

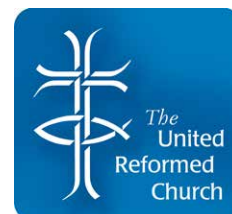
Paper L

Church House Feasibility Study

United Reformed Church Trust

Church 2014
United
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Church Church 2014

Paper L



URC Trust: Church House Feasibility Study

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Sandi Hallam-Jones s.hallam-jones@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees a feasibility study should be undertaken to explore options for the possible development of Church House.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Feasibility study for the future use and configuration of Church House
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Council has expressed concern about the infrastructural costs in the central budget • The URC Trust suggests a feasibility study for the options for possible development of Church House • Preliminary work on this idea is described • Cost of £15k-£20k can be found from existing budgets
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House Management Group; officers of Finance Committee.

Summary of Impact

Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Feasibility Study: £15 - £20k; • If works proceed then, potentially, in a range between £4m - £9m depending on the option chosen and bearing in mind that some of those costs may be defrayed by sale or lease of parts of the premises to other parties as well as savings on future running costs.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Major work on Church House might enable a small partner Church or ecumenical body to share the existing premises.

United Reformed Church Trust: Church House Feasibility Study

1 Introduction

1.1 At previous Mission Council meetings in 2012 and 2013, concern has been expressed at the failure to achieve significant savings in the infrastructure parts of the central budget to match those agreed elsewhere. One element of these costs relates to operating the existing Church House at 86 Tavistock Place in London. The URC Trust has reported on unsuccessful efforts to consider sharing office premises, and therefore costs, with partner Churches and given a commitment to Mission Council to explore ways of using Church House more efficiently.

1.2 At its meeting on 19th February 2014, the Trust considered presentations from two architectural practices (Theis & Khan and Hutson Associates) on how they would propose to approach the carrying out of a Feasibility Study, if one were to be commissioned, on the possible refurbishment and use of Church House.

1.3 The brief was to provide the URC with information which would enable decisions to be made in respect of the following:

- a reduction in running costs;
- the ability to utilise the building more effectively by the use of more open plan office space;
- the potential for a reduction in staff numbers in the future;
- the potential for creating residential unit(s) which could be sold or leased to offset or cover the development costs;
- the potential for creating separate office accommodation which could be leased to offset or cover the development costs.

2 The recommendation of the United Reformed Church Trust

2.1 Having heard the presentations from both practices, which included: their approach to the project, an initial analysis of the issues, the potential costs and the potential benefits, as well as examples of their previous work, the Trust considers that Theis & Khan (the architects responsible for the award winning work on Lumen United Reformed Church, next door to Church House) should be appointed to carry out a feasibility study.

2.2 In considering the presentations and the issue of possible works to Church House, the Trust was mindful that the ultimate decision about significant alterations to Church House would rest with Mission Council, if not General Assembly, but it felt that the Trust had a responsibility to assist the Church by researching all the options.

2.3 The Trust also took the view that, pending policy decisions to be made elsewhere, data on the possibility of creating a more flexible building with income generating potential would be of use and that Theis & Khan appeared to be a good choice for carrying out a feasibility study of Church House.

2.4 The Trust agreed that the chairman, secretary and treasurer be authorised to draw up a brief report for Mission Council, explaining that the Trust, with the support of the church house management group (CHMG) and the finance committee, was minded to commission a feasibility study from Theis & Khan to explore practical options for reducing Church House overheads, for providing modern, energy efficient, flexible office accommodation to meet changing needs in the future, and for the possibility of funding such alterations through disposal or letting of some parts of an extended building.

2.5 They also agreed that that the status of the trusteeship of Church House should be checked.

3 The feasibility study

3.1 The formal brief for the study will need to set out what the United Reformed Church wants to get out of the exercise. This will include:

- whether the project is feasible – either technically or financially;
- can the need to achieve all or any of the objectives set out in 1.3 above be best met by:
 - a building project;
 - a refurbishment;
 - an extension;
 - or a new build?
- or by changing existing work patterns and doing nothing structural;
- will the budget cover the type of building we want?

3.2 The feasibility study should set out the project's scope and should test and refine the outline brief. It usually is made up of drawings, diagrams and text.

3.3 The study will need to define the areas of detailed work that are needed to take the project forward. It should also cover the following aspects:

- technical – relating to the building or site possibilities, constraints and likely permissions required e.g. is the site/building suitable for the proposed function;
- are there any specific site problems, such as poor ground conditions, inadequate utilities, flood problems in the basement, access issues or lack of expansion space;
- financial – including initial fundraising, realism of future revenue streams and long-term cost implications;
- organisational – the ability of the organisation to do the project and any extra skills needed, e.g. who will be on the Project Board and who will manage the project?;
- programme – the length of time needed, and any phasing issues, e.g. changing one floor at a time;
- relationship of scheme to planning authority's Local Plan, and current planning policies, so as to make planning permission more likely to be granted;
- what impact the project will have on the locality.

Some of the information above will come from within the United Reformed Church, i.e. the financial and organisational capability assessment and the technical elements from the architects/surveyors etc.

3.4 The feasibility study produced will then act as an advisory document in order for the Church to decide whether or not to proceed.

3.5 Theis & Khan have given an initial estimated cost for the feasibility study of between £7,500 to £21,000, depending on the level of information required, particularly with regards to the level of detail in which alternative schemes are worked out and costed. These sums can be found from within the existing budget of the church house management group. Once the details of the amplified brief have been settled, we would expect a more precise estimate of the fee level for the project.

3.6 They also recommend that a topographical survey of the existing building be carried out to provide accurate drawings to work from. Whether this survey is included in the early stage of the Feasibility Study will influence the scope and overall cost of the study.

4 The outline brief

4.1 Once the feasibility study is completed it will then be necessary to produce an outline brief for the project if it is decided to go ahead.

4.2 Securing buy-in to the outline brief will help maintain support throughout the project's progress. A good outline brief acts as a map to help the project delivery team reach its destination. It should set out what we want to achieve from the project and how we want to go about it. It is about setting out our needs for the project, rather than setting out specific built solutions.

4.3 The brief has a role to play at all stages of the project. It will help communication between all parties: sharing information about the goals of the project will help build the relationships essential for the success of any building project. It also forms the foundation for the design.

Resolution

Mission Council agrees a feasibility study should be undertaken to explore options for the possible development of Church House.

