

Item 83
The Old Chancel

Background

The Old Chancel is a Grade II listed structure opposite St Augustines Church. It sits within pleasant green space which has been deconsecrated. There is a board of trustees which oversees the future of this site on which Cllr Lyons attends representing the Town Council.

The site is adjacent to the Trent and Mersey Canal where 48-hour moorings are available allowing canal visitors to access the shops in Rugeley for provisions. The site is adjacent to The Chancel primary school, opposite St Augustines Church and 5 minutes' walk to Rugeley Town centre.

The Trustees of the Old Chancel have been looking at various opportunities to bring this building back into public use. They have considered the creation of meeting rooms, a visitor centre, a museum, interpretation centre etc.

Given the provision of space already in Rugeley, the trustees are looking for a use that does not compete with other local providers but adds to the visitor experience, educational development, and historical narrative. Historic England are keen to see a reimagining of the space that looks to the future as well as acknowledging the history. Having spoken with the Diocese, they are happy for the Old Chancel to be developed but would like to see some telling of the religious history of Rugeley in the final use.

What do we do next?

Meetings have taken place with Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arups Consulting Engineers, Glancy Nicholls Architects and The Chancel School to consider possible future uses and development opportunities. Funding for a detailed feasibility study to inform and direct any future development of the site is now required and an expression of interest form is to be submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund to secure this.

The developments currently under consideration lean to the creation of modular structures to house kitchens / tea rooms / toilets etc away from the chancel – possibly in a lychgate location. This would allow visitors to look at the Chancel and free up this space for interpretation etc. The central core of the Chancel – of which only the arches remain – could become a functional space with a floating staging area on which events, shows, weddings etc could all take place in the open air or under canvas. The tower could become a beacon / look out point from which to survey the town and its surrounds.

Proposal

Councillors are being asked to support the application for funding being submitted as it is possible that the Town Council may be asked to take on a developmental role in this project. At this moment in time, it is not envisioned that the Town Council will put money into the project but will need to put in time from the Town Clerk.