEW GLAZED WEST ENTRANCE DOORS**

*(Read with drawings 23.041/S-013, S-014)*

- 5.1 It is proposed to leave the existing tall west doors in place and create a new arched timber-clad, glazed structure with a glazed door on the inside within the Tower. This solution would be fully reversible and allow all existing historic fabric and the existing doors to be retained. Four design options are illustrated on drawing S-014.

- Option A: frameless glass door in a minimalist glass screen with stainless steel or bronze finish glass-to-glass patch fittings.
- Option B: frameless glass door in a timber-framed glass screen.
- Option C: variation of Option B.
- Option D: glazed timber door in a timber-framed glass screen.

5.2 To create a visual link from the west doors through the Tower and into the Nave, the leaded lights and frosted glass of the internal double doors and glazed timber screen could simply be replaced with clear float glass. See drawing S-014.

## **6.0 OTHER ITEMS**

### **6.1 The Font:**

Drawings S-009/S-010/S-011 show proposed new position for the font - free-standing and without interrupting the main circulation routes around the Nave and Aisles. The existing steps are unsafe, and improvements should be considered, such as reducing the height of the hexagonal base and creating a larger stone step.

### **6.2 Heating Installation:**

A new heating installation should be considered as part of works to the floor. Ground-source heating (using bore-holes in the churchyard or shallow coils under Ramsey Abbey green space) or air-source heating could be integrated into the new floor construction to provide low-carbon/carbon-free continuous low-temperature back-ground heating.

### **6.3 Display of Historical Items with Interpretation:**

Proposals will be developed as part of the next design stage once a preferred new floor plan has been agreed.

### **6.4 The Memorial Chapel:**

Existing furniture and fittings will need to be reviewed with the PCC in more detail with the PCC as part of the next design stage. The aim should be to create a calm and private space with carefully coordinated furniture and fittings.

## **7.0 NEXT STEPS**

Following review of the Feasibility Study by the PCC, the following next steps are suggested:

- Consultation with the DAC using the Feasibility Study drawings and report.
- Freeland Rees Roberts to work up the PCC's preferred design solution to sufficient detail to obtain outline cost advice from a Quantity Surveyor.
- Quantity Surveyor to prepare an outline cost plan. FRR will be able to assist with obtaining quotations for cost advice.