

APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (HISTORIC BUILDINGS GRANTS) FROM THE CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE FUND

Purpose of Report

To consider an application for financial assistance towards the cost of the repair of the following buildings of special architectural and historic interest.

Recommendation

That the Planning Committee approves a grant of £537 for the 4 chest tombs, St Marys Church, Mucklestone, subject to the usual criteria.

Chest Tombs in the Churchyard of the Church of St Mary, Mucklestone, (Ref: 12/13002/HBG)

The request for a grant is towards the cost of repairing 4 historic sandstone chest tombs in the churchyard. One of the tombs (the Birchall memorial) is Listed in its own right (Grade II) and the churchyard sits within Mucklestone Conservation Area. The Church itself is Listed Grade II*.

The churchyard is a “closed” one and the Borough Council is responsible for the maintenance and health and safety of the area. Some of the memorials and tombs have been identified as being unstable and it was suggested that 3 of the chest tombs should be laid flat by the Council’s ground maintenance team. The Council’s Conservation Officer and the parishioners were reluctant to accept this as the character and appearance of the structure as a chest tomb is part of its significance, not as a flat gravestone. The Parochial Church Council have sought Church Faculty approval for works of repair and raised some funds to undertake the work.

The stonework of the individually Listed tomb is damaged and will be repaired with new buff stonework. The other three memorials require re-fixing and new stainless steel dowels to restore the joints. The Parochial Church Council has worked to find the funding to retain and repair the chest tombs and it is considered that this project should be supported as without such support, many such tombs will no longer be visible in our churchyards. The Parochial Church Council are using Parochial Church funds of £1,064 and the Council’s grounds maintenance team is contributing £300 (this being the sum that they would have to spend anyway were they to lay flat the tombs).

The work is estimated as costing £2,685 including VAT. Works to Listed Buildings can, in accordance with the agreed criteria of the Grant scheme, be supported by up to a 20% grant (up to a maximum figure of £10,000). Initially the view was taken that the maximum grant available here would be £321 because only one of the tombs is individually Listed, but on further reflection, on the basis that even the tombs that are not individually Listed are still “curtilage Listed Buildings”, the maximum available grant would be £537 (i.e. 20% of the total cost). When consulted the Conservation Advisory Working Party resolved that the Planning Committee be recommended to approve a grant of this amount.

Financial Implications

There is sufficient funding to meet this grant application at £69,000 in the fund, which allows for commitments.

Conclusions

This grant application meets all the Council’s criteria for the repair and restoration of the heritage asset.