

ST KATHERINE'S SITE UPDATE

Report By: Cultural Services Manager

Wards Affected

Ledbury and surrounding area

Purpose

1. To clarify the current position regarding progress in developing St Katherine's in Ledbury into an integrated Library and Info Shop.

Financial Implications

2. Possibility of increased costs.

Background

3. As part of a first phase project, plans are in place to improve facilities at St. Katherine's in Ledbury to create an integrated Library and Info Shop. This would create a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant Library for Ledbury and a generally better layout for customers. The original plan was to start work this autumn / winter but that will not be achieved because of the considerations required of the building.
4. An independent Conservation Report was commissioned to assess the historic fabric of the St Katherine's buildings. This report has shown that the buildings are of significant heritage importance to the County. Parts of the building date back to the early 15th Century, though the site was used before that date as a place of "hospitality" for travellers, the elderly, infirm and terminally ill. Combined with its age, the building is historically important, surviving dissolution of 1547 and containing traditional building methods in good condition. Based on detailed research, evidence from paintwork and a Tree-ring Study on the wood contained within the building, the report recommends that only certain areas should be subject to alteration English Heritage has seen the site and suggested at the time that some of the internal wall could be removed even though the building is Grade II* listed.
5. Before the Conservation Report was received there were existing issues over the best use of the space as a unit of small rooms it does not provide the best solution in terms of an integrated front line service, security and flow of visitors. The security risk can be partly overcome through the installation of CCTV. In addition consideration needs to be made regarding the ICT provision. The initial budget made no provision for ICT or project management and the current network upgrade project has made no provision for St Katherine's. A special provision would need to be made at the site with additional investment implications. All of these issues, have delayed the project with a more likely start date of June / July 2006.
6. The second stage of the project would be to utilise the whole of the building, including upstairs to incorporate other services on the one site and to highlight the

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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historic significance of the building. This would be dependent on a Heritage Lottery Fund application.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report be noted and any views the Committee may wish to express be forwarded to the Cabinet Member (Community Services) for consideration.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.