



ASHTON COURT MANSION

An offer to Bristol City Council - our proposal

What BCS offers – what we can deliver

We propose that we lead a year of study, debate and conversations. Possibly September 2023 to 2024. We think it will take this long to explore all opportunities. It's a complex challenge. If it was easy, it would have happened already.

We offer to hold events, talk to all those having an interest, explore all possible avenues. Generate publicity, excitement, ideas. We undertake to circulate regular updates so that everyone knows what is going on – no surprises.

We plan to hold quarterly open events to maintain momentum, exchange views, report on progress, and generally to generate publicity.

There is a precedent for this proposal. We held serious talks with the Church Commissioners about taking St Michel's on the Mount Without (prior to the fire) with aim of opening up the building, holding events and generating interest in its long-term restoration and reuse.

What we ask from BCC

In return we ask BCC to grant us an agreement for 12 months regarding the future of ACM. And letting us have access to relevant information, such as finances. And with no cost to BCC.

The Challenge

The Mansion has been owned by Bristol City Council since 1959. Most of it has been closed since 2017 and approximately two thirds are derelict.

Bristol City Council clearly doesn't have the funds or resources to tackle the restoration of even part of Ashton Court Mansion (ACM).

Time for action

At the moment there is no clarity over the long term future of ACM. This needs sorting before there is further serious physical deterioration or even a disastrous fire. Sorting out the long term future of ACM is very challenging and needs proper thought and discussion, a City wide conversation. There should be extensive debates and investigations, exploring both old and completely new ideas and initiatives. Time is needed to explore and to develop potential partnerships.

Why Bristol Civic Society (BCS)?

BCS is not the answer for the future of ACM. BCS can't tackle such a significant project. But BCS can stimulate and facilitate debate. We are good at this. An honest broker. With resources and enthusiasm to sort out the future of ACM. We have been involved with ACM since the 1970s and helped organise two public meetings – in 2017 and 2018. We were also on the stakeholder group for the major study of the Mansion – Ashton Court – Conservation Management Plan. We have a very longstanding interest.

The Outcome

The most positive outcome would be a report to BCC setting out a sustainable plan for the future of ACM. We don't know if we will be able to achieve this but our plan gives the best possible way of achieving progress.

Let us have the opportunity.

Simon Birch

Chair, Bristol Civic Society

1st May 2023