

St Mary's, Whittlesey

Reimagining our Church Building



Thank you for responding to our **Church Building Survey**. We had thirty responses from across our church congregation and this is what you thought:

50% saw the church as central to our community, **30%** did not and a further **20%** weren't sure or didn't respond.

Many of you who saw the church as central to our community mentioned its central location, its availability for baptisms, weddings and funerals and it's use for Civic Services, the Christmas Tree Festival and other community events. Some of you mentioned its welcome and the start of our outreach at St Mary's.

Those who didn't see the church as central to our community expressed a desire to open the church more regularly and to better serve the needs of our community. A number of you felt that the developments proposed by PCC would help St Mary's to be more central to our community.

63% saw the outside of our building as inviting, **27%** did not and **10%** weren't sure or didn't respond.

Many of you appreciated the historic architecture of St Mary's and the upkeep of the surrounding churchyard. A number of you also mentioned the new signage and banners.

When thinking about what could be better, a number of you mentioned the fencing around the church, the noticeboard and the main entrance to the church that we currently use.

Your Responses at a Glance

- 25 respondents were in favour of removing the **pews & levelling the floor**, 4 respondents felt we should only remove some of the pews - not all, and 1 person felt we shouldn't remove any.
- 21 people were in favour of a **transparent door** as you enter St Mary's, 7 respondents were not and two people weren't sure.
- All but one of our respondents (29) were in favour of **toilets** being installed in St Mary's, one person felt that one toilet was sufficient. One respondent also expressed a wish for shower facilities.
- 28 respondents were in favour of **kitchen facilities** in our church building, one person was not in favour & one person wasn't sure.
- 28 people were in favour of the creation of a **meeting room** within our plans, 2 people disagreed.
- 28 respondents were in favour of the creation of a **Parish Office**, two were not.
- 25 people were in favour of **solar panels** on our church roof, two respondents disagreed and a further three weren't sure or questioned whether it was economically viable.
- 28 people were in favour of **underfloor heating**, no one disagreed but two weren't too sure in their response - again questioning the economic benefit and the need for expert advice.



Levelled floor and underfloor heating at St Mary's, Ely



Solar Photovoltaics at St Mary's, Moseley



Internal transparent door at St Mary's, Balcombe

Your Ideas, Views and Comments

A number of you welcomed the proposed plans in your comments and noted that “most of the ideas have been discussed and prayed for, for decades”. There was a real desire to see St Mary’s as a building which could better serve the local community, which we could more readily invite local community groups in to and there was also the suggestion that we could then consider hiring the building out more which might help future sustainability.

A few of you mentioned sustainability and its importance in our future plans - “in terms of worship, finances, community presence - everything really!”

A couple of you expressed some anxiety about the proposed changes to the building and asked that “any alterations are made sympathetically to our beautiful church building”. As Trustees we would work closely with the appointed architect and the Diocesan Advisory Committee, as well as taking inspiration from other historic churches which have made similar alterations, to ensure that any plans are sympathetic to and work well with the historic architecture that we have inherited.

A few of you asked about finances and where the money for this building project was going to come from. St Mary’s does have some historic reserves but we going to need significant funding from outside bodies through additional grants to achieve our aims. The project is likely to be split into different phases and so, alongside the architect and DAC, we will need to prioritise within our plans.

Some felt that part of our funding should be used “to serve the community, particularly those hardest to reach - a community fridge, a pantry or a food truck/vehicle would be good first steps.”

Finally, I felt that one of you summed up this proposal to reimagine our church building perfectly when you said:

“The church building has been serving the community for nearly nine centuries. The building has seen many changes in its time and today is no different. For the building to continue to exist it needs to be used, to be sustainable and to be a centre of worship and the teaching of the Gospels. It needs to be a place of safety, a place of welcome and a place to nurture all.”

What Happens Next?

Prayer is at the heart of everything we do as church and so the first and most important thing we need to do as a church community is to pray; for discernment as our Church Council draw up a Statement of Need, seeks an architect and works with the Diocesan Advisory Committee to reimagine a St Mary's which better reflects the welcome and hospitality we wish to offer and can better serve our local community.

Our **PCC** (Parochial Church Council) will now use the feedback from the Church Building Survey to discern what our plans should include and, if we can't achieve it all in one phase, which of the proposals should be of a higher priority.

We will keep you updated on our progress as a church but please do commit this project to your prayers - not just for the sake of a building which we would love to preserve for future generations; but for the ongoing mission and ministry of the church community which could be transformed through a reimagined building with better facilities.