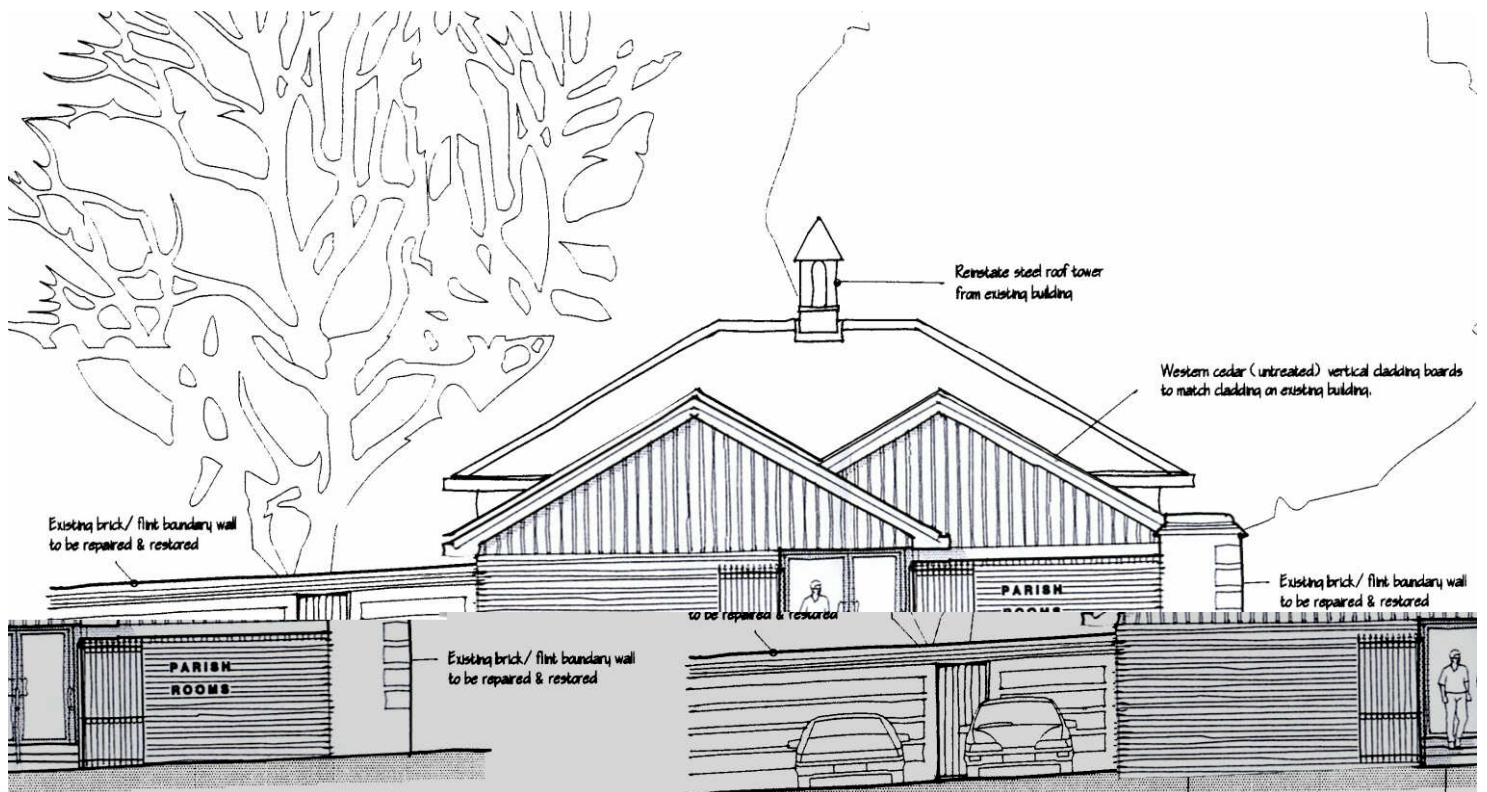




Blandford Church Hall

A New Hall for Blandford Forum - June 2007

We've Got It !!



BFPC Has Permission For New Hall

We have heard this week that we have succeeded in our application to demolish the old Church Hall and build a new one.

The North Dorset planners have given the project the go ahead after a series of meetings with the Rector and the Church

Architect to iron out last minute issues. Having looked at the

applications, the planning officers agreed that the plans were the most appropriate for the building and agreed to the decision under the "delegated powers" group - which meant we did not even have to prove our case at a meeting!

A New Hall for Blandford

What happened...? So what now ... ?

Blandford Forum Parish Church launched a Campaign in the Spring of 2006 to seek the demolition of the Church Hall (known to some as the Church Rooms) in The Tabernacle area of the town and replace it with a purpose-built amenity which could be used by the Church as well as by other groups in the town. The public got behind the idea with over 1700 signatures being added to a petition in support of the idea. An application to demolish was taken to North Dorset District Council in September but was rejected as no plans for a replacement building were put forward. In months since then, the Church and NDDC have been working together to find a way forward and the important factor was in April, when NDDC planning officers indicated that they could no longer see justifiable reasons to oppose the applications. As a result, discussions took place to clarify issues such as emergency escape routes, the protection of trees and even confirming the non-presence of bats in the current building !



Prepare to Say Goodbye !

Now that formal approval has been given, we can begin to draw up detailed plans for the building and address the financial issues involved. A subcommittee of the PCC has been formed, namely the "Hall Steering Group" (HSG), which has been in place since March 2007, with a brief to carry the project through to it's completion. They will now be working with the Architect to do this.

Some questions you may have ...

- **What sort of Time Scale are we talking?**
It is hoped that the new hall will be up and running by the end of Summer 2008.
- **And the Cost?** Whilst a significant amount of the cost of a new hall is in place thanks to the sale of a house, a large amount of money is still to be raised. But we believe that God has got us this far and this will not prove a major hurdle. Financial support will be sought from community groups and trust funds, as well as a Gift Day at BFPC later on this year.
- **What else needs Planning?** The outside has been agreed and plans for the inside of the building are almost complete, but there will be a lot of questions about decor, about equipment and about 101 other things. That is one of the things the HSG will be looking into in the coming months.
- **When can we start?** A small case of Japanese Knotweed has been identified in the grounds of the Hall and this will need to be dealt with before clearing and demolition can begin. So there will be a small delay!
- **But we're on our way ... !**

And Thanks ...!

There are many people that we already need to thank for helping us to get to this point in the process: special thanks go to John Turnbull, our wonderful Architect, who has been an advisor and friend to the PCC throughout the process, but thanks also to the 1700+ people who signed the petition, the dozens who wrote letters, the schools, churches and community groups who supported the application, the Town Council and Members of NDDC ... we had better stop there before it sounds like an Oscar acceptance speech and we start mentioning Dogs and Hairdressers!!



Above all, we give thanks and praise to God for his wisdom and guidance through the tortuous process of the past couple of years!