

We petition the Court for a faculty to authorise the following...

Schedule of works or proposals

We are seeking permission to take up all pews from the nave of the church, remove the raised platforms on which the pews currently stand, and replace this area with oak plank flooring (see architect's specification attached). We would then retain eight of the 4m pews, reduced to 2.5 metres in length and mounted on individual bases so that they can be moved when necessary. The remaining seating capacity would then be replaced with individual stackable seating (<https://trinitychurchfurniture.co.uk/products/theo-chair/>).

Statement of significance

From Historic England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1320745>

PAULTON C.P. CHURCH STREET (south side) ST 65 NW 1/3 Church of the Holy Trinity 21.9.60 G.V. II* Anglican Parish Church. Dated 1757 and 1839, the latter by John Pinch. Ashlar, freestone dressings, slate roof. West tower, nave, north and south aisles, north porch, chancel, south chapel, north organ chamber. Square tower of 3 stages with set-back buttresses and full-height circular stair turret, first stage has plinth, tudor-arch west door with heavy moulding and a good plank door below a small ogee-headed window, (strings between stages also appear between buttresses), second stage has quatrefoil to west, at third stage the buttresses peter out with crocketed finials, each side has a 2-light pointed window below a hoodmould with quatrefoil pierced tracery, then ogee quatrefoils, that to west with date (clockwise 1757 seems most likely), then ogee frieze as corbel table below quatrefoil pierced parapet with obelisk corner finials, tower stands at west end of north aisle of church of 1831. Gabled nave has 3-light pointed, cusped west window, buttressed aisles have 4 similar 2-light windows, one over south door under label, one absent at site of gabled north porch with moulded, pointed arch below date scroll, diagonal buttressed, gabled chancel has 3-light, pointed east window as elsewhere, similar 2-lights to north and south gabled chapels. Interior. 4-bay Perpendicular arcade, shafts on very thin piers, very rich, small chancel with mock hammer beams with angels, nave roof of arch-braced queen post construction with tracery spandrels. Fittings: octagonal font of C16?, stone pulpit, perpendicular details as in local tradition, complete set of pews with poppy heads. Monument: at west end of south aisle is a C14 chivalic figure under hood with head stops. (Source: N. Pevsner : Buildings of England : North Somerset and Bristol : ig58).

From the Victorian Society

Holy Trinity Paulton is a Grade II* listed church with possibly 15th century origins. However, the fabric predominantly dates from the mid-18th century onwards. The nave was built in 1839 by John Pinch Jr, a Bath based architect, who worked on several churches including St Mary's Bathwick, and nearby at Midsomer Norton and Downside. In all these churches Pinch designed in a Perpendicular revival style, and it is known that he often copied details from local Medieval examples. At Paulton Pinch's nave is more faithful to Medieval precedents than some of his

other buildings, and is significant as a good example of early 19th century Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design. A plan shows how the church was originally seated with box pews and benches, but there are no further details of their design.

In 1864 the notable Gothic Revival architect, John Norton, built a new chancel and re-seated the nave. Norton was a prolific architect and worked on many churches and country houses, and was a convinced disciple of AWN Pugin's understanding of the Gothic Revival as an artistic and theological/moral movement. As such Paulton represents an significant example of two differing phases and understandings of revival of Gothic architecture in the 19th century. The benches that Norton installed make an important contribution to this understanding, providing order and a hierarchy to the interior. The poppyhead bench ends provide additional interest and mean they are above average in terms of quality and design when compared to many 19th century sets of benches. Without conclusive evidence we question the assertion that they are a 'catalogue' design. The benches also have additional significance as a substantially complete set of high quality seating designed by Norton.

From: The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol Nikolaus Pevsner. 1958

HOLY TRINITY. The tower is dated prominently 1757 – on a quatrefoil on the w front. There are also other quatrefoils and ogee-headed windows. Even the quatrefoils are made ogee. The set-back buttresses and the pinnacles developing out of them are surviving Somerset tradition, though the

obelisk shape of the pinnacles is clearly enough post-medieval. The w doorway oddly enough looks c17, and the bell-openings genuine c15. The corbel-table on the other hand is obviously 1757. Could the pierced parapet and top pinnacles also be as early? The rest of the church was rebuilt in 1839 (by *John Pinch*, GR). It has the usual lancet windows with Perp tracery. Aisled interior in the Perp Somerset tradition, though in typical early c19 proportions. – PLATE. Chalice and two Patens 1801. – MONUMENT. Knight, praying, in long surcoat, the head under a trefoiled arch, which rests on two head-stops; c. 1290. – Knight, c. 1360, badly mutilated. ROMAN HOUSES. Reported in 1818 a pair of houses of corridor-type.

Current Significance of the Church

Holy Trinity Paulton has a Family Service every Sunday at 11am and a quiet prayer service at 5pm. Average Sunday attendance has tripled in the past year from pre lockdown levels of 25 to a regular worshipping community of 75, and the number of children has increased from none to around 15 per service. There are regular weekly toddler groups on Mondays and Fridays during term time attracting 10 or more families, and 'Messy Church' activities in school holidays that

can attract up to 50 children. There is also a cafe session every Tuesday all year round and a discussion group on Tuesday evenings. Alongside this the church holds many additional events and festival celebrations throughout the year.

Statement of need:

In Paulton we have a **rapidly growing congregation**, having tripled in size over the past three years and continuing to increase. We would predict on current trends that the congregation would reach over 100 with 20-30 children each week within the next two years. Alongside this we also have a range of well attended community engagement activities. Specifically, we run two weekly toddler groups regularly attended by 20 people, and a weekly coffee morning that has an average of 30 older people every week. We also run a monthly 'knit and natter' group with over 40 people each session, and termly 'Messy Church' activities which attract an average of 70 people on each occasion. All of these activities, which are vital community projects and gateways into the church community, require open and flexible space to operate. All these groups are currently oversubscribed and we deliberately do not advertise them because we could not accommodate the demand if we were to do so. None of the activities we run can make use of the current seating arrangements, and manage to achieve their current results in spite of the current seating arrangements, but are all significantly limited by them.

This growth, and demand for continued growth, has resulted in the need to have a more flexible space in which to conduct public worship and other gatherings. The nave in Holy Trinity Paulton is dominated by long pews which leave only very narrow walkways. There is no suitable access or parking for wheelchairs or baby buggies, with congregants having to sit in walkways to experience the service. We regularly have parents with prams and wheelchair users who cannot be accommodated within the nave, and also face issues with funerals and weddings where the central aisle is too narrow to accommodate a couple or a coffin being carried by bearers. The current configuration is therefore unsuitable for the future activities of the church, inhibiting for the current activities, and not fit for purpose for even the traditional life events it has accommodate.

The incoming congregation is primarily **families with young and primary school age children** who have already filled the room at the back that is intended for 'children's work'. If we are to continue growing we will need to make additional appropriate space available. Similarly our Alpha course has struggled to operate as the church has no suitable space for catering or small group activities, leaving us to accommodate 30 people in the aisles of the church whilst the pews remain empty.

This is also the case with the weekly **toddler groups and cafe** that run on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. These groups are severely limited by the lack of appropriate space within the church building and often have long waiting lists to attend. Any future activities we propose that

are not conventional anglican worship attended solely by able bodied adults will face the same limitations.

On the advice of our first DAC delegation visit we removed on a TMRO a small 2m square of pews at the rear of the church. This was primarily done to allow us to demonstrate the interaction between the new flooring and the tiles and the treatment of the base of the pillars. It also provided a small amount of space to accommodate families and wheelchair users. Whilst the flooring materials are still to be finalised, the DAC delegation were very happy with the aesthetic of the new floor area and its sensitive treatment of the pillar area. The creation of this space has served to **confirm the positive effect that the larger plans** would have on the use of the church, but has not allowed us to solve any of the issues detailed above. The design features of the flooring and the decorative detail around the base of the pillars, along with the retention of the eight pews, address all of the concerns of the Victorian and Gorgian society, whilst enabling us to also use the church for its intended mission



Removing pews to create flexible space within the nave would allow more **accessible seating for those with mobility needs**. We would be able to accommodate more children and families and provide appropriate activities to support the development of their faith. We would also be

able to configure the space for our other weekly groups and events to allow greater capacity and therefore reach more of our local community.

The village has a current population of Just over 6500 people and is rapidly expanding through new housing developments. The community four other meeting spaces available at present:

Methodist Hall
Village Hall
Football club
Scout Hall

All of these venues are heavily used and have little surplus capacity. There is therefore considerable demand for additional space for community events that the church could help to accommodate where appropriate.

The **vision for worship** within the church is one where all ages and abilities are able to participate equally and where children and families can be as integrated as possible within all aspects of the service. It is therefore not desirable to increase the capacity of a separate space within the church, but to **create a communal environment** in which all people can worship and learn together. The PCC also has a vision of the church being more central to the life of the village, allowing the space of the church to communicate the gospel in a wider range of circumstances and reaching out to people who may not yet access a Sunday service, to serve as a gateway to further engagement.

Other than the cost of the development itself, there will not be any financial impact to this proposal as it does not affect the building infrastructure. There is the potential impact of increased maintenance, lighting and heating as a result of increased use, however this should be offset by an increase in contributions from new users. The congregation already has adequate capacity to support the increase in scope of worship and events, with many of these currently having to be set up outdoors. A more flexible and accommodating space will reduce the workload on volunteers and make activities easier to manage.

This project has been discussed by the congregation for many years, however the need to carry out the work has now become essential as our congregation is outgrowing the current available space.

The church building is geographically central to the village, and remains culturally important with regards to major Christian festivals. However, as mentioned above, in the past decade the population of the village has almost doubled due to large scale housing developments. These developments are ongoing and so the population is set to increase further in the coming decade. Much of this growth is in young families and social housing, with people moving from outside the area who are not familiar with the traditional events of the church life in the village. It is a prime opportunity therefore, for the church to offer a more **relevant and accessible worship** space that can attract and meet the needs of this growing population.

The planned development aims to retain and enhance all of the traditional features of the church building, allowing the historic architecture to be viewed more clearly, along with the retention of isle pews to facilitate the liturgical narratives employed in pastoral services. The vision for the worship and the reordering is that the historic features and modern facilities would be coherently integrated so as to be complementary, allowing for the articulation of our historic forms of worship to a new generation of Anglicans. The planned development is sympathetic to the concerns of the Georgian Society in respect to its detail in the new flooring, and the Victorian Society in respect to its retention of the pew features. The design will also maintain the 'footprint' of the pews through the contrast between the new oak floor sections and the original Victorian tiles in the isle spaces.

The current proposal is a result of consultation with the PCC, broader congregation, and the wider userbase who access the church for groups and events. It is the culmination of many years of discussion around possible reordering considerations that have now been crystallised by the growing need for action. These have then been drawn up by the church architect.

In discussing this development the PCC used the mission objectives of the Bath and Wells diocese and their own benefice profile to shape their thinking:

Bath and Wells Diocese objectives:

To place mission and evangelism at the heart of all we do.

To re-align our resources towards mission.

Benefice objectives:

Engagement is essential. Our churches are seen as central to village life and important drivers of community activity.

Facilities improvement will underpin these developments, allowing more flexible and comfortable accommodation to welcome everyone.

The discussion of reordering was then structured around the following points:

- What is the traditional purpose of the church building?
To communicate the
- What are our priorities in using the building for evangelism?
- What characterises a comfortable and welcoming space?
- What community activities do we want to accommodate?
- What are our considerations regarding physical accessibility?

From this the PCC have considered a wide range of options (displayed below), each having benefits and disadvantages. The final configuration has been chosen to offer the most flexibility whilst retaining and enhancing the historically significant features of the building.



These options have now been drawn up in detail by the Church architect Mark Taylor: see attached files

We arrived at the decision to create the most open and flexible space possible as this will be the most effective for the mission of the church, and also solve the issues with the current fixed pew configuration. The chosen design, with moveable pews, will allow for the retention of the original features, including the 'poppy head' pew ends, whilst allowing the creation of a wider aisle

space. It also enables the widest variety of other activities, enabling the nave of the church to serve as both a worship environment and a church hall space as well. We feel that these changes are urgent and essential if we are to maintain our momentum of growth and preserve our anglican heritage for future generations.

The final design was presented to the congregation at the 2021 APCM for discussion and approval.

After a visit from a DAC delegation in September of 2022 we were advised to apply for temporary permission to remove a small block of pews at the rear of the church in order to demonstrate the use value of the extra space and the way that the flooring and pillar bases would be treated. During this time we have had multiple occasions where we have needed to provide access to wheelchair users, prams and buggies, and even this small space has clearly demonstrated the urgent need for more flexible space.

Holy Trinity Paulton: Final reordering proposal.
(Please see attached architects drawings for full detail and specification).

