

Applications for Financial Assistance (Historic Buildings Grants) from the Conservation and Heritage Fund for Maer Village Hall, Maer (Ref: 22/23001/HBG) and St James Church Hall, Audley (22/23002/HBG)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the following grants be approved:-

- 1. £ 3,423 Historic Building Grant be given towards external stonework repairs and roof repairs to Maer Village Hall.**
- 2. £ 5,000 Historic Building Grant to be given towards roof repairs and window repairs at St James Church Hall, Audley.**

Purpose of report

To enable members to consider the applications for financial assistance.

1. Maer Village Hall

The hall is located in the centre of Maer village and was the former school built by the Harrison family in the 19th century. The application is for assistance to help pay for repair works to external stone walls and the roof and repointing at Maer Village Hall.

The Hall committee have received advice and a specification of work from a heritage accredited architect to deal with the red sandstone, which has eroded and is very friable in places and needs dressing back and re-facing and repointing with a lime mix. Some roof tiles have also slipped or are missing and the ridge tiles need rebedding. There is also potential work to the chimney flashing which will be investigated once the scaffolding is in place.

Two quotations have been received. The total cost of this work is £34,236 including VAT.

The church hall is a historic building within Maer Conservation Area, and the work is eligible for 10% grant towards the cost which equates to £3,423.

2. St James Church Hall, Audley

The listed building includes a house and attached church hall, built in a gothic style in the late 19th century of red brick and forms a group with the attached terraces. It lies within the Audley Conservation opposite the church. It was originally built as the National School and the school master's house. The application includes a comprehensive heritage statement which describes in much detail the state of the buildings including plans and the complex issues which have arisen over the years and the core of the proposed works.

There is evidence to show that some of the original construction practices were flawed, however aesthetically this group of buildings contribute significantly towards the quality of the environment and to the conservation area. They are also invaluable to the community and are well used providing a vital income to the church.

There was essentially a defect with a roof purlin over the main hall during some planned repair works and other defects were found, showing another defective repair of a purlin

which was exacerbating the instability of the whole roof. Purlins were generally undersized for the job they needed to do and two roof trusses have significant splits in them where 1990s tie beams had been bolted to them and were now twisted and no longer structurally viable. In addition rafters were found to be considerably undersized as well as sections of failing rafters as well as the ridge board showing significant deflection. This has caused the fascia and wall plate to dislodge and the external wall had also bowed. All this movement meant that the roof was also leaking. The consulting engineer deemed the building unsafe and all work stopped for analysis of the best way forward. The method is an improved structural approach to allow original trusses to be secured and retained whilst stabilising the overall structure.

The grant application is for emergency repairs and partial replacement of the church hall roof structure and coverings and associated repair and redecoration of window and roof and chimney repairs to the attached dwelling. Although the contractors were on site, the level of work required continued to unfold and was more extensive than originally planned for so a new scheme and new costings were put forward. The church have managed to get an emergency loan from Lichfield Diocese for this additional work.

The total cost of the works including fees and VAT is £149,000 meaning 20% of these costs would be over £29,000. As the maximum grant given is capped at £5,000 it is proposed to offer the maximum amount to the church.

The church contacted the council in 2021 to ask for financial assistance but at this point in time, due to covid-19, all money had been withdrawn from the fund. The fund was reinstated recently and while some of the works have begun on site and the scheme is not completely retrospective, it seems applicable that the Fund assists the church in the costs of the repair of the Hall.

The Conservation Advisory Working Party will consider both of the grants at its next meeting on 12th July 2022 and its views will be reported to the committee.

Financial Implications

Historic buildings and structures are entitled to apply for up to a maximum of £5,000 from the Conservation and Heritage Grant Fund. The intervention rate is 20% of the cost of the work for Listed Buildings and 10% for historic buildings on the Local Register or in Conservation Areas.

10% of the cost of the repair work to Maer Village Hall is £3,423. In the case of St James Church Hall, the maximum grant of £5,000 is eligible work. A total of £8,423 for both grants.

There is sufficient funding to meet this grant application with a little under £10,991 in the Fund; allowing for commitments. This will leave £2,568 available to offer subsequent heritage assets within the Borough.