

St John's Buildings Taskgroup – report to the January 2022

St John's District Church Council

Members: Tim Edwards, Anne Hewett (sec), Stephen M'Caw (chair), John McLennan, Chris Pocock and Graham Shaw.

Meetings:

The group has since the summer of 2021, met in person on six occasions: 4th Oct; 18th Oct; 8th Nov; 6th Dec 2021; 8th and 15th Jan 2022, not always with everyone present.

The discussion has centered on the options appraisal drawings from the Architect Clare Younger – going through them in detail and formulating the best way forward for the St John's District Church Council's (DCC) consideration and then the Church congregation.

Background:

After the pass-it-on campaign in the autumn of 2017, during which comments were collected about the building, the DCC set up a task group in January 2019 to consider improvements to the building.

However, the situation is now different: the Church of England has committed itself to being carbon neutral by 2030, and there has been changes in the congregation and in society as a consequence of COVID.

This means St John's Church is in a different situation, and needs to respond differently.

The options appraisal drawings from the Architect Clare Younger were received in June 2021.

The current task group is the successor of the original task group (albeit with a reduced membership of only six).

The principles underlying the proposed Changes to the Church building:

- 1. To be undertaken in the context of prayer and wide consultation**
 - We need continuing prayer in order to be in step with the Holy Spirit
 - We need consultation with the St John's DCC and Church congregation
 - We need consultation with wider community
- 2. Need to meet the needs of every type of worship**
 - Any changes must meet the needs of the variety of worshipping congregations within the family of St John's
 - Any changes must meet the needs of funerals, weddings, baptisms, civic services, school services and informal services
 - We need a large flexible space
- 3. To be open and user friendly to all of Keynsham**
 - Seek to make the building more accessible to the wider Keynsham community and as an available and useful space
 - Make it warm, welcoming, comfortable and open
- 4. Reducing the Church's carbon footprint**
 - The Church of England is committed to being carbon neutral by 2030, and therefore we need to make St John's Church and Parish Hall, carbon neutral buildings.
- 5. This is a once in a generation project**
 - This is a big project looking at the Church building as a whole
 - This would take time and energy for the whole Church
 - This would involve the exercising of our faith in God

- The aim is to look at the whole site including the outside of St John's and the grounds around it.
- To be mindful of the Parish Hall in the process.

Suggested approach for the St John's DCC to follow in the next few months:

Overview of the process: to offer the options appraisal plans and the principles above, and journey together as a whole community of St John's.

1. Offer the Church the five main principles above
2. Offer the options appraisal plans as blue-sky thinking. None of the plans are definite, or complete on their own, but they offer a whole range of ideas to help the Church as whole come up with a priority list for reordering, (see paragraph 2 below for the suggested priority list.)
3. Invite all the congregation to go on a journey together and be part of the process.

Process in detail:

1. Two parallel presentation events to the congregation, covering:

- The background to where we are
- Delineate and explain the five principles.
- Offer a clear commentary on the option's appraisal plans.
- Invite the Church to begin the journey by defining the priorities for reordering

Two events give a greater likelihood for people to be able to attend one of them, perhaps one on a Saturday morning and one on a weekday evening. The Architect Claire Younger could be invited to be at one of these, or she could be invited to a meeting later in the process.

These two meetings to be followed by a time of Church consultation and prayer in a variety of ways over the course of 2-3 months. During this time a consensus for a list of the key priorities for the reordering of the Church building will be determined.

2. Suggested priority list

The taskgroup, being mindful of the big changes that have affected the Church since 2019 (when the taskgroup was set up), has worked through the options appraisal plans in detail and offer the following analysis. Please note, these are the views of only a few Church members and are not offered as a definite list, however they do draw on the congregational and DCC views raised by the pass-it-on campaign in 2017, and the DCC vision meeting in the leisure centre in 2020.

High Priority

- No loss of worship space or seating capacity
- A flexible worship space by removing some, or all, of the nave and side aisle pews and replacing with chairs
- A breakout room near the back of Church which can be used for a variety of purposes, e.g. a meeting space without having to heat the whole church, a creche/children's space with sound and vision provided of the service.
- New tower end entrance: to be more welcoming, to modernise the appearance and cut down heat loss from draughts
- A carbon neutral heating system
- A servery or kitchenette
- A prayer corner

- Improved storage space, to minimise clutter
- Landscaping of the churchyard

Middle Priority

- Toilet facilities within the church

Low Priority

- A gallery at the back of church – with or without a glazed screen underneath. (A gallery may be required to preserve seating capacity for worship if breakout room, servery and toilet have decreased it significantly.)
- Reordering the chancel

Not a priority

- Significant external extensions to the Church building
- Moving the organ
- Opening a door, or forming a window, in the north wall
- Changing the north side Lady chapel
- A covered walkway to the Hall
- Moving the large font from its present position
- A newbuild vestry

One possible illustration of the practical outworking of the priorities list:

- The west-end tower entrance to be modernised with a proper draft lobby, and doors which enhance welcome and outreach
- A carbon neutral heating system
- The nave and aisles to be cleared of pews and replaced with moveable seating
- The addition of a Kitchenette/Servery in the northwest corner of the nave and possibly a toilet too
- Multifunctional breakout room/children's corner/creche in the southwestern corner of the nave.

NB The high altar is at the east end of the Church, Station Road is on the north side of the Church.

3. The DCC should reconstitute the taskgroup to take this forward, adding to the existing group and giving it a wider representation from within the Church.

4. The St John's Churchyard to be modernised and the space to be incorporated within the final phase of the High Street development. The St John's end of the High Street has not had funding allocated or plans drawn up, and is at an early stage. St John's Church has expressed clear interest in being involved.

A Possible Timeline:

It is envisaged the journey through to completion of the project might look something like this and take at least five years:

Possible timing	Stage of the journey
3 months	Discovering the Vision As mentioned above presentation to the Church community and discernment of the key priorities for reordering
9 months	Developing the Vision Re-formation of a taskgroup to work with the Architect Clare Younger & Diocesan Church Buildings Advisor Emma Brown to bring plans forward for consideration
12 months	Refining the Vision Consultation with the Church community, users of the Church building and the whole community to decide on a definitive plan
Also, simultaneously with refining the vision and continuing onwards	Funding the Vision Costing the project and beginning publicity and events for fundraising and grant applications
12 months	Permitting the Vision Obtaining Diocesan faculty permission. Obtaining funds to enable us to proceed and then tenders for the work.
2 years	Delivering the Vision Reordering work takes place

Proposal agreed by the DCC

The St John's District Church Council proposes to:

- 1) to accept the five principles of the Buildings Taskgroup**
- 2) to follow the process outlined above by the Buildings Taskgroup**
- 3) to embark on a major reordering project**
- 4) to offer the congregation the principles, priorities - along with the options appraisals, and process outlined above, and journey together as a whole community of St John's.**
- 5) to reconstitute the taskgroup to take this forward.**