

## Statement of Need – new heating and floor May 2015

### Basic Facts

<b>Parish</b>	St John's and St Mary's
<b>Dedication</b>	St Mary
<b>Benefice</b>	Devizes St John and St Mary
<b>Diocese</b>	Salisbury
<b>Address</b>	New Park Street, Devizes SN10 1DS
<b>Grid Ref</b>	400557 161585 SU 005 615
<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	Wiltshire Council
<b>County</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Statutory Listing of church</b>	LB_Ref 003A/160 Grade 1 HBR_Ref 022/301
<b>Statutory designation for structures and objects within the churchyard</b>	LB_Ref 003A/160A Grade II HBR_Ref 022/300 Gates and Railing at St Mary's Church
	LB_Ref 003A/160B Grade II HBR_Ref 022/303 Main Entrance Gates to St Mary's Church
<b>Conservation Area</b>	Church and churchyard lie at the edge of a Conservation Area
<b>Scheduled Monument</b>	No
<b>Protected Species</b>	None
<b>Tree Preservation Orders</b>	A Group TPO exist. None for individual trees
<b>County Wildlife Site (or SSSI)</b>	Churchyard is not designated a Local Nature Reserve
<b>Any other designations</b>	None

### General Information

- Devizes serves as the commercial and cultural centre of a Community Area with a resident population of 32,090 (Wiltshire Council, Devizes Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2011).
- The Parish of St John's and St Mary's has an electoral role of 202 in 2014. However St Mary's has one service a week with average attendance of six including the celebrant. The church is normally kept locked.
- In addition to the regular services, very occasional exhibitions, concerts, recitals, christenings, weddings and funerals were held in the church until the concept of regenerating the church took hold in the town. Other organisations are now requesting use of St Mary's for their own events and this demonstrates the need of such a space and the level of support from the community.
- The St Mary's Church and Poor Lands Charity 201342 – Church Branch is currently providing the funding to maintain the fabric of the building.
- The last Quinquennial report was prepared in 2010. All the maintenance issues identified in the report have been addressed; more information is given below in paragraph 1.8.

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# **1 What do you need?**

## ***1.1 What to do with a building without a use?***

The Parochial Church Council of St John with St Mary recognised some years ago that St Mary's no longer has a use as a Parish Church, with no congregation and practically all services being held in St John's. It is effectively redundant, Devizes being over-churched already. Many other uses for the building have been considered and rejected by the PCC, (Chapter 6 of this document) as inappropriate or not viable for this Grade 1 asset of the town. The PCC petitioned for redundancy in 2006 and were asked to consider other options before asking again. This proposal is a further step in that regard.

The PCC recognise that a closed building is a decaying building and are keen to ensure this Grade 1 listed building remains in use as an asset to the area and fulfils a role in the parish, brings benefit to the mission of the parish and is made available for both Devizes area residents and open for visitors to the town.

## ***1.2 The first steps***

The parish has been working on the regeneration since 2007 and efforts have continued despite the recent planning setbacks. St Mary's will be of no use to the parish or town if it remains closed. It must be repeated that the parish has no need of the building in its current form and no amount of ecclesiastical re-ordering will alter this fact. If the parish does not maintain St Mary's then it will be locked and inevitably deteriorate. It has been the goodwill of parishioners that has looked after St Mary's so well up to now, but there is no guarantee that this effort can be continued if no way forward can be agreed.

No external bodies have promised any financial or other form of support for the building in the future in its current state. No other realistic alternative use has been proposed, apart from redundancy.

Any regeneration requires financing from outside the parish as well as active support from the community. To gain money from grant making bodies a positive, long term, forward looking plan must be produced. They must believe in the associated business plan and wish to be linked to the final outcome. Similarly the community, from which volunteers have to be drawn to enable regeneration, must believe that the plan can be achieved.

The parish has produced such a plan showing how the church can once again play a part in the community; this plan has the overwhelming support of the town and surrounding population and it has been positively received by a number of funding organisations. By using nationally agreed criteria it has been demonstrated that there is a local need for the envisaged facilities.

## ***1.3 What to do next***

Following the rejection of a planning application for a new cloister, the parish now has to rethink some of the details of its plan and explain, step by step, why the proposal will work and how it can maintain both the interior look and feel of the church and the external views that are so important to the residents and visitors to the town.

Discussions are still taking place with residents of Devizes, with Wiltshire Council, English Heritage and the DAC on the location and nature of any external building to support the envisaged use. While this continues the parish is following the DAC advice on adopting a step by step approach and dealing first with the necessary internal renovations.

The church has been modified over the centuries to accommodate the needs of the town and parish and, following the advice of the DAC, a step by step approach is being taken. This application to renew the flooring and introduce effective heating is the first phase of this process.

A Charitable Trust has been set up to support the envisaged wider future use. The trustees of this charity includes those with experience of the local arts community, both sourcing and producing a wide

range of social and cultural events; fund raising skills; financial management; construction projects; marketing and promotional expertise.

### **1.4 *Analysing the Need***

The questions that need to be addressed are:

- Is there a need for the church to remain open for worship and visitors?
- Is there a need to sustain an income stream to support and maintain the church?
- Is there a need to keep the church in use to avoid the church being declared redundant?
- Is there a need for performing spaces in Devizes?
- Is the proposed development addressing the needs for community use in Devizes?
- Does the proposed use need the facilities planned or could an alternative plan support other "needs"?
- Does the proposed development and use respectively fulfil the necessary requirements of the Charity Commissioners, Church branch of the Poor Lands Trust ("Poor Lands") and the Mission Statement for the Parish of St John and St Mary?
- Will the proposals attract the necessary support of the Diocesan Advisory Committee ("DAC"), Registrar and Chancellor of the Diocese of Salisbury?
- Will the proposed plan be attractive to independent funding bodies who can provide financial support?
- Will the funds needed be available to undertake the development and will the operation be financially viable?

### **1.5 *How to achieve the expanded purpose***

As a first step the interior must be made suitable for stage productions, concerts and exhibitions, with adequate heating for such audiences. This requires the removal of the pews and pew platforms; removal of the decayed floor structure; ensuring that adequate ventilation is provided for the sub-floor and an updated heating system that preserves the existing fabric of the building.

### **1.6 *Utilities required and access***

There is currently an electricity connection, gas and mains water is available in the existing underground boiler room. In the long term new mains services of three phase electricity and broadband telephony will be required.

### **1.7 *Other Considerations of Need***

- The existing look and feel of the interior of this Grade 1 listed building has to be retained or enhanced with minimal interference to the fabric and any changes, apart from the floor, must be reversible. They must leave an uncluttered interior preserving the light from the existing windows.
- The wonderful acoustics of the interior must be maintained as they are much sought after for choral performances.
- The axial integrity of the nave must be maintained as requested by the Church Building Council.
- The sanctuary and chancel must be kept as a worship space that can be used independently of the nave. The font to be moved to the tower area.
- Victorian pews to be removed from the nave and aisles. These have little historical significance and are decayed where they abut the walls.

- An easily maintainable, suspended semi-sprung wooden floor suitable for performance, including dancing. If the pews only were to be removed, this would leave an uneven surface as the pew platforms are higher than the stone walk areas. The design of the new floor area clearly reflects the different uses, secular and sacred, of the interior.
- Organ to be retained within the church because it was built by Sweetland, a Devizes-born organ builder, specifically for St Mary's, and to fulfil its role in church services.
- Fixed wall memorials [7 off] to be kept in situ. The interior floor memorials / ledger stones [26 off] currently used as aisle paving slabs, to be relocated within the body of the church.
- A modern fire and security alarm system is needed for the benefit of the parish and building users.

### **1.8 Current State of St Mary, Devizes**

The PCC remains responsible for maintaining the Church structure in good order.

The following works have been carried out to St Mary's Church within the last fifteen years, paid for by the St Mary Church and Poor Lands Charity, Church Branch:

- Stone work repairs to Tower and South Porch including conservation of South Porch doorway.
- General repairs to roofs, rainwater goods and stonework.
- Renewal of Vestry floor.
- Relaying of the Nave roof South slope in lead and repair to North Nave roof parapet gutter.
- Relaying of the Chancel stone tiled roof.
- Internal timber repairs to Nave roof structure.
- Fitting of protective window guards.
- Re-leading of Chancel North window.
- Replacement of oil fired boiler with new gas boiler and incoming gas supply.
- Repairs to the south aisle walls

A Quinquennial inspection of the church will be carried out in 2015. One of the items to be addressed is the decayed state of the floor joist bearers, established in the north east corner and suspected in the south aisle and at the tower entrance.

## **2 Why do you need it?**

### **2.1 Mission based approach to building development plans**

The Church of England's stated mission is "A Christian presence in every community". Our mission statement, in the parish of Devizes, St John with St Mary, exhibiting that Christian presence in this community, is: "to be a community growing in love, faith and service; reflecting the love and faithfulness of God towards us."

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and congregations of the Parish of Devizes, St John with St Mary have responsibility for the maintenance and use of three parish buildings, St John's Church, St Mary's Church and the Parish Rooms situated alongside St John's Church. The PCC sees that it can meet a variety of needs within the town of Devizes, the Deanery and beyond, in the way in which these buildings are developed.

Following a Parish Away Day in October 2008 which developed the parish mission plan, it was decided to address the opportunities and challenges of these buildings together, as part of that plan, rather than simply as individual building projects without any reference to our overall mission strategy. We

took the advice of Andrew Mottram of Ecclesiastical Property Solutions to further that aspect of our strategy.

In St Mary's case there is a particular concern for the building's place in environmental, historical and cultural context in the local community. In the community survey undertaken in 2009 the responses indicated a need in our town for a community meeting and assembly space for medium to large size gatherings of 200-250 people. A redeveloped St Mary's would fit that need perfectly.

## **2.2 Competitive Analysis of other community venues**

### **2.2.1 Summary:**

Within the Devizes Community Area (DCA) there is no existing or potential competing facility to the proposed facility at St Mary's. Its unique and historic surroundings coupled with the intent to provide specific facilities to broadening potential audiences will give it an accreditation which other venues will be unable to match. However it will also complement existing established venues and festivals in DCA. There are no competing or comparable facilities within the 20 minute Isochrones for St Mary's.

### **2.2.2 Strengths**

Devizes' potential to attract tourist or regular visitors:

- Is enhanced by its history;
- Its position in relation to the Avebury and Stonehenge world heritage sites and Salisbury;
- Its established promotion of culture;
- Town centre car parking;
- Established tourist attractions such as the Wilshire Museum with a nationally significant bronze collection, the Calne flight of locks and Wadworths brewery;
- The long established weekly market;
- There are several annual festivals that thrive and are well supported, as well as the carnival and Christmas lantern parade.

### **2.2.3 Weaknesses**

- Devizes does not enjoy the advantage of a tourist office which other comparable Wilshire market towns do
- It does not have a railway station
- DCA's "A" roads are not duelled
- It has limited hotel accommodation

Whereas Devizes attracts tourists for a day or a few days on the basis of the above, it is unlikely that St Mary's could potentially draw audiences other than from Wiltshire or from those already visiting until it has established a reputation for excellence of entertainment.

However St Mary's has the potential to attract significant audiences:

- By providing complementary and additional venues for the established Devizes festivals – arts, food and drink, beer and outdoor arts - with the unique advantage of raked seating.
- The proposed seating capacity of 250 fits between to 150 of the Town Hall and the 400 of the Corn Exchange. A capacity very much desired by the Arts Festival.
- With its outstanding acoustics;
- It can provide a wonderful wedding venue;

- Since it is located in the centre of the town and near car parks: an important factor since public transport is limited in evenings and highlighted by Acorn Classifications for the population of post code SN10;
- It has a local community which is supportive of the proposals;
- It can use its connections as part of the Church to advertise widely; and
- By maintaining high calibre performances and artists. This could be achieved if facilities for an arts and program co-ordinator can be provided.

The church will also comfortably hold exhibitions and similar events with its planned free floor areas. A case in point could be the Lawrence Art Society annual exhibition usually held in the Corn Exchange but necessitating the postponement or interruption of other weekly events held there.

#### 2.2.4 Sample alternative and possible competing venues to St Mary in Devizes

Venue	Accommodation	Capacity	Notes
Corn Exchange	Main hall	400	Limited access to stage
Cellar Bar	Night Club type venue	150	
Devizes Town Hall	Two entertainment spaces Plus bar	150 theatre style	Provided as a grace and favour venue for Devizes Arts Festival
Devizes School	Classic school hall	c. 250	Availability restricted by school use
Bear hotel	Cellar Bar	60	Holds regular weekly "gigs"
Literary Society	Small second floor function room	40-70	No disabled access
Conservative Club			A venue for live music events on an ad hoc basis and Folk club venue
The Wharf	Theatre with Small stage	96	Operates a full programme of plays etc. Confined seating layout
Devizes Cinema	Cinema and bingo hall	c. 180	In commercial use and not for general hire

Within Devizes existing event venues are not in direct competition with St Mary for the nature of the performance and scale of events proposed. Indeed there is a complementary situation, for example Devizes Arts Festival (DAF) Events which would find the availability of retractable seating at costs proposed more attractive than attempting to source the same feature into say the Corn Exchange which is the only competing venue capable of housing an audience of 200 plus. The envisaged seating capacity of around 250 would be of great advantage to the DAF in their planning for this two week / 20 to 30 event festival.

The Corn Exchange already has an established use pattern which when used as an event venue is disrupted, a prime case being the annual Lawrence Art Society exhibition. Other venues such as The Wharf Theatre and the Cinema are not realistically available or suitable for alternative events than currently programmed.

It is an accepted principle that 80% of audiences attending events which do not have performers of national or international status are drawn from within a 20 minute drive time or Isochrone. CACI the producer of Acorn Classifications and a leading research organisation publishes demographic data to support this, and states that only another 10% is drawn from between the 20 and 30 minute isochrones. Whilst there is overlap on drive time between towns Devizes is situated with no effectively

competing towns within its 20 minute isochrones; so it is beneficial to assess competing facilities within a 30/40 minute drive sector.

For the purposes of this evaluation, village and parish leisure centres have not been considered because of their design to support local communities and thus significance has been placed upon centres of population which afford larger facilities generally.

### 2.2.5 Facilities in adjacent towns

Table to illustrate towns with facilities and established venues in relation to the 20, 30 and 40 minute isochrones for St Mary's:

Town	Distance from St Marys	Drive time (note 1)	Within which Isochrone
Bradford upon Avon	15.5 miles	31 minutes	40
Calne	8.3 miles	16 minutes	20
Chippenham	11.6 miles	23 minutes	30
Corsham	15.9 miles	28 minutes	30
Marlborough	14.4 miles	29 minutes	30
Melksham	8.4 miles	16 minutes	20
Salisbury	24.9 miles	48 minutes	40 plus
Swindon	20.2 miles	42 minutes	40 plus
Trowbridge	11.4 miles	22 minutes	30

Within the 20 minute isochrone for Devizes, only Calne and Melksham are to be found but neither offers facilities which would directly compete with that of St Mary. Whilst the Assembly Hall in Melksham has a capacity of 400 in close seating this is a configuration essentially for diners. Most of the performance events are live cinematic screenings rather than those with live performers.

The Rachel Flowers Centre in Melksham is a curious analogy to the situation of St Mary. It was a former Congregational/United reform Chapel where the main body of the building was kept intact and extensions added. Currently it provides a main hall with a capacity of 60-80 (or 110 maximum if the first floor gallery is utilised). It provides a kitchen, two store rooms, a coffee and meeting room and five toilets. It is open for hire by arts or community based groups within Melksham Community Area, for instance it is the base for Melksham Choral Society.

Beyond the twenty minute isochrone most towns already enjoy the benefit of an Arts Centre in many instances in facilities provided or operated by Wiltshire Council or the respective town council. Most venues are not perceived as obvious venues for the Devizes community with the exception of the Wiltshire Music Centre in Bradford upon Avon, which benefits from pupils of Devizes schools being members of the youth orchestra. Further afield there are attractions at the well-established venues, such as those in Salisbury, but the nature of their catchment audience and productions are not directly competing with those proposed for St Mary.

	Immediate Catchment population	Location	Venue capacity	Notes
Devizes	11,296	St Mary	300 (260 seated)	1,
Bradford upon Avon	9,326	Wiltshire Music Centre	300 seat concert Hall	1,2
Calne	17,274	None of Note	N/a	1,
Chippenham	45,337	St Andrews Church	C200 in theatre style	1,3

Corsham	10,780	None of Note	N/a	1,4
Marlborough	8,009	Marlborough College	Various to 350	1,5
Melksham	27,835	The Assembly Hall Rachel Flower Centre	300 dining in main hall 110 include gallery space	1,6,7,8
Trowbridge	32,304	Trowbridge Town Hall Arts Centre	Maximum not yet established	1,9,10
Salisbury	40,302	Salisbury Playhouse The City Hall Salisbury Art Centre	Various	1,11,12,13
Swindon	209,000	Swindon Arts centre		1,14

The Table below illustrates the broader range of facilities within a range of drive time isochrones.

- 1 Data source Wiltshire council web site and/or Wikipedia and/or CACI
- 2 This venue benefits from a well serviced facility, draws support from a wide catchment area and has outstanding acoustics and holds 100 plus concerts annually.
- 3 Chippenham holds an annual Folk Festival
- 4 Corsham Festival has declined since inception in 2004
- 5 Marlborough holds a very successful Jazz Festival
- 6 Population is of DCA
- 7 Rachel Flowers Centre is a community centre for local groups
- 8 Assembly Hall is principally a dining based facility that also holds cinema screenings and events
- 9 The Arts centre is yet to be developed
- 10 The Arc theatre is no longer generally available except for use by Wiltshire College
- 11 Salisbury Playhouse is a full commercial theatre attracting nationally known actors for its productions
- 12 The City hall with retractable seating can offer a maximum capacity of 953 in its auditorium and is a "live entertainment" venue designed to attract regional rather than local audiences
- 13 Salisbury Arts Centre is housed in a deconsecrated church with a pottery studio in its crypt. It has raked seating for performances but its interior has been compromised particularly in its white room studio in order to achieve its modus operandi.
- 14 Swindon Arts Centre has a changed management contract for its operation but remains controlled by Swindon Unitary Authority. Whilst located in Wiltshire it is principally designed to service its local catchment which is approximately one third of that for Wiltshire if Highworth and Wroughton are included.

From the information above and the niche nature of the proposed facilities it can be seen that St Mary's affords advantages over its various competitors. It offers the basis for the establishment of an Arts Centre which is adequately provided for either within DCA or the 40 minute Isochrone.

Whilst it establishes a gap in need there remains the need to attract performers of high calibre to Devizes. This ability to attract such artists is proven by those attending the DAF and by detailed consultations with potential users.

### 2.2.6 Demographics

Summary: DCA is growing in population and shows a significantly greater engagement in the arts than elsewhere in Wiltshire. In particular its "greys" i.e. those of retirement age and with disposable income form a major demand group for the arts and act as volunteers for community activity. DCA is currently

underserved with built facilities, relative to other similar Wiltshire towns from an arts and cultural perspective.

There are 20 Community Areas in the county of Wiltshire together with the unitary authority of Swindon with an aggregate population of 684,000 as at the 27th March 2011 census. Excluding Swindon the population is 471,000 - an increase of 38,000 (8.8%) since the 2001 census.

At just over 32,000 the DCA population represents the 5th most populous at approximately 7% and its growth at 16.1% is almost double the county average.

The Joint Strategic Assessment ("JSA") for Devizes Community Area 2013-2015, published by Wiltshire Council provides the following apposite information:

The Devizes Community Area ("DCA") covers 216km<sup>2</sup> of mainly rural area in the middle of Wiltshire

DCA at mid-year 2011 estimated population was 32,090 making it the fifth most populous community in Wiltshire

Over the period Census 2001 to mid-year 2011, Devizes population growth was 16.1% (4,460 persons), significantly higher than Wiltshire's average of 9.6%

As the focus of new housing and employment sites in east Wiltshire 1,265 homes were developed in 2006-2011, a further 660 new homes planned in Devizes and 225 elsewhere in DCA between 2012 and 2026

The DCA's retirement-age population increased by 33.8% from 2001-2011; well above Wiltshire's average of 24.4%

A high proportion of town centre users rate the town's offering (retail) as good 88%

Devizes attracts more shoppers from a wider area than the average for towns of a similar size

Only 8% of town centre users travel more than 30 minutes

Engagement in the arts in Devizes is well above the national and Wiltshire averages, reported by the Active People survey

Devizes is a highly active community area with at least five large community events and festivals taking place on a regular basis

The conclusion can be drawn that the demographics for DCA establishes the need for the provision of an Arts Centre since other comparable community areas have such facilities which are successful but are either less populous or less supportive of art.

### ***2.3 Venue for activities and events***

It has been demonstrated over the last few years that St Mary's can attract audiences to a wide variety of events in support of the wider aim of regenerating the building. However the inflexible and uncomfortable nature of the interior is inhibiting for both performers and audiences.

As a first step in the regeneration the PCC wish to remove the existing pews, replace the decaying timber and ledger stone floor, modernise and water proof the boiler room and update the heating system.

The new floor timbers will be of English Oak boards over an engineering base and run north / south. Care is being taken to deal with expansion of lengths of timber, circa 25mm. The flooring design reflects the new uses envisaged for the building, taking care to distinguish the sacred spaces of the Baptistry, Chancel and Sanctuary from the multi-use nave and aisles.

A number of heating systems have been considered and the favoured solution is dealt with in detail elsewhere in this application.

## **2.4 Financial Impact and Arrangements**

### **2.4.1 Fiscal essentials**

The Parish of St Johns and St Mary Devizes operates on a deficiency basis, amounting to £13,000 in FYE December 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. Reserves are being eroded at a rate which is unsustainable. Turnover in the year reached £165,000 of which £45,000 was received from Poor Lands in relation to the maintenance of St Mary and the majority for the furnishing of the proposals to develop the alternative uses.

The parish operates three facilities, St John's church being the principal place of worship and is essential for the Church of England community, the Parish Rooms which are self-sustaining and generate a positive cash flow and St Mary, the continued maintenance of which is entirely a factor of an historic charitable trust, Poor Lands.

Poor Lands has significant cash reserves but its investment income is limited and without recourse to its cash reserves it would be unable to deliver all the funds necessary to maintain the fabric of St Mary.

In order to support the proposed development the PCC made an application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant which was rejected. It is understood that this rejection was after consultation with English Heritage who oppose the planning application. In these circumstances Poor Lands resolved to underwrite the development to the extent of its available cash reserves.

In so doing Poor Lands will act as a catalyst to other sponsors that have agreed to support the development but caveated upon the certainty of the necessary development funds being secured and the grant of planning. However Poor Land support in this manner leads to a critical need to secure a regular income flow for St Mary beside that from Poor Lands. Effectively there is a "chicken and egg" situation:-

if no alternative use for St Mary is found then it will ultimately, by necessity, be made redundant and the grants from Poor Lands cease thereby placing the maintenance of the building in jeopardy, public access stopped and potentially a sale for a non-community use progressed;

or

if a viable community use is to be pursued then an extension to the church will be required to fulfill the practical necessities identified by The Trust and this will need capital in order to proceed.

The design has therefore been tailored to rigid economic strictures with no "frillery" or use of costly and possibly unsympathetic materials. Scale has been constrained to the identified needs for space identified here and via the opinion samples conducted which formed the basis of need characteristics for the facility.

The business case upon which the operation is based has been presented as part of the planning application and is regarded as conservative.

Comparison can be drawn from The Devizes Arts Festival financial performance. The DAF offers a range of performances over a two week period with target audiences similar to that proposed for St Mary's. It has only made a loss in two years of twenty and in 2013 achieved a profit of £12,000 plus based upon a turnover of about £42,000. Such funds are utilised to subsidise or cross subsidise events which are put on for community benefit and not expected to recover costs. The DAF business model is based upon its more than 240 Fiends who strongly support the programme and its cadre of Volunteers.

St Mary's is working on a similar formula. Against the festival's 240 plus friends it has over 160 followers who receive regular email updates and whereas the Festival has about 12 key volunteers and about 40 others, St Mary's already has about 15 with support from perhaps 20 more. With events in a less concentrated timeframe and a site centric venue this is expected to be a workable number with a very dedicated group of champions leading.

A new charitable company, St Mary Devizes Trust (SMDT) has been created and will be able to maintain the church under a lease agreement with the Parochial Church Council.

The PCC will continue to run and maintain the church. Grant funding will be sought to cover the capital cost of the new works.

The ability to attract volunteers, especially in the development of an arts program, has been demonstrated by the enthusiasm of the supporters of the project in the current program of events.

### **3 Why do you need it now?**

The Parish has been working hard since 2006 on developing a future for St Mary's. Unless demonstrable progress is made on delivering a sustainable future, the voluntary support that enables the building to remain open will ebb away, leading to the possibility of a renewed Redundancy Application.

### **4 What is the evidence for the need?**

#### **4.1 The starting point**

St Mary's has no viable congregation, yet it is a very significant building in the town. If the PCC did nothing then the building would remain locked and unavailable for most of the time. The PCC would be forced to consider re-applying to make it redundant: if no decision is made then it would stay as an unused and unknown asset of the parish. Such unused buildings deteriorate and are forgotten.

In 2006 the Parochial Church Council applied to have St Mary's declared redundant. The two churches in the parish were formally recombined as attendance at St Mary's had fallen significantly and it was no longer needed for regular worship.

A letter (RDT/TB/4230) dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 from RD Trahair, Property Secretary, Diocese of Salisbury pointed out that the Church Commissioners would push the Diocese to seek alternative use, such as *community use as an exhibition hall, museum, concert hall, theatre etc. A use would have to be found that left the exterior unaltered.... It is also likely that the authorities would require minimum internal changes.*

It is worth noting that this letter predicated against fitting the required new facilities of toilets and offices within the nave and chancel.

A further letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006 (RDT/LC/5375) noted that RD Trahair was greatly relieved that there will be positive local support and commitment to help try and cultivate a body of local people willing to take on the building for a community project. **This has now been demonstrated by the wide ranging and active support of many people of the town at public meetings, at events organised by SMDT and by attendance at the Planning Committee meeting, where Wiltshire Councillors narrowly rejected plans by a majority of 4:3**

The Redundant Churches Division wrote in January 2007 (RC34/112 A M G Browning) that "Whilst the board considered the church to be of sufficient overall merit vesting in the Churches Conservation Trust, it is agreed that there was enough flexibility in the contents to support a use requiring a large and ostensibly undivided space. The Board's advice on the management of change is set out in the enclosed "Options and Impact Appraisal" which addresses the principal options and draws provisional conclusions as to their impacts."

The Pastoral and Redundant Churches Secretary wrote on 20 June 2007 (NB34/112/RA) "That other ecclesiastical avenues for the future of St Mary looking beyond the parish should be more fully explored before the diocese considered closing such a building for Christian worship."

The PCC has taken note of these suggestions and set up a St Mary's Future Group to undertake the necessary research and project management. The above attachments can be seen in the Statement of Significance which accompanies this Statement of Need.

This Redundancy application was formally withdrawn in November 2009 (NB34/112B/RA) by notice from Rex Andrew of the Church Commissioners. Two factors led to this decision: firstly St Mary's was used as the parish church after the fire which had badly damaged the interior of St John's and secondly

a public consultation had demonstrated local support for a Community Event space and serviced charity accommodation.

If the development proposed is rejected then the building will be without a purposeful use and the PCC will again consider petitioning for it to be made redundant.

The plan for an external cloister was put forward in 2013 but was rejected by the local planning authority, despite strong local support. The design was taken to appeal, but was again rejected by the planning inspector in 2014. While negotiations continue over the location, style and layout of any new building, the PCC recognise that unless local support is maintained the building will again be in danger of redundancy.

Devizes and its Community Area has been and continues to be the focus for a large increase in new housing and consequent increase in population. *In 2011 this stood at 32,090 The core strategy manager at Wiltshire Council has said that in 2009 the council proposed that 2,400 new homes be built in the Devizes area by 2026. By April 2011 some 1,639 homes have either been built or received planning permission and a further 136 homes could result from brown-field site development. It was also said that in order to support employment growth up to 1,000 more homes could be built in the area and it was noted that in the last ten years more homes had been built in the Devizes area than Chippenham or Salisbury and that the Census of 2001 showed 57 per cent of Devizes residents work in the town.*

## **4.2 Consultations undertaken by the PCC**

A public meeting was called in May 2008 following the PCC vote to involve the local community in determining a viable future use for St Mary's. This was one of a number of meetings to examine the options and identify actions.

Following the recommendations of Ecclesiastical Property Solutions Ltd an opinion survey was undertaken, which involved canvassing the views of local experts and influencers on what might be accomplished with the building to give it a new purpose. This survey started in May 2009 and a final report was given to the PCC in the autumn. The survey put up two concepts:

St Mary's as a 'Medium Place of Assembly' with a capacity of about 250 persons seated, for use as an arts, sports, social and meeting place.

St Mary's as a drop-in centre and serviced offices with small meeting rooms and storage space for charitable organisations.

Following this study, details below, the PCC decided to proceed with the idea of community use with serviced accommodation for charities. It determined that there would be a number of Unique Selling Points of the venue when compared with others in the town:

- A community event space for 200 to about 250 people, with raked seating available.
- A meeting venue with breakout rooms
- Serviced accommodation for charities reinforced by the provision of modern information technology services, such as broadband access, computers and projectors.

As the project has progressed more public meetings have been held to both inform and to receive and incorporate feedback on ideas.

## **4.3 Overall response to the 2009 public consultation**

Out of 49 organisations contacted 22 replies were received with comments. These responses are detailed in 4.4 below.

The preferences of those were predictable according to their function; if they were arts then community space; if they were a charity then charity function.

No other *Great Idea For a new Use* came from the responders. Most thought the concepts were well thought through and several produced very useful additions to the detail and requests for additional information in for the next Phase.

It is considered that an opportunity exists for a Community Event Space with a capacity of around 200+ with raked seating.

Only two organisations responded with actual ideas of charity use. One, the use by a charity for the homeless, has been accommodated within the St John's Parish Rooms. The other was primarily storage and that would not meet other criteria for a new use of the building. It should be added that neither organisation followed up its initial interest. No other potential users have been suggested or identified through the process. **This continues to be the case by 2014.**

One voluntary organisation said: "St Mary's is an ideal place to develop a community resource. It was our view that a Community Event Space was more important than a Drop-In Centre. However we felt that if there is potential to develop small office spaces, these could be used as offices for charities where only one to at most two staff need a base in the town."

Another specifically mentioned the need for flexible meeting room space with modern facilities.

#### **4.4 Comments on use as a Drop-In-Centre**

If used as a drop-in centre then it follows that the building is likely to be open seven days a week from early in the morning until evening for distribution of food, showering, washing clothes, help with advice & guidance or job search. This would preclude using the building as a venue for exhibitions, weddings or funerals. It was noted that St Mary's is also much larger than required for a drop in centre.

Subsequent to the questionnaire, the Parish Rooms have been upgraded with a new kitchen, washing and showering facilities. It hosts the Devizes Open Door, which uses the Rooms three days a week for the homeless, sofa surfers and the vulnerable.

#### **4.5 Consolidation of answers to questions asked**

*St Mary's was mainly known as a landmark but not as a visited building, very few activities taking place and due to its structure being largely masked by surrounding buildings, but its central position made it accessible and would be improved by making it more open to the street.*

Most responders were in favour of developing a community use as the demand for event space for 200plus outstripped the supply of suitable, cost effective venues. Especially if it had good facilities of raked comfortable seating, good sound equipment and effective lighting .

Other attributes that would be welcomed included an open, warm and welcoming environment with good acoustics for singing.

#### **4.6 Subsequent Public Feedback**

Redevelopment plans have been presented to the parish, the wider town and they have been enthusiastically received by residents who have a long attachment to the church. Wider publicity through photographs and articles in the local paper, the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald, produced significant public support and no adverse reaction.

A prospective future users seminar was held on 23 August 2012 at which the plans were presented and useful criticism obtained from the 50 or so attendees, all representing local organisations. They were keen on seeing a larger stage space and an increased provision of toilets so that excessive waiting was avoided between performances. The attendee list provided the basis for our mailing list, currently standing at over 150 people. The new work on the interior will be seen by the people of the Devizes area that the church can be saved and will not degenerate as have the Devizes Assize Courts.

## **4.7 Contact with the public**

A website [www.stmarydevizes.org.uk](http://www.stmarydevizes.org.uk) has been built and is constantly being enhanced. Together with a mailing utility, it allows information to be sent to our list of supporters and to be made available to the general public. Bulletins are issued whenever there is news to impart or events to be supported.

## **4.8 Business Plan**

A Business Plan will not be required for the new floor and heating system as no significant new running costs will be incurred. However, one has been drawn up to support the long term aim of a having a self-sufficient facility. It is thought that the underlying assumptions are conservative.

# **5 Environmental sustainability**

## **5.1 Reduced Carbon Footprint of the Development**

Enhancing the existing church to provide a large space for community activities in Devizes for 200-250 people keeps the building in active use. Taken together with the design for a new energy efficient building within the churchyard, it means the development will have a strong sustainability agenda, saving substantial costs in energy and resources compared with creating a new stand-alone community building.

## **5.2 Energy use**

The church has an old wet radiator heating system working with a gas fired boiler in a damp, below-ground boiler room. All the windows are singly glazed and there is no insulation in the walls or roof, so the heat loss is considerable. Because it is a radiator system the whole air has to be warmed in order to have a reasonably comfortable temperature at the ground level within the church. As part of the remodelling, a ground source heat pump will be incorporated using a bore hole which will distribute warm water through a new radiator and under-floor heating systems. This heats up the area where the people are, at ground level, and so does not waste energy heating up huge volumes of the air above.

## **5.3 Flora and fauna in the churchyard.**

Will be unaffected by these plans.

## **5.4 How the proposal will influence the way people use the building**

A warm building with comfortable seating, superb acoustics with an exciting program of activities will encourage people to attend events and visit the church.

Being centrally located in Devizes many users will be able to walk or cycle to activities in St Mary's, as opposed to relying on a car or on public transport.

Almost without exception, whenever the building has been unlocked for an activity associated with this regeneration plan, visitors have arrived and ask if they might see the interior. The long term aim of the PCC is for it to be regularly open during the day for visitors.

## **5.5 Long term environmental strategy**

The long term strategy will be to bring St. Mary's Church back into more regular use, with a wider more secular nature, but also to provide a base for the local community and to encourage more locally based activities to flourish rather than travelling to go elsewhere. A revitalised interior is a first step in that direction.

# **6 Other development options considered**

## **6.1 Fundamental Considerations**

St Mary's has no viable congregation and the PCC realises that it is impractical to operate St Mary purely as a church based upon the current congregation yet it is a very significant building in the town.

If the PCC did nothing then the building would remain locked and unavailable for most of the time. It would stay as an unused and unknown asset of the parish and the town. As stated earlier, the PCC would consider petitioning for redundancy.

To make the church a useful building for today, it must have modern facilities and a new floor and heating system are fundamental to any new use.

Some possible uses that have not been found attractive are: -

Storage facility such as a carpet warehouse.	No commercial vehicle access or parking
Cinema	Devizes already has a successful commercial cinema with up-to-date equipment.
Theatre	Devizes already has the thriving Wharf Theatre
Bowling	Requires significant permanent alteration and makes the building unusable for other interests.
Sporting activities such as: Skate-boarding, Volleyball, Handball.	Prevented by the stone columns
Coffee Shop or Restaurant	Devizes is already very well, possibly over, provided with catering establishments
Full-time, art, sculpture or display gallery	The last dedicated town centre art gallery closed some years ago and there is no evidence that one could be a viable business at this time.

## 7 Sources used for the Statements of Need and Significance

Church Building Council Guidance for Parishes: Statement of Significance and Statement of Need

Council for the Care of Churches, Pastoral Measure Report Devizes St Mary. Item 9 [b] Wilts ADP 20 July 06 and 29 May 1996

Church Commissioners Letters

RD Trahair 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 RDT/TB/4230, Property Secretary, Diocese of Salisbury

RD Trahair June 2006 RDT/LC/5375

RD Trahair January 2007 RC34/112 and attachments

Paul Lewis 20 June 2007 NB34/112/RA

Rex Andrew November 2009 NB34/112B/RA

Diocese of Salisbury;

RD Trahair RDT/LC/5375 Property Secretary, Diocese of Salisbury 21 June 2006

Pastoral secretary letter 1<sup>st</sup> August 2006 Ben 363A

Diocesan Advisory Committee Notes on a DAC site visit to Devizes St Mary on 19 October 2009

Parish reports

St. Mary's Church, Devizes, Historic Building Assessment; Matthew McMurray BA (Hons) MA; Historic Buildings Archaeologist.

Appendix of Figures to the above

Summary Report on St Mary's Future Consultation 2009

Marketing Plan for the use of St Mary's Devizes as a Community Event Space 2010

Study on St Mary's Churchyard 2010

Written Scheme of Investigations for Mitigatory Archaeological Works April 2012 ref 3537-2. Michael Heaton Heritage Consultant

Future Users Seminar- Consolidation of seminar input and StMFG plans 23/08/2012

Sir Thomas Phillipps record of Ledger Stones Wiltshire Record Society, Monumental Inscriptions of Wiltshire 1822

Demaus Building Diagnostics Ltd report , 9<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

ends