

Section 5

Definition of Options

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5.0.1 Introduction

The purpose of a Conservation Plan is to inform decisions about the future of a heritage asset so that due consideration is given to its cultural significance and qualities of special interest before any scheme of action is implemented. In such situations there are always choices to be made, and St Peter's Seminary Cardross is no exception. Although the extent of its current dereliction might at first sight suggest the buildings have no future such an impression would be technically incorrect and accordingly the object of this part of our brief is to try to define in systematic technical terms what options might really exist.

5.0.2

It is not the function of this study to choose an option – that decision will be for others to consider – but to set out the range of possibilities in such a way as both to identify the available responses whilst also avoiding precluding any future opportunities that may become available for the buildings despite not being capable of implementation at the current time. It is suggested that all valid options should be compatible with the assessment of significance.

5.0.3

Three generic options that are consistent with the above requirement have been identified as, respectively, The Consolidated Exhibit Option, The Holding Option and the Restoration Option. Two further 'options' are also discussed but regarded as being incompatible with the assessment of significance, The 'Do Nothing' Option and Demolition. Additionally comment is included on the proposal that is currently the subject of a Listed Building Application – The Stabilized Structure – which is also noted as being at variance with the assessment of significance.

5.1 Option 1 The Consolidated Exhibit Option

5.1.1

The objective of this option would be to secure and conserve the remaining viable fabric of the buildings and consolidate this in such a way as to achieve a meaningful public exhibit through enabling limited safe access. The property would require a commensurate maintenance and monitoring regime. The scope of works would entail achievement of an effective weather tight envelope in the main building (though not the teaching block) and the removal only of such fabric as is already detached or incapable of being made safe. Such material as was removed would be either retained on

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- 5.1.2 site as representative or re-usable fabric in cases of significance, or disposed of where consisting only of debris or hazardous material. Examples of fabric to be removed but stored on site either for possible future re-fixing or for templating future replacements would include the external balcony pc handrails, the sanctuary roof beams and the longitudinal timber header cradles respectively. Fabric retained in situ and re-secured would include pc panels (other than balcony handrails) and any sound vaults.
- 5.1.3 The objective of this option is to achieve a consolidated heritage asset that may be safely enjoyed by the public (through limited and well defined access) but without loss of any significant fabric, thereby leaving open the opportunity for a possible restoration/ re-use project at some point in the future. In other words the choice of this option would satisfy immediate conservation principles while not precluding a more ambitious later project. Clearly such a project if and when mobilized, would greatly benefit from these prior consolidation works which could significantly reduce the burden and cost of the remaining restoration.
- 5.1.4 In this respect the Option 1 strategy and proposed scope of work differ in several particulars from a previously prepared scheme termed 'the stabilized structure', currently pending as a Listed Building Application. This is due partly to the criterion that only options consistent with the assessment of significance should be regarded as valid options, and partly to the survey of the condition of the fabric in its current state. An example is the kitchen block, which in our view constitutes a significant element of the understanding of the social and operational history of the original seminary and accordingly should be retained at least as a series of buttressed walls. Another example is the scope of concrete repair work recommended for the seminary building which derives from the investigative survey carried out as part of this study. As the concrete panelling is regarded as a significant element of the architectural value of the building, the consolidation entails securing its fixings over the long term. Only the balcony handrails, which are already unsafe as an entire element, would be removed for storage.
- 5.1.5 Insofar as 'additive' work is involved this would consist of interventions necessary to prevent collapse of significant elements included in the consolidation, eg. providing a new sanctuary roof in order to stabilize the sanctuary wall.

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- 5.1.6 Other works would be related to access arrangements, eg. reinstatement of the ground floor staircase and essential health and safety measures. It would be important for appropriate interpretation measures to be included in the project to optimize public appreciation of the exhibit and promote interest in its possible re-use. (See chapter 6, for detailed scope of Option 1 works),
- 5.2 Option 2 The Holding Option
- 5.2.1 The objective of this option would be to arrest progressive damage to the buildings so as to allow a project for further reinstatement or complete restoration in the near or intermediate future. The result would leave the buildings wind and watertight and secure from further damage. It would differ from Option 1 insofar as the works would be primarily directed towards temporarily arresting further loss of significant fabric by the erection of a weather proof enclosure. The scheme would not involve producing a publicly accessible exhibit, but would be pursued essentially to 'buy time'. The period for the viability of this option would need to be defined. Too short a period would not buy sufficient time for potential new opportunities to emerge and take over. Too long a period would likely entail an uneconomic degree of investment in achieving a more permanent form of stabilisation. Subject to further discussion, a period of 5 years would seem optimum.
- 5.2.2 As in Option 1 the objective would be to retain as much as possible of the significant original fabric either in place, or in storage on site, so that any such elements of significance as might be feasible to repair and re-use would remain available to do so. Alternatively any such safeguarded items which were no longer viable could be used as templates for accurate replacements in a future project.
- 5.2.3 A characteristic of 'holding' measures is that their specification should generally take account of the design of the eventual permanent works. Criteria for the identification of 'holding measures' could be identified as follows.
- Work needed to arrest or prevent water ingress to the interior.
 - Work needed to remedy conspicuous consequential damage from active or previous water ingress defects.
 - Work needed to prevent damage from active defects becoming further entrenched and disproportionately costly to remedy.

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- Work needed to arrest deterioration of significant elements of historic fabric. (This would mean removal of an item at risk and safe storage for future work, eg. the balcony handrails.)
- Investigations needed to ascertain the extent and severity of potentially progressive defects.
- Maintenance work needed to ensure or retrieve the operational viability of services installations. (eg. site drainage)
- Works needed to ensure adequate compliance with Health and Safety requirements for safe monitoring by authorized personnel.

5.2.4

Note

It should be appreciated that in addition to the respective building works involved both Options 1 and 2 require differing parallel projects of promotion and management to produce the intended outcomes. In the case of Option 1 the new exhibit would need to be positively promoted as a safe and rewarding public offer to be enjoyed in conjunction with the associated rehabilitation of the estate as a country park. The building complex would also require a suitable management and maintenance regime to protect the investment represented by the capital works, and enable the exhibit to be promoted as a springboard for eventual full re-use.

5.2.5

In the case of Option 2 there would also be a management implication to ensure that the area inaccessible to the public remained secure. But there would be a similar and vital promotional task to maximise the marketing profile of the complex in order to attract a viable new future proposal within the holding period.

5.3

Option 3 The Restoration Option

5.3.1

This option is based upon the early identification of a viable new use and business plan for the complex. It is the most ambitious of the options, but is essential to be included and considered as a possible one. Of course it is difficult to scope such an option in detail in the absence of a specific operational programme, as there would inevitably be a measure of intervention in order to achieve both the desired arrangements and satisfy the necessary standards of technical compliance. Although the outline costings therefore assume a basic restoration scope of work it may be assumed that an actual project scope would be tailored to the requirements of the new use/s to be adopted.

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- 5.3.2 Whilst the Restoration Option is described as a single 'grand project' it should be appreciated that there may be a variety of ways to reach that ultimate objective. Of course, if it followed the implementation of Option 1, the Consolidated Exhibit, much essential repair work would have already been executed. An intermediate strategy might be identified as 'The Progressive Repair Option'. This would approach the repair of the complex as a series of phased projects, dealing with each building separately as a means of limiting outlay and risk. Such a process would seem best applied to the following sequence – convent, main building, teaching block, with external works and infrastructure in a commensurate relationship to the respective buildings. The advantages that might result from such an approach, such as trialling of repair techniques and material samples, would need to be weighed against the extended time frame entailed in accomplishing the overall rehabilitation of the complex.
- 5.3.3 This option would of course also need to be related to a specific business strategy and programme of use that made sequential completion of parts of the complex a relevant objective. But the possibility of being able to approach the challenge of rehabilitation other than by means of a single major commitment might itself enable a wider range of opportunities to be considered.
- 5.3.4 Two further points may be noted here. First, that the comprehensive archival record of the building would provide ample reference material to inform the authentic restoration of virtually any original detail where this was desired. Secondly, and notwithstanding the above resource, it should not be assumed that the Restoration Option would impose an obligation to reinstate any element of the original that was not pertinent to the proposal made for re-use. Thus whilst Option 1 being essentially orientated to providing an exhibit of the previous seminary would ideally retain elements of, for example the kitchen block, Option 3, being directly geared towards supporting a new use, might exclude retention of this building if it thwarted the viable achievement of the proposed use. The challenge, as with any constructive conservation would be to balance the demands of heritage and viability. The project would call for an imaginative and sensitive assimilation of the new needs and original significance.

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5.4 Stabilized Structure

5.4.1 This option is proposed in the current listed building consent application prepared by Messrs. CDP on behalf of the Archdiocese and Classical House and would involve removal of all roof coverings and structure (except for the sanctuary roof which would be restructured to provide lateral stability for the curved external wall), retaining pre-cast concrete components but otherwise stripping back the main buildings to their structural frame. One bay of the seminary would be restored to represent an example of the original vaulting, but otherwise the building would be open to the elements. The teaching block would be stripped back to the structural frame and left exposed. Retention of the convent would be optional, while the community room, sisters' refectory and kitchen block would all be demolished. Limited public access would be provided to the ground floor of the seminary block only. (See Supporting Planning Statement, 2004, for further details.)

5.5 The 'Do:Nothing' option

5.5.1 Although this option has not been written into the brief for consideration as such, we are obliged to include it in the study for the sake of completeness. It could be suggested that the 'Do Nothing' Option has already been being pursued de facto inasmuch as with the exception of the installation of perimeter fencing (now breached) there has been no work of any kind undertaken to the buildings themselves or their setting over a considerable number of years. The consequences of this option are effectively what currently exists on site, ie. significant and progressive damage to and loss of original building fabric, degradation of the immediate curtilage and deterioration of the wider setting generally.

5.5.2 Although this option may appear to be free of cost (and is therefore uncosted in this study), it is not free of risk. Risks (and therefore potential cost) are increasing in severity the longer the option continues. These include immediate risk of serious or fatal injury in the event of material collapse. Significant sections of the buildings are insecure, including concrete panels, extensive areas of render, vaulted ceilings, timbers at high level, and various elements of masonry. Other hazards include fallen debris, unsealed asbestos, unguarded edges and uncovered pits.

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5.5.3 At the very least immediate measures should be taken to re-secure the perimeter fencing around the buildings, address immediate public safety hazards, post hazard warning notices, and monitor site security on a regular basis.

5.5.4 The state of the wider site also presents significant risks, including uncontrolled water courses (one of which appears to be contaminated), collapsed bridge parapets and partially fallen trees. Any of these risks could materialise in an incident at any time and thus constitute a grave liability for the Archdiocese. Apart from being self-evidently incompatible with the assessment of significance, it is accordingly considered that continuation of the Do Nothing Option is perilous and unsustainable.

5.6 Demolition

5.6.1 At an interim client/stakeholder team review meeting of 27th April 2007 the project brief was extended to cover the issue of demolition. This 'option' had not previously been included and was also identified as at variance with the Assessment of Significance, which it has been the principal objective of this study to provide. Whilst it is difficult therefore to see how the existing undetermined application, whose first aim is explicitly stated as 'the stabilization of the A listed seminary buildings giving the opportunity for future re-use' could be replaced by an application for consent to demolish, since the issue has been raised in discussion consideration of demolition of the listed seminary complex is considered here in order to ensure that the study is comprehensive.

5.6.2 In this context reference is made to Historic Scotland. Memorandum of Guidance on listed buildings and conservation areas. 1998, and NPPG 18 Planning and the Historic environment, April 1999. These provide at section 2.10 and para 47 respectively that Government policy is that 'no worthwhile building should be lost to our environment unless it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it.' It can be seen that this provision embodies a number of tests to be considered in dealing with applications for demolition of a listed building, namely

- whether the building/s in question may be regarded as 'worthwhile'
- whether there has been 'demonstration beyond reasonable doubt'

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- whether 'every effort – to find practical ways of keeping it' has been exerted
- and whether the said effort/s have been exerted by 'all concerned'

- 5.6.3 These tests may be answered shortly in the following terms. First, there is evidently a sufficient consensus that the buildings are regarded as 'worthwhile', both through their statutory designation at Category A, in the considerable interest and attention they continue to command (see bibliography) and indeed in the Supporting Planning Statement itself which refers to the buildings as 'internationally important', (para 3.32) stating that 'St Peter's Seminary is widely recognized as one of Scotland's finest post-war buildings', (para.8.1). The present study also acknowledges that even in its current state it retains a considerable sum of heritage values. The recent (June 2007) addition of St Peter's Seminary to the World Monument Watch List underscores the established recognition of its importance still further.
- 5.6.4 Secondly it does not appear that there has been 'demonstration beyond reasonable doubt' in the terms suggested by the policy. Such demonstration is assumed to include the manifestation of endeavour by its owners to prevent deterioration of the building in order to maximize or maintain its chances of survival and re-usability, whereas it is reported that over a period (1983-87) efforts were directed towards its demolition including three (unsuccessful) applications to this effect. We are also not aware of any active current regime of site monitoring or management. This test may also be conjoined with the following one in regard to the range of action necessary to demonstrate effort to keep a building.
- 5.6.5 As regards satisfying the test that 'every effort to find practical ways of keeping it has been exerted', a marketing invitation was issued by Messrs Bell Ingram in March 1981. It is further understood that the principal marketing study dates from 1994 (ref. St. Peter's College, Cardross Market Assessment, prepared for Dunbartonshire Enterprise by EDAW CR Planning, 15th September 1994). However it is not clear as to the extent to which some of the more positive findings from this exercise have been followed up in active marketing, or whether concerted efforts have been made more recently on behalf of the current owner or by others. One specific enquiry that is

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reported is that developer Urban Splash who visited the complex in 2006 but declined to follow this up with any positive interest.

- 5.6.6 Whilst it is evident there has as yet been no conclusive response to the potential opportunity at St Peter's, it is noted these tests relate not to the level of market response but to the level of marketing effort. The inclusion of St Peter's on the Building at Risk Register is cited in this context. This Register, which is operated as a publicly accessible record by The Scottish Civic Trust, provides a detailed narrative of events and press coverage and has maintained an ongoing entry on St Peter's Seminary since 1990. see Appendix 12.7. The last item of correspondence of which we are aware (ref. Supporting Planning Statement, Appendix 2) dates from October 2003 and advised that Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire was unaware of any market interest in St Peter's College and would not view redevelopment as a priority. It is reported that 'marketing appraisals and initiatives have been ongoing' (3.15) and that 'the Archdiocese have sought to secure the future of the building by every possible means available' (3.29), Whilst this may still need to be formally evidenced to satisfy the relevant policy test, it is nevertheless asserted that 'market ignorance is most unlikely to lie at the heart of this very difficult issue.'
- 5.6.7 Fourthly, in this series of tests, it may be difficult to demonstrate conclusively that the said efforts have been exerted 'by all concerned'. It is clear that beyond the immediate group of stakeholders there is a wider circle of concerned parties, some of whom may be willing and able to exert further efforts to explore a beneficial future for the buildings if the only alternative was demolition.
- 5.6.8 The policy context whereby there is a presumption in favour of preservation requires that any proposal for demolition is further considered in the light of the following specific factors.
- 5.6.9 Importance
As already indicated above, the obligation to have regard to the importance of the building in question would reinforce the case for preservation in the case of St Peter's Seminary, which is Category A listed on account of its national significance. It could not be contended that the seminary, even in its current state, is of insufficient importance to justify the presumption to preserve. Aspects

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of importance suggested in the Guidance include rarity, group value, historic interest, design, plan, materials, location and technology – all of which have relevance in the case of St Peter's, as detailed in the Statement of Significance.

5.6.10

Condition

Policy also dictates that regard should be paid to the condition of the listed building, the cost of repairing it in relation to its importance and the economic value of the building when repaired. Whilst in the case of St Peter's Seminary it must be acknowledged that this test is onerous it must also be recognized that the mitigating factors of importance and outturn value make it difficult to conclude that the test is passed. In the latter case, it is currently not possible to establish a value in the absence of a suitable use model, and also of a feasibility study exploring the viability of retaining the building in active use, which NPPG 18 specifically requires (para 47). The Guidance (2.10b) goes on to emphasize that 'while most old buildings suffer from some defects it is important to distinguish between serious structural faults and less serious but frequently more obvious consequences of poor maintenance, neglect or vandalism'. All of these clearly apply at St Peter's, where despite the extensive results of neglect and vandalism the essential structural condition of the buildings is relatively sound and repairable, the principal area of damage relating to fixings rather than structure as such – as reported in the condition survey, Chapter 4.

5.6.11

Alternative Uses

Policy guidance here indicates that it would be necessary to show beyond doubt that it is not possible to adapt the existing building to any new use that would safeguard its future and benefit the community, (para 2.10c). Whilst reference to an earlier inconclusive proposal to convert the buildings to hotel use is cited as evidence of the difficulty of adaptation, it is not an inevitable inference that adaptation 'to any new use' is impossible. Other alternative proposals are known to exist and have yet to be tested. (See Appendix 12.9 - Examples of Rescue and Re-use). The current Listed Building Application has moreover indicated that even 'in use in a reduced and consolidated state the building would provide educational and heritage benefits to the community'.

5.6.12

Additionally the policy is predicated upon linkage of demolition in circumstances where the existing listed building cannot be adapted

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for re-use to replacement with a new building designed for the specified use which 'would positively enhance both the environment and the setting of other listed buildings in the area'. (para 2.10c) In this instance no such replacement scheme is proposed, so it is not possible to address the consequential test of estimating 'the extent to which the community would benefit from redevelopment'.

5.6.13 It is noted that any application for listed building consent to demolish must be notified to Scottish Ministers. At this stage it is likely to be contended that consideration of demolition does not arise from the failed endeavour to seek a beneficial future for the listed building in accordance with the prescribed policy tests, but rather from the assumption that demolition is only what the proceeds of an enabling development might buy. In such circumstances the said development would clearly not qualify for consideration as 'enabling development' as no heritage benefit would be thereby enabled.

5.6.14 Notwithstanding the above, for the purposes of providing a theoretical cost the scope of works assumes complete clearance of all surviving structures, with disposal of arisings (which will include hazardous material) in accordance with authorized procedures, and remedial landscape works. This would include necessary strengthening work to the bridge/s on the access route to accept demolition site traffic, and repairs to retaining walls to leave a permanently safe site.