



## 1. Overview and Purpose of Brief

St Joseph-the-Worker Catholic Church in Bidford on Avon is a thriving church in the centre of this growing village. However, the Church is limited in both its religious and community activities due to the lack of facilities in the building. It has already been identified that in the future, the church may have to share a priest with another parish, meaning that only one mass takes place at the weekend, and the current building does not have the capacity to accommodate all of the parishioners. Apart from worship, even other core activities such as Children's Liturgy and Parish meetings cannot be accommodated suitably on site.

In addition, there are a number of active volunteer groups in the congregation who already undertake outreach work in the community and have identified a number of needs that they believe the Church can help meet. However, developing such provision is restricted by the church's lack of facilities. The existing building, converted from a workshop, comprises just a single church space, a small porch and sacristy. There is nowhere for meetings to take place, yet there is a demand for a number of activity spaces for small and larger gatherings from both the church, and the wider community. The existing church building was never intended to be a long-term solution, yet it sits on a generous and prominent site, so is very well-located to meet community needs.

This brief has been written following an extended period of consultation and discussion, within the church and with the wider community. It has been written for the purposes of this feasibility study, and so is focussed on amount, type, quality and layout of spaces. Should the project proceed further, it would require amplification to cover matters of detailed design. This document is intended to inform and direct the conceptual options to be developed. However, it is flexible and the opportunities and constraints of the site, as identified through the exploratory design work may affect some of the priorities identified here, and this document may need to be updated accordingly.

The brief is limited to development within the church's site boundary. It has been identified that highway improvements to access the site will be an essential part of any development- either through the upgrade of Quinneys Lane, or indeed with a new access from the main road. Such matters are being considered in parallel with this study, and indeed, may affect the viability of the scheme. However, until a preferred design option is developed, it is difficult to commence meaningful discussions with the authorities.

## 2. Vision

The Church considers that the circumstances above provide not only the chance to rebuild its church building to suit its current and future needs, but also an ideal opportunity to outreach to the wider community and increase its presence in Bidford. The Church wishes to do so through the provision of a range of services and facilities that meet the community's needs, and in a building that makes a positive contribution to the village; functionally and aesthetically.

The Church's vision is to design and build a new church, first and foremost, but that is proactively meeting community needs as well as its own. There is a range of services that the Church would want to provide from the building, and it would be desirable to also be able to provide facilities that are suitable for complementary organisations and activities. However, the Church is not keen on having an anchor tenant, as it feels that this would limit their own use of the building, and would not want to be left with premises that had bespoke designed elements should such a tenant move out.

Central to the Church's mission is outreaching to the wider community, and in particular, to those in need. The Church is particularly interested in providing facilities and services that can bring people in the community together; specifically addressing social isolation. The Church has recognised that with the growing population, there are many new residents who do not know anyone, and those at home with young children, in particular, may feel particularly isolated. In addition, whilst some of the more elderly residents may be relatively affluent, many are isolated and are looking for companionship and social activities for which there is little existing provision in the village itself.

Therefore, the church particularly wishes to provide services for sections of the local community who are either socially isolated or lacking in provision. This includes young children and their parents, people of all ages with disabilities- and their families, young adults (13+), and the elderly.



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In accordance with Canon Law, the main church must be dedicated to Catholic worship only, and therefore the church itself is for that single function. However, the rest of the building should be flexibly designed to suit the range of uses that have been identified as desirable to accommodate.

### 3. General

In broad terms, the core, functional need is for a church building that can accommodate the whole congregation in one Mass and to provide spaces for church related activities and meetings, along with associated ancillary spaces (e.g. WCs, kitchen(s), and storage). The need is driven by the likelihood that in the near future, the Church may be sharing a parish priest, and therefore only one Sunday Mass (or Saturday vigil) will take place. The need includes a presbytery, that should be a self-contained house that could potentially be occupied by someone other than the priest in future, or sold off. The rest of the site should provide car parking and landscaping that is complementary to the church building in design and amenity.

The building should have a strong, distinctive physical presence in its prominent village location, and be clearly identifiable as a church. The building should be outward looking, rather than insular, reflecting the warm, welcoming identity of the church that so many of the congregation value so highly. However, the church (worship) space itself must feel separated from the outside world to avoid undesirable distraction from prayer and worship.

Consideration should be given to orientation, particularly with regards to the desire for a focal stained glass window to the back of the sanctuary, that would ideally be backlit by the morning sun. The external design will also need to be mindful of people arriving on foot, as well as traffic passing on the by-pass- ensuring that it can be understood by both types of users.

The design should be mindful of minimising long-term running and maintenance costs, yet be of high quality architecture, recognising that this is a 'once in a generation' opportunity.

The design should be fully accessible, physically, for people with any particular needs including disabilities, age-related impairments, people with very young children etc.

### 4. Main Church (worship) Space

The detailed design of the church is beyond the scope of this feasibility study, and will also be informed by published guidance from the Catholic Church, particularly relating to the liturgical requirements. However, recorded here are the views of the congregation that will influence both the conceptual design and, in time, the detailed design.

The new church should reflect the welcoming, friendly nature of the Church community. It would also be desirable for its design to reflect its patron, St Joseph the Worker, and the use of simple, natural materials, including timber would be appropriate. The warmth of the church community, articulated by so many parishioners, should be reflected and reinforced in the design of the building from outside to internally. So far as possible, the intimacy and calmness of the existing church should be carried forward into new designs.

A beautiful quality of space should be achieved through the exploitation of natural light and careful positioning of glazing, including stained glass, in a space that should be relatively simple and humble, rather than grand or intimidating. It should feel special, and separated from the distractions of the outside world, with few, if any direct views out of the space- except possibly to external gardens that are private to the church.

The sanctuary and altar table should be of particular focus, and if possible a large feature window, representing St Joseph, back lit by direct sunlight should provide a visual focus behind the altar. Consideration should be given to providing natural top-light onto the sanctuary to emphasise it as a focal point. The layout and arrangement of other liturgical furniture items on the sanctuary will be subject to further briefing and consulting guidance.



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The arrangement of seating in the nave should be such that people feel they are 'gathered around' the altar, and as such, a fanned arrangement of seating is desirable. Consideration should be given to the route of procession to/from the sacristy to/from the sanctuary, in a way which concludes or begins with a procession up a central aisle.

The main worship space should be comfortably able to accommodate a congregation of 150-175, but with the potential to expand to 200, relatively easily, and up to 250 if possible (albeit by opening up into one of the other activity spaces described in this brief). It may be appropriate that the activity space used for children's liturgy could become part of the main worship space, assuming it is not required at the main masses of Holy Week, Christmas nor weddings or funerals.

Seating should be largely in the form of pews, with some of the capacity being provided by chairs with arms, in order that some elderly or infirm members of the congregation can use the chair arms to assist with getting up and down. In addition, there should be a number of areas at the end of pews where wheelchairs or pushchairs can be positioned.

A baptismal font would ideally be positioned at the front of the nave to one side. The layout should ensure that sufficient space is provided for the celebrant, the candidate (if an adult) family members and godparents to stand around the font.

Music plays an important role at St Josephs, and an area should be identified on the plans for approximately 6 musicians to sit with room for a keyboard, other instruments and music stands. It should be positioned so that the lead can have direct line of view to the celebrant. It is likely that this would be to one side, close to the front. It would be ideal that this area also incorporates some storage for musical scores etc.

Inclusivity should be a priority, and the church design should be particularly welcoming to families with young children, as well as parishioners with mobility needs or audio-visual disabilities. Provision should be made for pushchairs and wheelchairs/ mobility scooters to be brought into church or to be stored safely near the entrance, and without impeding others. Whilst the entrance lobby would be available for parents to use if children are upset, the main body of the church should be child-friendly and encourage parents to bring young children to Mass.

Whilst the exact positioning of liturgical furniture and other religious items is beyond the scope of this study, consideration should be given in the general layout for accommodating statues, votive candles, stations of the cross etc. Also consideration should be given to the placement of a cross- though it may be that this is designed into the feature window.

A confessional that provides the options of both open and closed formats for the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be provided. Its detailed design is likely to be subject to further consideration beyond the feasibility study stage, including consulting Church guidance on this matter, with regards to safeguarding, for example. For the purposes of this brief, an appropriate size of space and location should be identified, accessible from the church.

A separate chapel is not required as the relatively small church is considered to be appropriate for smaller masses, or worship.

It is desirable that the church can accommodate projected images or information. Whilst detailed decisions over the desirability of either concealed screens, or white walls are beyond the scope of this study, designs should be mindful of indicative positions where the projector and/or images may go.

## 5. Sacristy

A sacristy should be provided ideally to one side, at the front of the church (close to the sanctuary), with its own entrance to enable processions to circulate externally to the front of the church.

The design should be mindful of visibility from the main body of the church, but with the opportunity to be acoustically separated- e.g. consideration given to providing a glass screen between the sacristy and main church.



The sacristy should provide storage for liturgical garments, as well as smaller items such as candles, seasonal items, and secure storage for valuable items and a safe, as well as a small basin.

Located off or next to the sacristy should be a flower arrangement room that should provide space for a Belfast sink (deep enough to fill vases), worktop space for arranging flowers, and shelving for storing seasonal items etc.

#### 6. Church Porch

A main entrance lobby to the church should be provided, large enough for the notice boards, piety stall, holy water and space for Mass sheets and/or hymn books to be distributed. This space may also double up as a place for parents with young children to use if they wish to leave the main worship area because their child is crying, yet still feel part of Mass, so it should have space for a few chairs. There must be a visual connection between the lobby and the main worship space. Such a space could also act as an overflow space to accommodate worshippers on occasions where there is a high attendance e.g. large funerals, Christmas, Easter, either with audio speakers or sliding/ bifolding doors.

Consideration should be given to adequate door height and width for processional crosses and for pallbearers with coffins.

This space may be separate or combined with the main building entrance, dependant upon the design.

#### 7. Main Entrance and Foyer

Either separate to or combined with the church porch will be the main entrance to the building. The entrance way should be welcoming in its design, to ensure everyone in the community feels comfortable to come inside. A strong visual connection (e.g. full height glazing) so that people can see inside before making the decision to enter, and good, clear signage can assist in this.

The main entrance to the building should give access directly or indirectly to a fairly generous circulation space. Such a space should give access to all of the main facilities, most importantly with a prominent and direct access into the main body of the church. Access to the key common facilities should be from this space, including the WCs and kitchen. The space should be mindful of the need for users to leave pushchairs, and mobility aids (e.g. scooters, frames).

Depending upon availability of suitable space, and the layout, it may be appropriate to provide an area within this foyer that can be used for informal meetings and occasional cafe use ie with some soft, comfortable seating around tables, and with a servery. If viable, it may be advantageous that it could open up, via acoustic folding doors, into the main activity hall in order to use the two spaces together (e.g. teas and coffees after mass on a Sunday). It also provides the opportunity for people to wait for an activity to start/ end (e.g. parents waiting for children to finish a dance lesson in the main hall).

#### 8. Activity/ Hall Spaces

An activity space to accommodate up to 100 people (audience style) or around 70 people seated at tables for eating, should be provided. It should be suitably designed to accommodate a wide range of activities by church and community groups including church social occasions including after Sunday Mass, children's liturgy (depending upon group size), 'Stay and Play' groups, activities for people with Dementia (as respite for carers), parish meals, large church meetings, gentle physical/ well-being activities, dance classes, community choirs or theatre groups to rehearse in. Direct access to a secure outdoor space/ garden would be desirable, particularly for use by activities for young children

The main space should be served by the kitchen (described later).



A smaller activity room should also be provided, suitable for more sedentary activities that could be used for meetings of around 15-25 people, catechesis, training/ teaching space or group therapy. Ease of access to a kitchen facility or tea/ coffee points should be provided.

#### 9. **Kitchen and Catering Facilities**

It is desirable that the building has facilities for making hot meals on site, as well as having appropriate facilities for other groups (either church, community or private hirers) to prepare hot drinks and light snacks. There is no requirement for a 'commercial' cafe, but having the facility to run specialist 'cafe format' events would be desirable e.g. dementia cafe, young people's cafe for people to meet up informally around a soft drink or food.

A full catering kitchen should be provided that is suitable for providing a hot meal for up to 70 people. Whilst the detailed design is beyond the scope of this study, it should provide sufficient space for food storage, storage of cooking utensils, storage of crockery and cutlery, preparation worktop and cooking, as well as washing up and refuse areas. It must have a separate handwash basin.

It should have a direct servery point into the main activity hall, as well as access to/from the main entrance foyer. If sufficient space, a second counter may be provided to serve the foyer space. However, it may be appropriate that this is within the foyer itself, so that it can be used independently of the kitchen, with its own tea and coffee making facilities.

#### 10. **WCs**

An appropriate number of male and female WCs should be provided to serve the building, based on the projected number of users, using Building Regulations guidance. This should include at least one unisex WC for wheelchair users, and at least one 'ambulant disabled' WC (slightly wider than standard with handrails).

In addition a unisex family WC should be provided that includes space for a pushchair, as well as a baby changing table (either fold down or permanent). It is not good practice for this to be within the disabled WC if there is only one disabled WC.

The layouts (and detailed design at a later stage) should adopt best practice principles for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

#### 11. **Administrative Office**

A small, church office for maintaining and storing records associated with both the church and community use of the building should be provided. It should contain a work station with space for a computer and printer, as well as secure storage for files and stationery. It is not intended that a full-time administrator would be based in this space

#### 12. **Storage**

In addition to storage mentioned elsewhere in this brief, the proposals should include suitably sized and located storage for the following items:

Chair and table storage (associated with the main activity space and as additional seating for large Masses).

Storage for the piety stall and/or Fair trade items?

Secure storage cupboard for children's liturgy to use for resources and equipment.

Secure storage cupboards for regular church/ community groups to use e.g. toy cupboard, respite care groups

Storage areas for seasonal items such as Christmas decorations (this could be in a loft space for items only accessed once or twice a year).

External storage shed(s) for gardening equipment, tools, seasonal furniture, outdoor toys.



#### 13. Ancillary Rooms

A cleaner's cupboard should be provided to include a Belfast sink, and space for the storage of cleaning equipment, products and consumable supplies. It is assumed that brooms, mops and domestic type vacuums to be used.

Sufficient space for a domestic size washer/ dryer should be provided for washing tea towels, hand towels and the like, and for occasional use for soiled garments.

#### 14. Presbytery

A separate presbytery is required on the site to house the parish priest and occasional guests. Given the increase in married priests (converts from Anglicanism), it is possible that a priest may have a family, and therefore a 3 to 4 bedroom house should be provided.

The presbytery should be designed and positioned such that should there no longer be a priest resident on site, it could be sub-let privately (or even sold). It should be of relatively modest size as most likely to be occupied by one priest. However, given the future uncertainty with regards to a resident priest, it should be of an appropriate size to appeal to a small family.

It should include its own private parking and garden space- but could be much smaller than the current gardens/ driveway.

#### 15. External Areas

##### 15.1. Car Parking and vehicular access

Given the possibility of a single weekend mass, it would be desirable to have a minimum of 50 car parking spaces on site. The car park would ideally be attractively landscaped to minimise the visual impact of a large car park. However, an alternative option of a more efficiently laid out car park that is screened from the rest of the site with could be explored, without compromising personal safety nor security.

The car park should provide appropriate disability spaces, should be well-lit and be mindful of personal safety and security.

Sufficient space should be provided for access by emergency vehicles, and the possibility of one or two parking spaces for minibuses.

Cycle racks should be provided (and are statutory in Planning policy) close to the entrance, ideally sheltered, and not in a concealed area- so that they benefit from 'natural surveillance'.

##### 15.2. Gardens, amenity space and landscaping

As a minimum, a small garden for prayer, gathering and occasion photographs should be provided, at or near to the church entrance which can be used by the community too. The Church may wish to incorporate a designated (but subtle) sheltered location for smoking away from the doorway to dissuade people from smoking next to the entrance, and with an appropriate bin for cigarette butts.

An external, secure amenity space would also be desirable, probably associated with the main hall, so that events can 'flow' outside on mild days. It should include hard standing space for events, play or gentle exercise (e.g. Tai Chi) as well as planting and possibly lawns. It would ideally incorporate some sitting areas for prayer and reflection. It should be screened from the car park, if adjacent, but a secure access gate from the car park could be considered for certain occasions.



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Should space allow, an external area that could be used for horticulture therapy or growing herbs or vegetables would be desirable. Such use can provide ideal opportunities for intergenerational activity, and occupational therapy.

### 15.3. Refuse and recycling

Suitably located, practical, and visually discreet refuse and recycling storage should be provided, designed into the scheme, rather than as an after thought.