

Statement of Significance – St John the Baptist, Keynsham in the Diocese of Bath and Wells

Installation of Radiant Electric Heating System–

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

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

1.1 Setting of the Church

St John the Baptist is situated at one end of the high street in the town of Keynsham. (Population over 20,000). It is the only historic Anglican church in the town. Its tower (visible in the picture) can be seen from many parts of the town and even from the nearby Cotswold Edge.

The Anglican Parish includes the whole town and three neighbouring villages.



1.2 The Living Churchyard

The churchyard has been closed since the Victorian cemetery took over as the town's burial site.

The churchyard is grass with memorial stones either moved to the side or used as pathway stones.

The front apron visible on the photograph is concrete.

The church is situated within the town conservation area.



1.3 Social History

As the largest historical building in continuous use for its original purpose in Keynsham, St. John's is a priceless part of the town's heritage. It is not the oldest historical artefact – the Roman mosaics in the library are much older; nor is it the largest building with a history – the former Fry's chocolate factory is much larger; nor is it the only historical building still in use – there are many houses around the town built centuries before today, but as a historical building the Church is unique.

It is firstly exceptional because of its age: most other large medieval buildings in Keynsham have gone.

Secondly it is unique because of its character: it has accumulated over the centuries memories connected with the unique history of Keynsham. It therefore stands as a kind of elder statesman watching the comings and goings of each new generation, collecting a little something from each one as it passes through.

Thirdly it is important as one of the largest community spaces in the town: with its excellent acoustics it is a favourite venue for concerts.

Fourthly it is unique in having been a place of prayer for 750 years: and continues in regular daily use as the Anglican parish church of the town.

1.4 The Church building in general

In 1167 the building of Keynsham Abbey was begun. Remains of this abbey can be seen today. About one hundred years later a church was built nearby for the people in the town. The chancel of St John's Church dates from the thirteenth century. After the break with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries took place and Keynsham Abbey was dissolved in 1539. Thus, St John's Church became the chief place of worship for the town.

In the fifteenth century there was a spire on the end of the north aisle. During a great storm in 1632 the tower collapsed and a new west end tower was not completed until the 1650s. The church went into a period of decline and the building suffered as a consequence.

It was restored during the nineteenth century. Various restorations have taken place since then, culminating in a significant restoration during the 1990s.

For a full history of the church, please see the book 'St John the Baptist, Keynsham. A history of the Church,' written by Elizabeth White, a local historian. There are more historical details on the website of the separate charity: The Friends of St John www.fosjkeynsham.org.uk

1.5 The church building in detail

Listed grade II*

Sir Nikolas Pevsner, in his "Buildings of England" Series (North Somerset and Bristol) describes the Church as follows:

C13 chancel with lancet windows. The E window and the inside are of the restoration of 1861-3. This has in fact given the whole interior a Victorian flavour. Yet the church was once, and is to a certain extent still, an interesting building. It is very long and originally had its tower at the E end of the N aisle. The tower collapsed in 1632 "by tempestuous weather...which continued in a most fearfull manner, being intermixed with hideous Clapps of Thunder and flashes of Lightning" (Brief of Charles I for the rebuilding of the tower). The N aisle is seven bays long, the S aisle eight bays. Both have Perp windows with panel tracery (that on the S without sub-panels). The S side has a parapet, the N side battlements. Both have polygonal turrets for rood-loft staircases. The S porch is distinguished by a tierceron-vault. The N arcade had piers at standard (four-waves) section, the S arcade octagonal piers with arches with two-hollow mouldings. Nice Perp arch from the former tower is a remarkable achievement, Carolean of 1634, yet clearly meant to be a Gothic Somerset tower. Set-back buttresses, W doorway with a two-centred arch, four-light W window, blank window

above, two two-light bell-openings, parapet and pinnacles. So far all sounds Perp, but the buttresses on ground-floor level have been given an odd kind of alternating projection and recession of their courses, the W doorway leads into a W porch, the blank window is of a design without local precedent: four lights, transom and straight top, the bell-openings have cusped Y-tracery, and the parapet is partly (near the angles) solid and decorated with blank arcading, partly pierced with the familiar pattern of cusped triangles. – FONT. Dainty decorated baluster stem and small circular bowl; dated 1725. – SCREENS. To the S chapel. Perp, of three-light divisions with panel tracery, on leaf frieze and cresting. Then coving for the loft, decorated with suns, and one more leaf frieze and another cresting. – This screen was replaced about 1665 by another, which is now between chancel and organ chamber. This has arched side parts with columns, a larger arch in the middle and above it a raised centre with termini pilasters and an achievement. The ornament is foliage and arabesques rather than strapwork. – PULPIT. Carolean, perhaps as late as c. 1665. The usual blank arches, with diamond-cut decoration here, and ovals keyed into oblong panels above. MONUMENTS. Sir Henry Bridges * 1587. Recumbent effigy on a big tomb-chest with caryatids. The top is of two arches on two tapering pillars. Arms in the back wall, small allegorical figures on the tops of the arches. – Sir Thomas Bridges * 1661. Very large hanging monument of triptych type. Thin kneeling figure of Sir Thomas in the middle, thin angles in the sides. The three parts are emphasised by four thin, twisted columns, attenuated descendants of Berninis from the Baldacchino in St. Peter's. Each of the side parts carries a much projecting and receding open segmental pediment. Over the centre a kind of apse vault with carved clouds and angels. The style is similar to that of the Rodney monument at Rodney Stoke, and Sir Thomas's mother (he died young) was indeed a Rodney. Minor tablets in the aisles, by King (*1819), Greenway (* 1833) and others.

Facing west:



Facing east:



1.6 Contents of the Church

From <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1384628?section=official-list-entry>

INTERIOR: there is a C19 tie-beam roof to the nave and similar mid-C17 roofs to the aisles but with quatrefoil and lozenge panels; all roofs are supported on carved stone corbels. The chancel has a C19 hammer-beam roof. The seven-bay north arcade has piers of four-waves section and the eight-bay south arcade has octagonal piers with hollow mouldings. There is a Perpendicular arch to the tower and a C19 arch to the chancel.

FITTINGS: the nave has three 1717-21 brass chandeliers given by Ann Tilly; a baluster stem font with circular bowl given by Harry Bridges in 1725; a further 1864 Perpendicular Gothic style, octagonal font with wooden spired cover; a wooden pulpit of around 1655 with blind arcading and diamond-cut decoration; and an 1893 wooden eagle lectern. The south aisle has a section of the mid-C15, wooden rood screen, moved from the chancel, which survived the fall of north-east tower in 1632: it comprises three-light divisions with panel tracery, a leaf frieze, cresting and coving for the rood decorated with suns. The south aisle also has a burial hatchment high up on aisle wall. The chancel has a further wooden screen, which replaced the original, now reset between the chancel and the vestry: it comprises a colonnade of round-headed arches and a centrepiece above with terminal pilasters and an achievement of arms to Charles II (1665). The chancel also contains choir stalls and altar rail of 1913. The west tower has five benefaction/charity boards on the south wall.

MEMORIALS: there are wall memorials to the north and south aisles, mostly C18 and C19, with one of 1659 to Joane Flower (of the Flowers of Saltford Manor, listed at Grade II*). The chancel north wall has a monument to Sir Henry Bridges, died 1587: it comprises a recumbent effigy on a tomb chest with caryatids, an arched top on pillars, coats of arms on the back wall and small allegorical figures on the tops of the arches. The south wall has a monument to Sir Thomas Bridges, died 1661 comprising a hanging triptych with a kneeling figure of Sir Thomas in centre and angels to the sides; the three parts are emphasised by four twisted columns which carry open segmental pediments and an apse vault over the centre with carved clouds and angels. There are further C17 and C18 wall memorials to the Bridges family.

STAINED GLASS: there is some C19 stained glass including the tower window (1869); the south aisle west window (1860); the north aisle window in the last bay to the east (1876) and the north aisle west window (1902). The chancel's north and east windows date to 1961.

1.7 Significance for mission

The Church of St John's is one of the larger ones within the diocese of Bath and Wells, having an electoral roll in 2024 of 190.

It hosts concerts, civic services, political hustings, and all the services expected of an Anglican Parish church. Its worshipping life includes contemporary informal style services and sung eucharists led by a traditional robed choir (see pictures below).

The Church is a key part of the town community and a vibrant witness to the Christian faith.





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 installation of a new radiant heating system using “halo” radiant electric heaters will impact upon: the chancel, dais, nave and aisles.
In addition, it is proposed to install a wall-mounted infra-red heater in the choir vestry.

2.2 Set out the significance of these particular parts.

The Nave and side aisles hold the bulk of the congregation for services and audience for concerts and other community events.
The dais (between nave and chancel) is used for most services, and is where clergy, choir and/or music band are accommodated.
The chancel is used for monthly Evensong services and occasionally for significant services in the Church calendar, when the high altar is used.

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 main impact of the installation of radiant heaters will be to provide adequate warmth for congregations and audiences. While traditional gas convection heating heats the air in the building (with the consequence that much heat is wasted as it rises to the roof), electric radiant heating works by heating the surfaces (including people) at which it is directed.

The installation will also have a visual impact. This is best understood by viewing the virtual mock-ups of the proposed installation displayed at the end of this application.

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.

We are of the view that the Herschel “heritage” design of heater does not detract from the overall architecture of a mediaeval structure such as St. John’s. We consider that the brass-effect metal surrounds of the “halos” will complement the C18 brass chandeliers in the nave.

Electrical wiring to connect the “halos” to the mains electricity supply will be coloured as nearly as possible to match the background against which it is fixed.

Statement of Needs – St John the Baptist, Keynsham in the Diocese of Bath and Wells

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1. General information

The Parish consists of the town of Keynsham and the three villages of Burnett, Chewton Keynsham and Queen Charlton.

There are two town Churches the largest being St the Baptist (the subject of this application) and the smaller St Francis built in the 1950s to serve a new area of housing.

St Michael, Burnett and St Margaret, Queen Charlton are mediaeval village churches. Chewton Keynsham has a Victorian school used for worship since it was built, but recently closed.

The team of the five churches was formed into a single parish in 1975. The parish is broadly 'open evangelical' in style.

Each Church has its own District Church Council, in addition to the Parochial Church Council, which has representatives from each of the churches within it.

The parish of Keynsham is within the Deanery of Chew Magna in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

2. What do you need?

Following the annual service of the church's gas heating system in September 2023, we were required to shut down the system as a result of a corroded and unsafe flue. We were advised that the gas boiler itself, while still usable, was obsolete and that it was no longer possible to obtain spare parts for it. A working party was appointed by the DCC to examine a wide range of solutions, including: replacing the flue alone; replacing the entire gas boiler and flue; or installing a more carbon-neutral system. Following guidance from the Diocesan Buildings Adviser and Net Zero Support Assistant, the working group has recommended the installation of electric radiant heating. The type we propose to install is manufactured by Herschel, a Bristol-based radiant heating manufacturer. Herschel has developed a "halo" design of heater specifically for "heritage" spaces.

The new system will demand greater capacity from the electricity supply to the church. National Grid has advised on the routing of a new 3-phase electricity supply through the churchyard. We have applied for a separate faculty for this. We expect the new supply to be installed by April 2025.

3. The proposals

We propose to install 9 “halos” as follows (see mock-up photos at end) :

1. 6 x 7.8 kW halos in the nave, suspended from hooks fixed at the apex of the arches separating the nave from the side aisles. The reasons for suspending the halos from the arches rather than from the roof above the central aisle are that (i) hanging the halos centrally would interfere with the view down the church (and particularly with the view of the C18 brass chandeliers) and (ii) by positioning the halos beneath the arches we will be able to heat both the nave and the side aisles. The arches already have hooks in place at the apex (we do not know of what age and for what purpose these were installed); these will be removed and replaced by modern appropriate fixings. We have engaged a consultant engineer (Mann Williams) to advise on this.

We believe that 6 halos will be sufficient to provide adequate heating for most occasions. However, we propose to have the requisite wiring connections installed to all the arches on both sides of the nave, so that further halos can be installed at a later date if required.

2. 2 x 7.8 KW mini halos above the dais. These will be suspended from the nave roof rafters above the dais area. They will also have LED lighting to improve lighting quality in the dais area.

A projector screen is currently installed immediately behind the chancel arch; the projector which serves it is suspended from a cross-beam in the roof of the nave. Depending on the optimum positioning of the halos, it may be necessary to adjust the position of the projector.

3. 1 x 7.8 kW halo in a central position in the chancel, suspended from the rafters.

We propose controlling the halos through a wireless system, which will enable each halo to be separately controlled, and the heating level to respond automatically to the local environment.

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

We are looking to install radiant electric heating throughout the church building to replace a gas central heating system which has been condemned due to a broken flue.

The church has been without heating since September 2023. This has meant that winter services have had to be held in the church hall. It has also meant the loss of community events such as concerts. It is therefore essential that we have the new system installed in advance of winter 2025.

5. What is the evidence for the need?

Without any form of heating, the ambient temperature of the church building in winter 2023-4 dropped to around 4 degrees Centigrade. We have had to move church services to the church hall for the winter months. We have also lost a number of concerts from local orchestras and choirs because the building is too cold. A modern, efficient and carbon-neutral heating system is required to make the building fit for purpose both for congregational worship and for enhanced community use.

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

The church will no longer require gas to heat the building. We already subscribe to a “green” electricity provider (Good Energy), and none of the electricity we use is produced by coal- or gas-fired power-stations.

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

We rejected a replacement gas system for the reasons set out above. We rejected air- or ground-source heat pump systems on grounds of both cost and effectiveness given the nature of the building.

Completed by Graham Shaw – Chair, advisory group to St John’s DCC on church heating

Chancel halo





Nave halos looking towards East
end of church



Mini halos above dais, and full-size halo in Chancel. All hung at height of approx. 4.2 metres.



Nave halos looking towards West
end of church