

The Coach House Project

The Parish Council has reluctantly decided not to proceed with its attempt to rebuild the Coach House.

Despite initial enthusiasm and some financial contributions from the community, it soon became apparent that an informal approach relying on voluntary labour and donated materials was not going to be viable.

We therefore decided to adopt a more formal approach and establish a working group which initially planned to apply to the Architectural Heritage Fund for financial aid and administrative assistance.

After much discussion and several meetings, we decided against this approach as it would have cost us £7500 to get to the Planning Application stage; and with no guarantee of success.

At a follow-up meeting we were advised by a local architect that a better approach would be to demolish the existing building, which was already suffering from several instances of subsidence, put in a concrete raft and rebuild it.

Drawing up plans for this would have cost about £3-5000.

We also approached Taunton Deane's planning department, and, for a fee, they gave us some pre-planning application advice.

Whilst not ruling out approval straightaway, they did raise several issues.

Amongst the most important were related to Highways. The site is extremely close to the main road, has no parking, and is in between the set of two traffic lights on the bridge.

Additionally, they advised that for the limited use to which the Coach House was going to be put, a more suitable venue would be preferable, especially as the Coach house is in a Flood Zone 3 ie liable to flooding.

We have only ever thought that the rebuilt Coach House would be suitable for an unmanned information centre and felt that the estimated cost and effort involved were not justified.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that we plan to take down the building and use the bricks to provide a flat covered area which could incorporate some display boards, benches and planting. We plan to start this work in the spring when the weather will be drier.

In the meantime, anyone who has contributed to the original project can receive a refund if they ask the Clerk (Debbie House). Otherwise we will use the contributions to fund the new plans.

We will always be pleased to receive your comments or suggestions.

David Graham

