

# Crewe Christ Church

Crewe Christ Church was designated redundant and has stood vacant since 2013. In 2019, Crewe Town Council (CTC) received £53,000 from the Architectural Heritage Fund to support the redevelopment of the site. Through this funding CTC must establish a community trust, oversee the transfer of the asset and help the trust find a sustainable use for Crewe Christ Church. CTC is working with the Diocese of Chester, the Church Commissioners and Cheshire East Council to find a new use for the building and transfer the ownership of the asset.

Cheshire East Council received £3.8m from the Future High Streets Fund to develop a Technology and Digital Innovation Centre (TADIC) in two locations. Christ Church is one of the proposed locations and has been allocated £1.9m. Feasibility studies to RIBA Stage 2 are underway and will be complete by the end of September 2021. It is currently proposed TADIC would occupy the chancel and some of the nave area. This area would be managed by an appointed operator. A sustainable use for the rest of the building would be developed by the community trust.

## 1.1 Ownership

- Title Number CH624378 - The Chancel is owned by the Church Commissioners.
- Title Number CH624382 (Freehold) - The Nave, Tower and Baptistry is owned by the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, who have leased the area to Cheshire East Council since 1963 (Title Number CH623989 Leasehold).
- Title Number CH566060 - The Churchyard is owned by Cheshire East Council.

## 1.2 Transfer of the asset

The Pastoral Scheme of Use is developed to enable the Church to dispose of a building. The use referred to in the scheme is the only use permitted and any proposed change of use would result in a new Pastoral Scheme of Use having to be created. This is a specific church process which includes statutory consultation.

Statutory consultation on the Pastoral Scheme of Use for Crewe Christ Church was undertaken July 2021 and the scheme was approved on 16 August 2021. Crewe Christ Church can be disposed of for use as an enterprise and community centre. The Pastoral Scheme of Use is available in Appendix A.

Cheshire East Council has indicated it wishes to surrender its lease on transfer of the asset to new ownership.

## 1.3 Restrictions on Use

Christ Church is only permitted to be used as an enterprise and community centre.

The Church Commissioners retain an interest in the building after the transfer and have advised a number of activities that are unacceptable to the church. CTC has been advised a business looking to rent space, should not be considered if it breaches any of these restrictions by performing one of the following activities:

- Immoral or illegal activity e.g. betting halls, brothel.
- Alcohol where the primary purpose is sale. Options such as a restaurant that serves alcohol as part of a meal or a micro-brewery would need to be put to the Church Commissioners but would be considered.
- Weddings.

Further covenants have been placed on the transfer and are available in Appendix B. A history of the building and its significance is located in Appendix C.

### **Draft Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme**

This Scheme is made by the Church Commissioners (“the Commissioners”) this ..... day of ..... 20.... under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011.

#### **Background**

1. By a Scheme of the Commissioners made under the Pastoral Measure 1968 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April 1980 the tower, the baptistry and the remaining parts of the nave of the parish church of Crewe Christ Church were declared redundant. The Scheme also appropriated the said tower to use as a monument, the said baptistry to use as a public shelter and the remaining parts of the nave to use as a garden and empowered the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance to lease the tower, baptistry and remaining parts of the nave for the said uses.
2. By a Scheme of the Commissioners made under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of November 2013 the parish church of Crewe Christ Church was declared closed for regular public worship.
3. By a further Scheme of the Commissioners made under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of June 2015 the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance was empowered to hold let or licence the former parish church of Crewe Christ Church for worship according to the rites and customs of the Church of England or any other Christian body designated by the Bishop for the time being of Chester and for arts and education and community purposes and for purposes ancillary to any or all of those uses.
4. It is now proposed to make new provision for the property described in clause 1 and clause 3 aforesaid.

NOW, it is provided as follows: -

#### **Future of the property**

1. The provisions of the 1980 Scheme and the 2015 Scheme are hereby revoked.
2. The property (shown hatched on the attached plan and registered under title numbers CH624378 and CH624382) shall be appropriated to use as an enterprise and community centre and for purposes ancillary thereto with the benefit of the Existing Matters specified in Schedule 1.

#### **Disposal**

3. The Commissioners are hereby empowered to sell the property for the said use with the benefit of the Existing Matters specified in Schedule 1.

#### **Contents**

4. The contents of the former church of Crewe Christ Church shall be disposed of as the Bishop shall direct.

**Coming into operation of this Scheme**

5. This Scheme shall not come into operation until such date or dates as the Commissioners shall determine following the making of this Scheme and the Commissioners shall not be obliged to bring the Scheme or any part thereof into operation until such time as they are satisfied that the conditions specified in Schedule 2 have been complied with but may do so if they so determine.

In witness of which this Scheme has been duly executed as a deed by the Church Commissioners.

Executed as a Deed by the Church Commissioners for England acting by two authorised signatories:

-----  
Signature of Authorised Signatory

-----  
Signature of Authorised Signatory

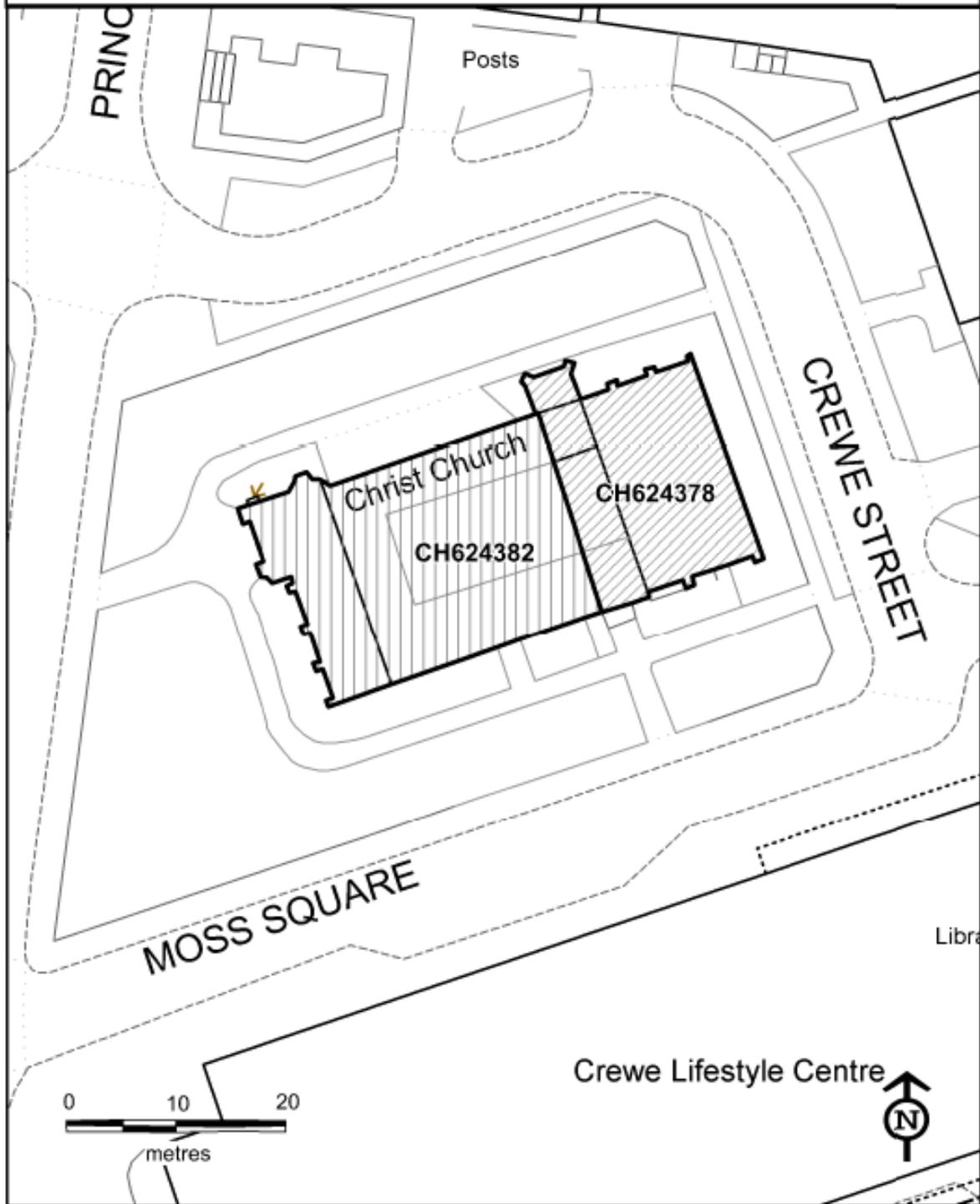
**Schedule 1: Existing Matters**

The rights reserved by the conveyance dated the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October 1963 made between (1) The Reverend William Stuart Pears and (2) The Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of Crewe so far as the same are still subsisting and capable of taking effect.

**Schedule 2: Conditions**

- (i) That Planning Permission has been obtained for the proposed use.
  
- (ii) That Listed Building Consent has been obtained for such alterations as are necessary to enable the implementation of all or some of the proposed uses.

# CREWE CHRIST CHURCH



Drawn by  
c.hall

Scale  
1:500

Date  
07/05/2021

© Crown copyright and database rights 2021.  
Ordnance Survey Licence number 100040148

File Pathname / Project / Drawing No.  
S:\General\Tracing\24\1\_crewe\_2021.wor

## **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

### **MISSION AND PASTORAL MEASURE 2011 DRAFT PASTORAL (CHURCH BUILDINGS DISPOSAL) SCHEME CREWE CHRIST CHURCH DIOCESE OF CHESTER**

This note accompanies a draft scheme under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 which makes provision for the future of a closed church building, The Church Commissioners provide this information so that individuals and interested parties can understand the background to the proposals, make a reasoned judgement on the merits of the draft scheme and, if they see fit, a reasoned expression of support or objection to it.

#### **The Current Proposals**

The Commissioners have agreed to publish a draft Pastoral (Church Buildings Disposal) Scheme providing for the closed church of Crewe Christ Church and its former tower, nave and baptistry to be appropriated for use as an enterprise and community centre.

The draft scheme, which this note accompanies, contains provisions for the buildings to be sold by the Church Commissioners and for the contents to be disposed of as the Bishop shall direct.

#### **Background**

In 1980 the tower, baptistry and what remained of the nave of Christ Church following partial demolition were declared redundant and leased by the Diocese of Chester to Cheshire East Council for a variety of public purposes. In 2013 the surviving chancel was closed for public worship with a view to it becoming the focus of a town centre initiative incorporating various arts, education and community programmes.

However, that initiative did not proceed and the Diocese of Chester is now proposing that the church site as a whole be used as an enterprise and community centre to assist in the regeneration of this part of Crewe. This is being led by Cheshire East Council and Crewe Town Council with financial support from the Government's Future High Streets Fund. The former chancel will be a base for start-up businesses and other enterprise initiatives whilst the baptistry and nave will be used for community events such as open-air performances.

#### **The Building**

Christ Church dates from 1845, being built originally by the Grand Junction Railway Company. In 1877 the yellow sandstone tower was added at the north-west corner, to be followed by the red brick chancel on the east side of the nave in 1898. The furniture and fittings generally date from this latter period and are fashioned in the Arts and Crafts style.

The now-detached tower is listed Grade II, whilst the other buildings on the church site are unlisted.

#### **The Views of the Statutory Advisory Committee**

After formal closure of the chancel in 2013 the Commissioners statutory advisors, the Statutory Advisory Committee of the Church Buildings Council (SAC), indicated that although Christ Church was of only low to moderate significance it should be preserved by conversion to an alternative use. The Committee was of the opinion that the stained glass and carved woodwork should be preserved by relocation if not required for use in the building.

#### **Planning and Access**

The conversion of Christ Church to an enterprise and community centre will complement recent developments in the surrounding area, which has been improved through the

provision of new leisure and community facilities. The site is a key element in the Crewe Town Centre master plan and is at the heart of a new Cultural & Civic Quarter. It is also one of the few heritage assets in the town centre and the churchyard is a much-appreciated green space.

There is unrestricted access from the adjoining roads, with convenient parking and good links to public transport.

### **Burials and the Churchyard**

The churchyard, now in the ownership of the local authority, was closed for burials in 1912. Most of the headstones were removed in the 1960s when the churchyard was taken over by the local authority.

### **Making the Draft Scheme**

Before they allow the Scheme to proceed the Commissioners will need to be satisfied that both planning permission and listed building consent have been secured for the proposed use.

### **Correspondence**

Further information about the proposals may be obtained from the Case Officer, Norman Bilsborough, by e-mail at [norman.bilsborough@churchofengland.org](mailto:norman.bilsborough@churchofengland.org) or by telephone at 07825 854935.

### **Representations against or in support of the draft Scheme**

Anyone may make a representation for or against any provision of the draft Scheme. Representations should be sent to:

**Representations  
Closed Churches Division, Church Commissioners  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3AZ**

Or by e-mail to: [closedchurches.reps@churchofengland.org](mailto:closedchurches.reps@churchofengland.org)

Any communication received after 23 July 2021 cannot be treated as a representation.

If we receive representations against the draft Scheme, we will send all representations, both for and against, to the Bishop, whose view will be sought. Individual representors will then receive copies of our correspondence with the Bishop (including copies of all the representations) and they may comment further in writing to us in light of the diocesan response if they so wish.

If no representations against the Scheme are received the Commissioners shall make the Scheme and bring it into effect as provided for in the scheme and explained above.

Information on the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and its procedures can be found on the Church Commissioners' website at [www.ccpastoral.org](http://www.ccpastoral.org) where there are also links to download copies of these notes and the draft scheme.

Norman Bilsborough  
June 2021

## Appendix B

### Standard covenants included in the sale

(c)(i)As provided by section 75(1) of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 the following covenants on the part of the Transferee shall be enforceable as if the Transferor were the owner of adjacent land and the covenants were expressed to be entered into for the benefit of that adjacent land and (in the case of covenants of a positive nature) as if they were negative.

(ii)The burden of the following covenants is intended to bind and binds each and every part of the property into whosesoever hands it may come.

(iii)A covenant not to do any act or thing includes an obligation not to permit or suffer that act or thing to be done by another person.

(iv)The Transferee [jointly and severally] covenants with the Transferor:-

- (aa) Not to use the property for any purpose other than as an enterprise and community centre and ancillary purposes;
- (bb) Not to use the property for any illegal or immoral purpose or for any purpose which may be or become a nuisance annoyance or disturbance to the Transferor or which shall (in the opinion of at least two of the following: the bishop for the time being of the diocese in which the property is situated, the dean for the time being of the cathedral which is the seat of the bishop and the archdeacon for the time being of the archdeaconry in which the Property is situated) be offensive to the principles and practice of the Christian faith;
- (cc) Not without the prior written consent of the Transferor (which is not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed following the grant as necessary of planning permission and/or listed building consent from the local planning authority) to demolish any building nor to erect any new or additional structure or building on the property;
- (dd) Within three years of today's date to carry out and complete to the satisfaction of the Transferor's surveyor the works shown on the plans numbered ..... already submitted to and approved in writing by the Transferor;
- (ee) Not to make any architectural or structural changes (including, for the avoidance of doubt, any alteration to or the removal of any stained glass) in any building on the property except in accordance with plans previously submitted to and approved in writing by the Transferor following the grant as necessary of planning permission and /or listed building consent from the local planning authority, such approval not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed;
- (ff) Not to damage any monument or memorial in the property nor, without the Transferor's consent, to remove or disturb any such;
- (gg) Not to permit or allow use of the property for the solemnization of marriages under section 26(1)(bb) of the Marriage Act 1949 or as a place at which two people may register as civil partners of each other under section 6 of the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 or under any other legislation for the time being in force amending or replacing the said Acts;
- (hh) To give access at reasonable times and on reasonable notice to the Transferor's surveyor to enable him to inspect the works undertaken by the Transferee in accordance with these covenants.

## Appendix C

### C.0 Historical Development

The Grand Junction Railway company built the church between 1843 and 1845. There are no known traces of the original small structure of Newcastle blue brick, which included a 74 foot tower. It is assumed the architect was the company's chief architect, John Cunningham. Beatties of Liverpool are thought to have constructed the building. The building included two gas chandeliers, each with 99 burners. As the town grew, so did the congregation and in 1855, Christ Church was assigned a parish, giving it powers to perform marriages, alongside baptisms and burials which had been undertaken since 1846. It is thought the expansion of the building began in 1855 and was funded by the London North Western Railway Company (LNWR). By 1859, services were being held in the Town Hall while the church was closed. The town continued to grow, and additions included:

- 1864 Aisles and galleries added
- 1878 Current tower designed by J W Stansby (railways engineer) and built by Messrs Cubitt of London. The tower included the clock by John Blackhurst, who also installed the Market Hall clock (1871) and Queens Park clock (1888). Blackhurst's shop was at 54 Market Street. The turret included a carillon. It is thought the iron pillars date to this rebuild and helped support the galleries added in 1864.
- 1878 Font paid for by James Atkinson, first Mayor of Crewe; Oak lectern, communion chairs, Minton Tiles and communion rails funded by Mrs Hill (wife of late John Hill who built the Market Hall)
- 1898 Chancel added. The architect was John Brooke of Manchester who also designed the entrance lodges at Queens Park.
- 1901 Galleries removed
- 1906 Chapel added – most of the furnishings and fittings relate to this
- 1909 Oak reredos added under the east window in memorial to Lucy Mirion Bidlake, daughter of James Atkinson.

Other key dates relating to the building we see today include:

- 1911 Ringing was halted due to the tower and belfry dilapidation
- 1912 Churchyard closed to burials (last burial was Susannah Barrass, lived in Victoria Street). Eight bells recast and reinstated as 10 bells, pealed for the first time in June 1912.
- 1963 Headstones removed
- 1977 Nave, aisles and most of the roof removed
- 1978 Chancel, north chapel and south vestry reordered and reopened
- 2013 Last service held in the Chancel.

### C.1 Historical Context

As the railway developed and the Works were established in Crewe, there was an influx of migrant workers who established settlements. As part of the railway company's efforts to create an infrastructure for the developing town, the Rector of Coppenhall parish asked the company to provide in some way "for the spiritual wants of numerous workmen and their families". With the

first residential areas being centred around Moss Square, the company consecrated a nearby workshop in 1843, until Christ Church was consecrated in December 1845.

## C.2 Historical Significance

According to the *Pastoral Measure Report*, compiled by Joseph Elders in October 2011, Christ Church is one of the few remaining Railway Churches. The tower has considerable architectural significance and townscape value. It is a key component of the town centre area and considered a landmark of Crewe. This is reflected in the tower being listed as Grade II. The rest of the building is of local architectural significance.

The fittings mainly date to 1906 and they are good examples of the Arts & Crafts type. They hold local historical significance as an ensemble. The stone carved reredos under the east window was noted as very good. The stained glass is also of local significance with the West Window of St George and St Michael by Trena Cox, 1947, noted as of some significance. The stained glass windows are all dedicated in memory to important Crewe founders including the first Mayor of Crewe, the Chief Mechanical Engineer LNWR, and church wardens of Christ Church. The monuments form an interesting group of local significance for Crewe.

No archaeological remains other than burials are known of and there are no designations relating to the ecology of the church.

The South Cheshire Branch of Chester Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers states Christ Church is one of four towers in Cheshire with 10 bells. They are the only church bells in Crewe. The current bells date to 1912 when they were recast by Gillet and Johnston. They form an original set, still in its original frame. The names of their donors are inscribed on the bells and include the Foreman of Crewe Works, Artisans, Tradespeople of Crewe, the Mayor and the Chief Engineer. They are one of the first to be tuned to the *Five Tone Simpson* principle. They were recast from the eight bells, themselves recast from the original bell by Gillet and Johnston. The eight bells arrived in May 1878 with the official opening on 4 August 1878. The original bell was 4 cwt and cast by London Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

Purcell (2018) assessed value as:

- Communal Value – Medium / High – One of only a handful of listed buildings within Crewe town centre. Others mainly hold a civic duty. A number of memorials are included within the footprint and the association with the external nave garden increases the communal value of the site.
- Aesthetic Value – Bell Tower & Baptistry – High / Medium – much higher quality due to their architectural presence and quality of materials. Also provides a prominent feature in the Crewe townscape.  
The Chancel – Medium – inferior to the tower due to modern interventions. However, it does contain elements of high quality joinery in the fixtures.  
Later alterations including 1970s lean-to structure an external entrance canopy – neutral / detrimental.
- Historic Value – High – the site has been prominent in the development of Crewe and is one of the few remaining buildings from the town's foundation.

- Evidential Value – Medium / Low – while a large part of the original site has been demolished, there are opportunities to discover additional information during works.

### C.3 Designations

- The Tower is Grade II Listed and the rest of the site falls under curtilage legislation.
- The building and land remains consecrated but the Pastoral Scheme will remove the legal effects of consecration.