

Statement of Significance – Major projects

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This document must be accompanied by the Standard Information Form 1A

Section 1: The church in its urban / rural environment.

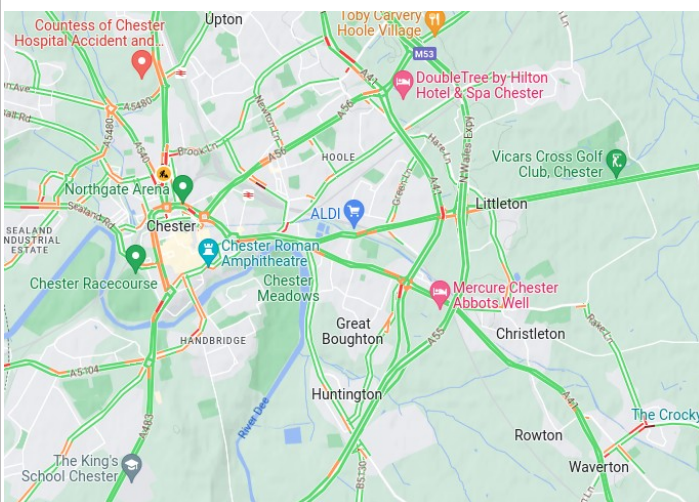
1.1 Setting of the Church

The parish of Christleton, lying 3 miles east of the City of Chester, serves 5 communities; Christleton, Littleton, Rowton, Cotton Abbotts, and Cotton Edmonds. St James is sited at the centre of the semi rural Christleton village whose history can be traced with certainty to the Domesday Book, which contains an entry for Christleton, though there is evidence of earlier occupation.

The setting of the church is considered as pivotal to the 'chocolate box' nature of the village which was named as one of the best places to live in the North West in 2022 by the Sunday Times who said "It's beautiful, much loved by its residents, has excellent schools right on the doorstep and a shop, café and excellent pubs" [1].

Many of the surrounding buildings near the centre of the village are substantial and complementary in style and age. There are two significant groupings of modern, mixed style housing also close to the church on its NW side.

Around 50 new substantial family houses are being built c. 200 metres to the west of the church, and there are significant local plans to



re-site the high school and develop 70 acres of housing in Christleton in the next 5 to 10 years. This would increase the parish population by around 50%.

The inner circular churchyard suggests a church has existed on the site of St James before the 7th Century [2]. It has since expanded to the north, west, and south sides to cover c. 2-3 acres with 4000+ records in the last 200 years alone.

There are 7 commonwealth war memorials, a war memorial (grade II) from the Great War of 1914-8, and a number of significant family memorials in the churchyard (including the grade II listed headstone of William Huggins and members of his family dated 1884).

The Lych gate serves as the main entrance to the church, and is a grade 2 listed structure designed by the renowned Victorian Architect William Butterfield, and built from ashlar red sandstone and timber framing with a Welsh slate roof and a red tile bridge.

The church (grade II*), also designed by Butterfield aside from the 15th Century Tower, is bounded by sandstone walls to the south, west, and east, with a fence to the north. There is also a grade 2 listed sundial, thought to date from the mid-late 18th Century, in the southern churchyard.

1.2 The Living Churchyard

What is the significance of the natural heritage of the site?

A professional tree survey was conducted in 2022, and shows 52 trees. Of these 52, approximately half are mature Yew trees. The trees of the site were found to be in reasonable/typical condition for their age and species. No ancient, very prominent, rare or unusual trees have been noted to us.

As noted, the churchyard is a significant size, around 2- 3 acres, and well maintained; perhaps over-maintained in recent years. Its relevance as a good habitat for flora and fauna is growing in response to our recent, c. 2 years ago, commitment to safeguarding the integrity of creation through the implementation of re-wilding the older sections of the churchyard. This project is young, but the early signs are positive with sightings of, not least, Wrens, Robins, and Brown Hawker's.

At the same time, around 3 years ago, we built a bug hotel to encourage biodiversity which is sited near the north-west wall of the church.

1.3 Social History

What is the historic and present use of the church and churchyard by the congregation and wider community? How does this contribute to its significance?

The information, social and otherwise, about the village of Christleton, of which St James is a part, is contained in two histories [2, 3], extensively researched and written by Christleton Local History Group and his members.

There is a continuous record of clergymen from 1215, and record of pastoral offices from 1600. A severe plague blighted the communities in 1603-5. The church was used as a look out post during the English Civil War.

In the late 19th and early 20th Century (1869-1911), Lionel Garnett (Rector) oversaw “a period of great advancement in church and community care” [3, p. 64]. There was great entanglement between church and village life. Garnett was instrumental in initiating community sports teams, flower and vegetable shows, and a parish magazine. Garnett was greatly supported by Lucy Anne Ince (the Townsend Ince/Currie family lived at Christleton Hall from the early 1700s to 1910) who funded many of his projects in the village including the rebuilding of the church. Lucy died in 1903 and was a member of the Fuller Meyrick family of Sussex, descendant’s of Sir Francis Drake.

At the same time, the existence of family chapels, pews, dedicated windows in the 18th Century, and significant family memorials in Victorian times suggest the church was used by wealthy Liverpool and Manchester merchants who had set up home in Christleton. Other significant families and personalities of the time include: The Mayers family, which included prominent bellringers, local builders, and educators. The Dixons of Littleton family, whose head Thomas Dixon was a timber merchant. Among their acts of charity towards the villages, was their establishment of the Dixon’s Almshouses in Christleton – initially for the poor residents of Littleton.

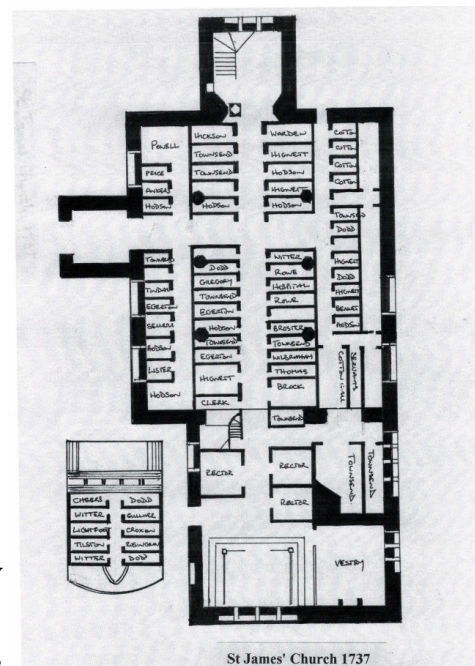
The congregation declined over the 50 years following Garnett, before being revitalised around the 1960-1970s and, in the late 1970s, remained “the pivot of local life’ [3, p. 64], with an electoral roll of 466. Currently, the church’s electoral roll is around 180. Hence, a decline of around 60% in the last 20 years or so. It is used for daily worship, and many of the ceremonies and festivals of the last 120 years are still around or recognizable in form, e.g., village show. However, they have been secularised and the church’s involvement is minimal. This is beginning to change slowly. But the church is clearly no longer the pivot of village life, although it attracts a significant sized congregation for a semi-rural community.

1.4 The church building in general

Provide a description of the church.

As noted, the inner circular churchyard suggests a church has existed on the site of St James before the 7th Century [4]. There are no details about this church.

Local history research notes it is almost certain a wooden building existed by the 14th Century, and the present red sandstone tower is thought to be from the second church built in 1484; overseen by Rector Thomas. There are no formal records of the building of this first stone church, but local stone from nearby Christleton and Waverton quarries was used. Research indicates the church grew to include two chapels; ‘Breton or Cholmondeley Chapel’ and ‘Cotton or Venables’ [2 ,p. 40]. The former was thought to be in ruins by 1619.



The church was damaged in the English Civil War (1642-45), and this resulted in the nave and chancel being rebuilt in Georgian Style in 1736; overseen by Rector Smallridge, as shown in the Figure above. This church included the Cotton chapel, and includes evidence of a larger chapel belonging to the Townsend family. Robert Townsend was an ironmonger in Chester, and prominent landowner in Christleton.

Thomas Dixon (father of Thomas Dixon commemorated in the Tower) got permission to erect a gallery at the north end of the church in 1811 for the use of his family and servants. This was reached through a small door in the tower (used as choir vestry). It is thought this gallery was removed as a result of the roof collapse in 1873 now detailed.

Part of the church roof collapsed in 1873, and this led to a substantial rebuild of the church nave and chancel under the oversight and influence of Rector Garnett in 1876 who employed the design services of the distinguished Victorian architect William Butterfield who was prominent in the Gothic Revival in England and sometimes noted as the Oxford movement's most original architect [5].

The church is built in ashlar red (from local quarries in Delamere and Waverton) and white (Stourton Hill, Wirral) sandstone with a green slate roof. Its plan consists of a nave and chancel in one range with a clerestory, north and south aisles, a south porch, side chapels to the chancel, and a west tower. The tower is in two stages with diagonal buttresses and a stair turret at the southeast angle.

The church is a grade 2* listed building, and one of nearly 100 Butterfield churches in England; the only one in Cheshire. It embodies an architectural realism which includes a clear expression of materials in colourful contrasts of textures and patterns which constitute a "structural polychromy" which became the fashion of the late Victorian period. In considering the theological 'message' communicated by the exterior and interior of the church one might relate it to the Oxford movement which sought the renewal of 'catholic' thought and practice within the Church of England, and placed a greater emphasis on ceremony and ritual. This would not be recognisable today, with the church and its building and given its semi-rural context, desiring to embrace a diversity of traditions and theologies.

A plan detailing the location of the heating and lighting is given in supporting documentation – heatingLighting.pdf. The lighting is electric, and was installed post World War 2, possibly in the 1950s. The church is heated by gas, through 2 boilers (one an auxiliary in case the other fails). The boiler was last replaced 7 years ago, and the radiators within the church possibly date from the 1960s/1970s. The Nave and chancel lights use modern energy saving bulbs.

1.5 The church building in detail

Assess the significance of either each historical phase of the building or of each area within it. For example, north aisle, south chancel elevation, Norman tower

The church comprises a late 15th Century tower, and the rest was rebuilt and designed by William Butterfield between 1874-7. The building is made of ashlar red sandstone, with a green slate roof. The church detail is formed as follows.

Exterior:

- Nave and chancel in one range
- North and south aisles, south porch, sidechapels to chancel and a 2-stage west tower.
- Aisles have rectangular windows of 2 or 3 cusped lights with similar 2-light windows in the clerestory.
- Gabled porch with arched entrance on engaged columns.
- Tall gabled and buttressed side chapel has a 3-light window with cusped tracery. Similar tall 2-light window in the chancel and a 3-light east window.
- Tower has diagonal buttresses and a stair turret at the south-east angle.
- 3-light west window and a 2-light louvred bell opening.
- Gargoyle rainspouts below an embattled parapet.
- The shingled pyramidal cap is Butterfield's addition.

Interior:

- Decorated with red and white sandstone.
- 5-bay nave arcades of double chamfered arches on octagonal piers. The clerestory windows are over the piers and all the windows have wooden lintels.
- A wagon roof is sprung from stone corbels.
- Tall narrow triple-chamfered tower arch where plaster mimics the white stone.
- Wrought iron chancel screen beneath a hanging wooden screen.
- The panels of coloured stonework continue into the chancel and have a chequerboard pattern added in the upper portion.
- 2 bay arcades to the side chapels with the sanctuary beyond.
- This has a large alabaster reredos with cusped and quatrefoil panels filled with mosaic. Above, the roof contains painted quatrefoil panels.
- West window of 1877 by Gibbs and much of the other glass by Kempe 1884-1904.
- Large painted panels of the royal arms dated 1665, by Randle Holme III (Pevsner and Hubbard).
- The red sandstone came from Waverton quarry and the white from Stourton Hill.

1.6 Contents of the Church

Provide a description of its contents and their significance. It is reasonable to group these if there is a contemporary scheme which is significant as such, for example one could say a complete scheme of 18th-century furnishings, of high significance.

Porch: Brass plaque commemorating the lives of Canon Gorst and the Sellers family

of Littleton. The latter great benefactors to the church and village; John Sellers founded the first school in Christleton in 1779 which was sited at the southern, front aspect of the church which is currently a grassed area. It was resited in the 1890s to where the current parish hall is.

South West Window: This window is dated 1896, and was restored in 1987 by Mr Twigg. It depicts St Catherine, and is in memory of Catherine Hartford (nee Fleming) who died in 1886.

Pelican: A carved wooden pelican (or swan?) feeding her young sits above the churchwarden pews at the West end of the church. It used to be the centre-piece of a wooden reredos over the altar table in the 1737 building, and was carved by an unknown local artist.

Pews: The fine two churchwarden pews and the vergers' pew at the west end of the church 'probably date from the 1880s' [4]. They are comparable in design to the single pew sited in the sanctuary. The North aisle comprises 11 pew benches of ~ 170 cm length. The South aisle comprises 15 pew benches of ~ 130cm length. The North inner aisle comprises 15 pew benches of lengths between 173 – 264 cm. The South inner aisle comprises 13 pew benches of lengths between 158 and 232 cm. Comparing these North, South, North Inner, and South Inner pews (see figure below) to those found in three other Butterfield churches reveals they have a different structure, less detail, and are not of the highest quality, however, likely have had designer input, see, e.g., supporting documentation – pews 2.pdf; especially in comparison with the churchwarden and vergers pew stalls. It is entirely possible this designer input was from Butterfield himself – this is our assumption, though we have no evidence to make this claim definitive. The nave pews contain prayer kneelers. The chancel area contains two Rector stalls, and 4 pew benches for the choir. Consultation of parish records, county office records, and an expert suggest a reasonable working assumption is the pews were changed at the time of the restoration of the church by William Butterfield, and therefore likely had his design input (see supporting documentation for further discussion). Moreover, further research is unlikely to yield further definitive information and change this working assumption.



Tower, West Baptistry Window: This window, in memory of Theodosia Fanny Lace, was designed by Alexander Gibbs in 1877, with the theme of Jesus welcoming children. It is said that the Lace family were patrons of the window, and their faces are reflected in the design.

Tower, Thomas Dixon tablet: sited on north wall of tower. It commemorates Thomas Dixon a merchant of Littleton, founder of one of the first banks in Chester, sheriff of Chester in 1813, Mayor in 1842, and churchwarden.

Tower, Bells: The tower houses 8 bells (a peal), which originate from 1743 and were last re-hung in 1927 when a major re-design of the bell chamber took place. They were cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester. A major restoration project was undertaken in 2019 which involved the cleaning of bearings and housings, clapper repair, and repainting the bell frame. The bells are highly regarded in the Chester district, with the Mayers family involved for over 150 years.

The Font: Made of crinoidal limestone from Derbyshire, on a base of Sicilian marble. Commissioned by William Butterfield in London at a cost of £45.7s.6d. Crinoidal limestone is much in evidence in rooms and corridors at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, as well as the sanctuary of the church. The oak font cover, with designs by Dr Vincent Tonge, was dedicated in March 2002 in memory of Canon Gordon Robinson.

North West corner, North Aisle Bookcase: A modern wooden bookcase in the unused children's area.

The Royal Arms (North Aisle): The work of Randle Holmes, Major of Chester during the Civil War, to commemorate the return to the throne of the monarchy in the person of Charles II in 1665.

Kempe Windows

We believe there are 10 Kempe windows. Charles E Kempe was a young artist based in the Cotswolds who worked at the same time as William Morris during the great revival of English art in the reign of Queen Victoria. He designed and made over 4000 windows, and is recognised as one of the greatest influences in stained glass window design of that period. His trademark is a sheaf of corn and use of peacock feathers in his designs. However, several of St James' windows also have a tower on top of the sheaf, which dates them from 1907 when the company changed its name after his death.

- 1903: East Window: Three lights; St James the Great and St Mary, Christ the King and Crucifixion, and St Werburgh and St John.
- 1909: South (S) Chancel: Two lights; Jeremiah and Zechariah.
- 1898: S Transept East (E): Two lights; King David and Isaiah
- 1908: S Aisle E most: Three lights; SS George, Anna, and Elizabeth (memorial to three parishioners)
- 1904: S Aisle 2nd E: Three lights; St John, Madonna, St Luke (in memory of Lucy Anne Ince)
- 1899: S Aisle 2nd West (W): Two lights; Annunciation (in memory of Mary Nichols and her two drowned sisters Mary Anne and Madeline who dies in 1874).
- 1909: S Aisle W most: St John the Evangelist and Ruth (in memory of John Thompson, father of Mrs Garnett from Boughton and Mable McWatt)
- 1884: N Aisle W: One light; St Elizabeth
- 1905: N Aisle 2nd E: Two lights; Gethsemane (commemorates Richard Henry Williams Currie of Boughton Hall)
- 1905: N Aisle E: Three lights; Christ before Pilate (commemorates Lucy Ann

Ince, detailed above)

Other North Aisle Windows: Mack Window: This is a modern stained glass window to commemorate the life of Revd Charles D Mack (1972-1986). It was designed by Cliff Boddy, a long time member of the choir and church. **Blanche Collins:** A modern stained glass window, dating from 1960, in memory of Blanche from Littleton.

Roll of Honour: A scribed Roll of Honour hangs on the north wall, and commemorates the lives of 249 men from the village who fought in The Great War of 1914-18.

Vestment Store: At the back of the organ space, is a modern, c. 1990s, oak vestment storage chest which host the altar frontals for the different church seasons.

Pulpit: A gift from Lucy Anne Ince in memory of her husband, Townsend Ince who died in 1871.

Lectern: Constructed in oak, and dedicated to the memory of T F Lace of Christleton Hall.

Altar and Sanctuary: Combines fine Victorian tile work, Italian mosaic on the floor and walls, and crinoidal limestone edging. Moreover, is framed with Butterfield's structural polychromy of white and red stone from the Wirral and Waverton quarries respectively. This space accommodates a banner of the Christleton branch of the Mother's Union, designed and made by Dorothy McNair (Colley) and a member of her family. Also, a processional cross, given to the church by Ivy Clarke in memory of her parents, Lionel and Mrs Garnett.

The Organ: The two manual organ was rebuilt and restored around 1990 by Rushworth and Dreaper, following a period of none use. The original organ was a gift of William Fleming MD of Rowton, and was built in London by George Holditch, and is a two manual organ which was installed in 1878.

Lady Chapel: The entrance to the space is framed with a wrought iron screen, originally between nave and chancel; made c. 1953 in the Kale Yards, Chester, and was given by Vera Pride in memory of her parents Albert Edward and Louise. **The Millennium Window** was designed by Bill Davies of Irby, Wirral based on ideas from members of the community. It includes representations of St James and the Methodist chapel, Christ, the pilgrim shell of St James, a bell rope, a mute swan representing the village, Robert (baron of Malpas who was patron of church in 1086), Celia Fiennes (a famous traveller who rode through Christleton on a white horse in 1685), Lucy and Townsend Ince, Prince Rupert of the Rhine (nephew of King Charles I who largely destroyed the village in 1645, an Abbott for Chester Abbey in 1285 obtaining water from Christleton well (the Abbey were also patrons of St James, and the well was a water source for the Abbey), and figures of a mother and child (representing the community in 2000 AD). It was dedicated 5th January 2003. **Altar Table:** This is thought to date from the Jacobean period. **Wall Hangings:** Account of Beating of the Bounds created and scribed by Cliff Boddy in 1993. Church year tapestry created by the Sunday and Primary school in 1990-91. **Wall Memorials:** The two memorials on the western wall are to soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment killed in action in Belgium and Northern France during World War I; Lt Col Townsend Logan and Capt. Hugh Irvine.

South wall bronze memorial: To Annie Holt of 'The Green', Christleton, sister of Canon Lionel Garnett mother of famous canal engineer and writer Lionel Thomas

Caswell Rolt.

South Wall, Two Brass Sanctuary Lamps: These were gifted by Mrs Garnett and her nieces after the Great War 1914-18.

South Wall, Remembrance Tablets: Commemorate the men from Christleton parish who fought and died in the two World Wars.

Flooring: Tan, Black, and yellow tiles characteristic of Butterfield design in the nave aisles and sanctuary (Minton), with wooden flooring underneath pews.

Church Plate: 13" Silver flagon, London 1722; 3 7/8" Alms Basin, disputed London 1595 (possibly early 18th Century); 2 1/8" Paten, London 1860; 8 1/2" Chalice and 2 1/4" Paten, Chester 1723; Pocket Communion Set in Case, London 1833; 8 1/2" Chalice, Chester 1935; Alms Dish 9 1/4" diameter, Chester 1764; 7 1/8" Chalice, London 1875; Small Paten 6 1/4" diameter, London 1880; Engraved chalice, London 1870

1.7 Significance for mission

What are the strengths of the building as it is for worship and mission? What potential for adapted and new uses does the church and its setting already have with little or no change?

The main strength of the building for worship and mission is arguably its aesthetic appeal which is rooted in Butterfield's architectural realism which finds expression in the colourful contrasts of the stone and tiling throughout the church. This aesthetic appeal, hugely enhanced by the Kempe windows, connects with a sense of transcendence which glorifies God, and promotes the idea the church building represents a thin space – a place of contemplation. It well suits worship which emphasises order, control, limited movement, ceremony and ritual, as to be expected given when it was constructed and its designer.

We are seeking to exploit this main strength through, e.g. developing the church as a place of contemplation through the week and a 'visitor attraction' given its historical and architectural significance. To this end, the Rector has developed a church app which, in the first instance, provides a historical tour of the church. It is planned to develop this aim to provide a spiritual tour of the building, drawing on for example Taylor's work [6], with a view to promoting spiritual encounter. These new uses of the church require little adaption of the current building for abled bodied users. However, wheelchair users (or those with prams) are only able to access the west and east ends of the central nave, and its central aisle currently.

Section 2 : The significance of the area affected by the proposal.

2.1 Identify the parts of the church and/or churchyard which will be directly or indirectly affected by your proposal.

The architect details of the proposal are given in separate supporting documentation.

The extension, housing a kitchen, toilets, and storage is proposed for the NW corner of the church. The extension impacts the NW wall of the church, and extends a short distance into the churchyard.

The Lady Chapel would be impacted through its enclosure as a designated meeting space.

The pews, throughout the nave with some exceptions see below, would be impacted through the provision of more flexible seating, albeit in keeping with the building's aesthetic beauty. The Churchwarden and vergers pews on the west wall, pew stall in the Sanctuary (Chancel), and the pews in the choir are all to be retained.

The current children's corner and library would be reimagined to account for the final server area. The impact on the library is potentially the greatest, though this is very seldom used, and is of no historical or architectural importance.

2.2 Set out the significance of these particular parts.

For the extension. The church wall dates from c. 1876.

The graves, in one of the oldest sections of the churchyard, which would be effected are as detailed in supporting documentation – graves.pdf. In summary, 9 graves have been identified covering the footprint of the extension. They date between 1796 and 1891, hence are in excess of 130 years old. Their median date of death is 1847, i.e., 175 years old.

The proposed Lady Chapel enclosure is a glass glazing. This will materially effect the structure of the chapel. Furthermore, account will be taken to minimise the impact of reflections, maintain sight lines, and provide appropriate acoustics as a result of enclosing the chapel.

Consultation of parish records, county office records, and an expert detailed in our supporting documentation suggest a reasonable assumption is the pews were changed at the time of the restoration of the church by William Butterfield, and therefore likely had his design input. In comparison with other Butterfield churches, e.g., Tadlow and Waresley, they appear less sophisticated in design. This said, they are the most significant part of the building effected by our proposals.

The children's corner and library are judged of no significance.

Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals

3.1 Describe and assess the impact of your proposal on these parts, and on the whole.

The extension extends on a N-S line from the NW corner of the church into the churchyard. It primarily impacts the church wall, and a number of graves. The age of the graves suggest they may be reasonably resited or laid flat (depending on local custom). It is proposed where possible to lay them flat and incorporate them into the design of the extension as detailed in the supporting documentation. The access into the extension will match the colouring of the surrounding area, in an effort to minimise its impact. The associated impact on the children's corner and library are of no comparative significance. The children's corner can be reimaged or resited to the enclosed Lady Chapel (LOW impact), and the library could be resited or closed. The library is very seldom used (HIGH IMPACT). The extension has a minor impact on the whole of the church building, but is assessed as having MODERATE impact.

The use of clear enclosure for the Lady chapel should minimise its impact, and ensure views of, e.g., the SE window are retained from the chancel. The impact is judged LOW.

The removal of the majority of the nave pews is significant, and judged as having HIGH impact. Implicit in this HIGH impact assessment is the proper understanding this is the only Butterfield church in Cheshire, and Victorian churches were designed to have pews. It accidentally occurred to us, however, there is an important perspective to this assessment when viewed through the research question - what makes/constitutes a Butterfield church?

If you consider Butterfield's biography on the Victorian Web, [7], pews are not mentioned once. Rather, his 'unusual methods of colour', 'forms and mouldings and exuberance in the color decoration', 'one of the most striking features of the church is the, then novel, use of exposed brickwork, both external and internal', and 'the proportions of the building' are what is noted. This suggests the features which characterise and are distinctive about a Butterfield building are not in fact the pews. The pews, the contents – furniture of the church, could reasonably be considered of secondary importance. An argument strengthened by the prior existence of pews in the building prior to Butterfield's design and their lack of current sophistication.

To test this thought further, the following question was asked of OpenAI's ChatGPT – an Artificial Intelligence model with access to copious volumes of data across many forms prior to 2022: What is distinctive about a William Butterfield church? The answer given was as follows [8]:

“William Butterfield was a prominent Victorian architect who designed many churches and other buildings in the Gothic Revival style. Butterfield's churches are known for their distinctive features that set them apart from other Gothic Revival buildings of the period.

One of the most distinctive features of a William Butterfield church is the use of polychromatic brickwork. Butterfield believed that the texture and color of brickwork could be used to create a richly decorative effect, and he often used different colors of brick to create patterns and motifs on the exterior of his buildings.

Another characteristic of Butterfield's churches is the use of geometric forms and patterns. He often incorporated intricate geometric shapes and designs into the stonework, woodwork, and decorative elements of his buildings, creating a sense of unity and harmony in the overall design.

Butterfield was also known for his use of materials such as tiles, marble, and other natural stones, which he used to create intricate and colorful patterns and designs. He believed that the use of these materials added depth and texture to the overall design of his buildings.

Overall, Butterfield's churches are characterized by their attention to detail and the use of richly decorative elements to create a sense of beauty and spiritual inspiration.”

This answer resonates and supports the accidental thought reflecting on Butterfield’s biography above. There is therefore likely an evidential argument to suggest removal of the majority of the pews in the nave is of much less impact both for this area and for the whole of the church with reference to it being a Butterfield church.

This line of thinking is not offered to antagonise relevant stakeholders. On the contrary, it derives from reflecting deeper on the advice we have received. The strength of our case is based on the mission needs of the church for the 21st century and beyond, rather than diminishing the significance of the pews. However, we are asked here to consider the significance/impact of removing the pews for the whole church, and this line of thinking is therefore clearly relevant. It does not diminish our respect for the view which states the removal of the majority of the nave pews is significant, and judged as having HIGH impact on account of the opening arguments.

3.2 Explain how you intend, where possible, to mitigate the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the parts affected and the whole.

To minimise the impact on the graves. We intend, where possible, to incorporate them into the design of the extension as detailed in the architect supporting documentation. At the same time, the work on the extension will be overseen by an archaeologist to ensure it’s impact is well managed.

The material chosen for the Lady Chapel enclosure will maintain sight-lines in the church, and mitigate against unhelpful reflections and noise.

As detailed in the supporting documentation, the colour and style of the flexible seating has been chosen by the community to maintain the sacred quality of the building. See supporting documentation chairs.pdf. Feedback from stakeholders suggested both chair choices would be acceptable, however, one design should be chosen; two types of chair are not acceptable. The community would make this compromise.

Sources consulted

- [1] The Times. *Why Christleton, Cheshire, is one of the best places to live in 2022*. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/> [Online]. Available: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/why-christleton-cheshire-best-place-to-live-uk-9cdlpcxls> [Accessed: 29 March 2023].
- [2] The Local History Group, *Christleton: 2000 Years of History*, Masons Design and Print (2000).
- [3] The Local History Group, *Christleton*, Herald Printers, 1985
- [4] Cummings, D., *St James Church: Christleton (guidebook)*, DevaPrint, 2018.
- [5] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023, February 19). William Butterfield. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Butterfield>
- [6] Taylor, R., *How to Read a Church Building: An Illustrated Guide to Images, Symbols and Meanings in Churches and Cathedrals*, Rider, 2004
- [7] William Butterfield (1814-1900), <https://www.victorianweb.org/index.html> [Online]. <https://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/butterfield/bio.html> [Accessed: 29 March 2023]
- [8] ChatGPT. (2023, May 4). [What is distinctive about a William Butterfield church?].

Statement of Needs – Major projects

Guidance on completing this form can be found on the ChurchCare website at <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/statements-of-significance-need>

This document must be accompanied by the Standard Information Form 1A

Statement of Need – Major projects

1. General Information

This should provide an overview of the parish and the current use of the building.

The parish of Christleton in the Chester Deanery consists of St James Church, and serves the communities of Christleton, Littleton, Rowton, Cotton Abbots, and Cotton Edmunds. The electoral roll (2022) stood at 180 members, while the parish population is c. 3400. The communities of the parish are semi rural, though they rest about 3 miles SE of Chester city. The parish includes a high school, primary school, two care homes, a Save the Family facility, two community public houses, a Methodist church, and a number of other small businesses.

The current use of the building centres around worship on Sunday mornings, Wednesday mornings, and for praying the Daily Office on weekdays. Our Usual Sunday Attendance (USA, 2022) is 72 across, currently, 2 morning communion services, with 3 children hosted in a Sunday School which runs in the parish hall opposite the church. The age profile of the adult congregation is estimated (2019) at 80% over the ages of 65. Our midweek services average 8 adults. Our midweek Daily Office services average 4 adults.

The church remains open every day during daylight hours, with a very small footfall during the week. Since 2018, the church has been used for learning events over a 4 week period up to twice a year.

The church is up to date on its parish share payments of £85425 pa (1.25), with reserves of about £75000 designated towards this project. The financial position of the church is weak, with around 70% of its income arriving from around 20 persons and 40% of its income from donations, c.f., regular giving. We estimate we will need to raise another £25000 before we can start applying for grants towards this project.

Our next Quinquennial report is scheduled for March/April 2023. There are no major issues outstanding, and a stewardship group provides regular oversight of church maintenance issues.

2. What do you need?

Briefly explain your needs (not your proposals). Append any brief for your architect.

Facilities

We need toilets (including disabled access toilets) since there are none in the church. The nearest one is across the road in the parish hall. For our older community, the lack of a toilet in the church is a barrier to attendance; they do not have time to make

it across the road. For our younger community, the lack of baby change facilities, is also a barrier to attendance.

We need a kitchen to facilitate hospitality for groups between 6 to 150 for a wide range of liturgical/worship and community events. We need storage space to house the flexible seating when not in use.

Space/Worship

We need flexible space for a variety of worship and community activities for groups between 6-150 in the central nave of the church. Of these activities, around 2/3 are activities we are currently engaged with and or have tried, while a 1/3 we have not been able to try to date. Please see supporting documentation – needs of St James.pdf for more information.

We need to enclose the lady chapel to provide a small meeting, hospitality, learning, and worship space for the communities.

Access

We need the central nave to be accessible by wheelchairs and pushchairs. Currently, the north and south aisles channels are not accessible by, e.g., wheelchairs; only the central aisle. At the same time, we need access, for the same reasons, into the Lady Chapel which will and does host worship and community events.

3. The Proposals

Set out what you are proposing to do in order to meet the needs set out in section 2.

Facilities

To provide toilets and a kitchen for hospitality we propose to build an extension, dimensions as detailed in the architect brief, to the NW of the church.

Space/Worship

To create flexible space for a variety of worship and community activities we are proposing to remove the central nave pews and replace them with appropriate moveable seating – chairs. We propose retaining the churchwarden pews and vergers pews in the central nave area, and, of course, those in the chancel and sanctuary. This flexible seating may be stored in the extension when not in use.

To enclose the lady chapel we propose using a glass screen which will retain light flow and provide acoustic soundproofing.

Access

To provide dramatically improved access to the north and south aisles of the church in the central nave we propose to remove the the central nave pews and replace them with appropriate moveable seating – chairs. To provide access into the Lady Chapel from the central nave we propose introducing a small ramp on the south aisle.

4. Why do you need it and why do you need it now?

Justify your proposals by explaining why you can't meet your needs without making changes. Also include anything which may have prompted your proposals.

Why do you need it now?

The proposals stem from the arrival of a new incumbent (late 2018), the encouragement to audit the health of the community [1], discern the church's contextual vocation, and develop a healthy church community or equivalently a community rooted in the *missio dei* as described by the Anglican 5 marks of mission [2].

The health audit, Nov 2018, demonstrated the church was in poor health, in particular it was not energised by faith or had an outward looking focus. An analysis of service attendance, census, and worship data, spanning 10 years, demonstrated all our services had experienced serious decline (well above national average), the church was not engaging with around 80% of the demographic of the parish communities, 80% of the church community is above 65 years of age, and the church had a deficit of children and young people with attendance numbers of around 3.

The combination of the (worship and community) health audit, the weak finances of the church (around 70% of regular giving from ~ 20 persons, and this only accounting for 60% of the annual income of the church), and the discerned vocation (vision) of the church as a community of worship, welcome, and witness – a community rooted in worship which does/is justice and reconciliation – made it clear to us radical change in the worship and community life of the church was necessary now if the church was to thrive and hand on a community to the following generations.

This change was translated into strategic priorities, among them, to undertake a (worship) service pattern and provision review and orient the life of the community to be outward facing towards the communities we serve.

Why do you need it?

Our strategic priorities dictated our needs, and are captured in the exploring the space document which justify our needs. Underlying this document is the ongoing (albeit interrupted by Covid) implementation of a major new pattern and provision of services (Pentecost 2019) which provided an even balance of contemporary and traditional styles of worship. Namely, both traditional Eucharistic (9am) and 'contemporary' Service of the Word (10.30am) worship every Sunday, and space for a variety of styles of worship in the afternoons at 4pm through the course of a month (contemplative communion, a 'youth' space, evensong, and messy church (held in the parish hall)). This, itself, a result of a service pattern and provision review undertaken in early 2019. Currently, transitioning out of the pandemic, two Eucharistic services are held weekly at 8am and 10.30am with a 'contemporary' service of the word once a month replacing the 10.30am service.

We can't meet our needs without providing flexible space in the nave for the variety of activities currently undertaken and proposed. An analysis of these needs allows us to make the following comments (see Supporting Documentation – Church Uses.pdf).

- Two thirds of the 21 activities or needs which embody our strategic priorities relate solely to worship. Of the remaining third, 60% relates to worship & community purposes and 40% to community purposes only. In essence over 85% are connected to delivering worship . The church would contend this dichotomy presented may be unhelpful¹.
- Of the 21 activities, around 70% are or have been undertaken, and 30% are yet to be implemented. Over 40% of these activities are currently considered completely non-viable on account of the constraints imposed by the pews, whilst a further 50% are of restricted viability for the same reason.
- In essence 95% of the needs require a degree of pew removal.
- The removal of all the pews in the nave (aside from the churchwarden/verger pews on the west wall) permits 100% of the needs both current and anticipated in the future.
- We have explored partial removal of the pews in both the central nave and also in the side aisles. The partial removal in the central nave enabled about 20% of the needs to be met with a similar outcome if pews were partially removed in both side aisles. Hence, in both cases the vast majority of the needs of the church, around 80%, remain unmet by these options.
- We also looked at removing all the pews in the central area and this would enable around 70% of the activities, although the reduction in flexible space may limit the size of the congregation that can be accommodated in these new forms of worship.
- This option risks creating two dead spaces in the north and south aisles, with secondary visibility and comfort. It may also lead to a further reduction in the potential size of actual congregations as people may only want to sit in the middle which would effectively shrink the size of the church further.
- Furthermore, we see removal of the pews in the North aisle as critical in creating a café space for near continuous hospitality , which would provide a hub for people to meet in a safe environment and thereby combat social issues of loneliness and isolation. It would also provide an opportunity for family friendly seating during worship & social events.
- To leave pews only in the South aisle is probably the least impactful as it delivers close to 90% of our mission , however, it would arguably render this area defunct and impact congregation sizes. Hence, why the proposal

¹ While it is natural to think of the proposed plans in terms of worship and community activities, the authors of them would caution against this. Our strategic plan concerns our desire to be and grow a healthy church, understood as one that participates in the five marks of mission. Moreover, to use all of our assets, for missional purposes, i.e., for the five marks of mission. A corollary of this, is - for example - the offering of the church for, say, a flower exhibition. This use may be understood as devoid of any worship-church content, but the church would understand this use as an opportunity to participate in the fifth mark of mission, namely “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”; to rejoice in the glory of God’s creation, to potentially highlight issues of conservation, etc. Other examples could easily be given, and thereby theologically a case made to support the idea that all the uses of the church are sacred – are in fact acts of worship. This in line with, say, the Benedictine tradition which speaks of everything as sacred. A view which stands in opposition to the idea - there is a secular – sacred divide. The church would desire to subscribe to this theology.

advocates to have flexible space in the whole of the nave across the central, north and south aisles.

- We considered whether placing the current pews on castors would meet the needs of the church outlined above and in the supporting documentation – Church Uses. This idea was rejected, since it would not provide the space required for the uses of the church both current and projected. At the same time, they would be more difficult to move around, remain uncomfortable, potentially damage the flooring, potentially introduce distracting noise while in use, and require maintenance.

How will the proposal help the ministry (mission) of the church?

The ministry of the church concerns its participation in the 5 marks of mission. The worship and community activities noted facilitate this participation as detailed, see especially columns 1 and 8.

How will it enhance the liturgical space and services?

The creation of flexible space in the nave, with concomitant hospitality and public conveniences, will allow the creation of uncommon worship, [3], facilitate fresh expressions of worship, e.g., cafe church [4], sweaty church [5], provide enhanced opportunities to explore worship across ages and together through the creation of worship zones which allow for whole body worship [6], and thereby facilitate participatory worship as demanded by, not least, our younger generations [7].

How will it help small group and midweek meetings?

The toilets and hospitality capability will widen access to these meetings. The ability to configure the space and its seating to the style of meeting and group will enhanced the effectiveness of the meeting/teaching [8]

What new activities and events will be able to take place in the church?

We can't anticipate all the new activities and events which will be able to take place in the church as a result of our proposals. We've identified, not least, a number of community events, e.g., cafe, cinema, community markets and festivals, and concerts which will be able to take place. A large number of current, especially worship, activities are currently inhibited by the building's current configuration.

How will it help your financial situation?

The proposals are likely to generate income, but are firmly focused on our participation in the *missio dei* and ability to offer space and activities at no cost. If forced to give an estimate, a back of the envelope incomplete calculation might look as follows:

Activity	Income (per month)	Notes
Cafe	800	~ 13 people per day for 5 days @ £3 per coffee
Concerts	125	25 people at £5
Cinema	125	25 people at £5
Exhibitions	77	4 a year, each of 50 people at £5
Senior Ministry	125	25 people at £5
Meetings	60	2 per month for 2hrs at £15 ph
New Members of Church	280	10% growth = 7 each contributing £40 pm

This would give a total annual income of around £19000 which would be a significant contribution to improving the financial viability of the parish.

Recent changes which are taking place which concern the need?

As noted current and proposed housing developments in the parish could increase the parish population by around 50%, and will see the need for appropriate worship and community activities grow in the coming decade.

5. What is the evidence for the need?

The evidence for the need is multifaceted, as discussed now.

(Market) Research

There is a plethora of research directions which evidence the need, among them:

(a) From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013 [9]. This reports details factors associated with church growth, among them being willing to change and adapt (this includes around types of worship, and how and when the building is used), actively engaging children and teenagers and those who might not go to church/are outside the existing community, good welcoming and follow up for visitors, and being committed to nurturing new and existing Christians. Our proposal and needs are very well aligned with these factors of church growth, which in turn can be shown to align well with various published frameworks for creating healthy church communities, e.g., Robert Warren's Healthy Churches [1], Natural Church Development [<https://www.naturalchurchdevelopment.org/>], and George Ling's Seven Sacred Spaces: Portals to deeper community life in Christ [10].

(b) The Church Buildings Review Group 2015 (Church of England Report), [11], speaks of how the Anglican Church has lost its connection with the community and some churches stand like mausoleums locked and 'marginal to the life of the community'. The Report suggests a need to breathe new life into these buildings, which may mean 're-ordering and adapting in a manner which is sensitive to their heritage to enable the life of contemporary worshipping Christians and service of the community'. Re-ordering generally means removal of pews to create more flexible space, which is the experience of the Oxfordshire Diocese. The Bishop of Dorchester states that changes at the start of the C21st to the interiors of 20% of Oxfordshire's

circa 300 churches are the most radical since the early C19th [12]. The changes involve new kitchens, toilets and replacement of pews by stacking chairs, as churches seek to become ‘community hubs’.

Wright [13] deemed this ‘the re-medievalisation’ of the church buildings, as churches recapture the sense of once again becoming the ‘hub of the community’. Tilby [14] agrees with this trend suggesting that churches are wanting to be to become ‘flexible and user- friendly, adaptable for concerts, coffee-mornings, and different styles of worship’.

During the early 1960s Hammond [15, p. 137] was encouraging the reordering of the traditional parish church claiming the majority of Victorian Gothic churches were unsuitable to serve the needs of the C20th congregations;

‘Their unsuitability is due, above all, to the fact that they are planned in accordance with an understanding of the liturgy which is fundamentally at variance with modern biblical and liturgical scholarship’.

In the above statement Hammond [15] alludes to the new liturgy as one which enables the whole body of the local church to be gathered around the table and fixed seating simply nullifies participation encouraging congregations to ‘regard themselves as spectators rather than participants’.

Giles [16, p. 175] agrees urging churches to shed the pews for ‘liturgical reasons’. ‘Flexible seating is therefore essential if a real process of liturgical formulation is going to be stimulated every time the assembly meets for worship. Not only do we need to break free from centuries of captivity in serried ranks of pews, but we need also to be frequently ringing the changes in our seating plan to denote different “moods” of the assembly appropriate to different seasons of the Church’s Year.

St James has lost its connection with the community, in part, because it over-pewed, and our proposal and need is evidenced by the research noted.

(c) The above is possibly sufficient. By way of examples. However, other research could be drawn on. The Church Army produced a report entitled “Sweaty Church: Church for kinaesthetic learners, [5]. This demonstrates, not least, the need for movement in worship with our younger generations. A plethora of ‘new’ worship resources, among them, Explore Together by Scripture Union, [6], speak of the importance of worshipping with all our senses, and the importance of movement in worship. The Mission Shaped Church Report, [4], speaks of the need of creating a mixed economy for mission, and the importance of fresh expressions like Cafe church. Our proposal and needs are very well aligned with these reports which speak of the importance of a flexible, hospitable space in the development of a mixed economy for mission.

Context

The context of our proposal is significant. It is one proposal among many for the introduction of flexible seating within the Church of England; over the last decade nearly 250 churches a year have made applications to remove pews according to unofficial estimates. While access to the data concerning these applications has proved difficult, data concerning 42 UK cathedrals, of which 39 are grade 1 listed, is accessible. All, bar 3 (Derby, Durham, and Oxford), UK cathedrals have removed pews and example flexible seating. This demonstrates that even in Grade 1 listed sites

and in buildings of much greater significant architectural and historic significance than St James the flexibility in the use of space is seen to be critical to achieving the Church of England's mission. The fact that Cathedral and greater churches evidence significant church growth (over and above parishes) validate their need and indeed our own.

Community

The PCC unanimously support the proposal, and it has the overwhelming majority of support from the church community. The wider community was offered six one hour consultations during March 2022, as detailed in the supporting documentation. These consultations were advertised electronically and in paper form, and personal invites were sent out to community stakeholders. The consultations hosted a total of 42 people, and demonstrated majority support for the proposals. A small number of people do not like the idea of removing the pews. The DAC have also undertaken a visit to the church to discuss this proposal, and have given encouraging feedback. It was also made clear to us that flexible seating would have made a positive impact during the Covid-19 pandemic. Christleton Parish Council was consulted at around the same time, and they too offered no objections to the proposals.

We have identified several local people who have expressed a committed interest in running and shaping the cinema club. We have good connections with our local primary and high schools. By way of example, starting from no relationship in late 2018 we now regularly host the primary school at church for services and other events, and undertake assemblies twice a month. Therefore, we have confidence, for example, exhibitions, concerts and similar will be supported and or offered in partnership as appropriate.

The community has expressed a desire for computing classes. In response, the church ran an I:Tea and Coffee club in 2020 (financially supported by the local council). It was well supported, and requests have been made for further activities of this kind. However, feedback from the club made clear how difficult it was to instruct people, one on one, in the pews, and the lack of surfaces to rest computer equipment was also severely limiting.

The most recent (civil parish) Christleton community plan [17] articulates interest in club or activities for children before or after school, a youth club or other facilities (undefined), and notes a need to survey said communities. Making the largest public space in the village accessible and flexible positions the church well to respond and partner with the community as it continues to explore these options. The church ran an after school code club at the local primary school in 2023 which was very well supported, and demonstrates a need for such activities. As noted above, this is not viable in the church currently but would be if we have flexible space in the nave of the church which can accommodate tables and chairs.

Cafe

We identified a need for a community cafe back in late early 2019. Confirmation we were correct has come from the local publican setting up a commercial cafe in the last 18 months or so (and is also evidenced in the responses to the Christleton community plan [17]). This cafe is modern, small, without disabled access and commercial, while ours would be within the beauty of Grade II* listed building, larger, and not primarily commercial rather aimed towards specific social needs in our community, e.g., dementia, combating isolation, etc. This and the likely significant increase in parish

population on account of local developments strongly suggest they would complement each other well. They would not be in competition with one another.

Accessibility

A number of letters from the church and wider communities evidence the need for flexible seating to improve the accessibility of the church for wheelchair users and everyday users. These are including in supporting documentation.

Vignettes of Worship

In 2019, we sought to create uncommon worship for Maundy Thursday after [18]. We set up tables down the central nave aisle to celebrate a seder meal. There were around 30 people present, and it was very difficult to move about the tables while eating. At the same time, there was no possibility of creating the intimacy of worship desired through facing one another during worship.

We reviewed of worship pattern and provision changes of 2019 in Feb 2020, albeit interrupted by the pandemic. There was a lot of encouragement for the different pattern and ways of worship we were offering, with further suggestions. However, feedback noted how difficult it was to offer 'contemporary' styles of worship which required, not least, movement and discussion. The space is cramped, difficult and dangerous to move around (many people trip on the prayer kneelers given the narrowness of the pews), and discussions were inhibited by having to turn around in your pew to have conversations and sit at awkward angles.

In Sept 2022, we ran a vocations development event for around 10 persons in the main body of the church. We should like to offer this event between 2 and 4 times a year, however, this is likely not possible on account of the feedback received. Namely, how the event was problematic on account of how uncomfortable it was to sit in the pews during the morning session and therefore engage in the teaching. Further, it was difficult to break out into small group conversations across pews. There was insufficient space to comfortably gather everyone into groups elsewhere in the church.

To encourage divine encounter in the building, we often seek to set up prayer stations throughout the building. The lack of space and pews form a barrier for people to gather and journey together around prayer stations, which in turn impacts the quality of the divine encounter one seeks to offer.

6. How is the proposal contributing to the need for environmental sustainability?

Supporting documentation (supporting documentation - parishCarbonNetZeroRoutemap.pdf) details our completed parish routemap to carbon net zero by 2030. Our current net carbon footprint is in the top 10% relative to other churches. We are making good progress towards environmental awards with Eco Church (an A Rocha UK project), and have identified community and global engagement and lifestyle as key areas to progress. The proposals will deliver a wide range of worship and community activities which may be readily tuned to make a significant impact on, not least, these areas, thereby make a pivotal contribution to the church's future recognition as an Eco Church.

7. What other options to meet the need were considered, taking point 6 and the impact identified in the Statement of Significance into account?

The church considered at least 5 design options over 2- 3 years, which are detailed in supporting documentation – designIterations.pdf. These included different, facility housing, extension configurations and seating arrangements from pews, pew benches, and chairs.

We also considered whether we could use the parish hall (across the road from the church), thereby making no changes to the church. This was rejected for a number of reasons, among them:

The parish hall is not owned by the church, rather leased from the parish hall trustees drawn mostly from the wider community. The church manages the hall, and receives any income generated. There is a risk (which by its nature is uncertain and difficult to quantify) the church will lose access to the parish hall in the future, and the church would be wise to note this risk and plan for its mitigation as part of good stewardship. While we have never intended to mitigate this risk with our proposals – we see the hall and church as complementary to one another, this is a (partial) corollary of them.

The majority of our needs, up to 86%, centre around worship activities which we believe should be sited in the church rather than the parish hall, and drive the requirement for flexible seating in the church. The parish hall could cater for many of the community activities, save for the present, following discussion.

Many of the proposals activities need to be offered at no or little cost, and this would seriously undermine the parish hall income stream upon which the church depends for its viability.

The parish hall often operates at full capacity, thereby does not have space to host additional activities. Indeed, the church has struggled to gain access to the hall for events and attempts at fresh expressions of church on occasions.

The types of activities hosted by the parish hall (e.g, dancing, yoga, Pilates, fitness, painting, RSPB meetings) are complementary to the types of activities the church proposes. The communities will be enriched by both rather than one over the other.

Many of the community activities noted, e.g., concerts, markets, cinema, and exhibitions potentially require, for example, a larger space than afforded by the parish hall. By way of example, the village show is hosted in the parish hall currently but space to move around stalls is limited which encourages the dispersal of community members on a shorter timescale. Our proposals provide this flexible space and already has audio-visual facilities these events require.

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