

Parish Church of St Peter, St Albans

Parish/Benefice: St Peter's St Albans

Diocese: St Albans

Address: St Peters Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3HG

Local Planning Authority: St Albans City and District Council

Heritage category: Listed building Grade II*

Statement of Need (September 2021 update)

Background

St Peter's church is located at the Northern end of its parish which encompasses much of central St Albans and extends in an SSE direction to the North Orbital road. The parish has a population of around 10,900 people. Parish statistics are shown opposite. The church currently has 215 on its electoral roll but this may increase as the new roll is populated although the impact of the Covid emergency will not be known for some time. Based on pre-Covid (2017) data the age profile of our worshipping community is as follows:

Children aged 0-10 yrs	- 46
Young people aged 11-17 yrs	- 24
Adults aged 18-69 yrs	-143
Adults aged 70+ yrs	- 51
Total	264

There are four principal congregations; one each for the four services held on Sundays: Holy Communion at 08.00 (10) and 09.30 (80), Choral Mattins at 11.15 (10-20) and Choral Evensong at 18.30 (20-30) (numbers in parentheses indicate average attendance). The 09.30 service is usually accompanied by the choir or an all-age orchestra. This is a family service which has been attracting an increasing number of young adults, young children, and their parents. This service offers a crèche at the rear of the church and there is a junior church for ages of 4 years plus. Morning prayers are held on four out of five weekdays and there is a lunchtime Eucharist each Tuesday.

The age profile of the four Sunday congregations varies and is approximately as follows:

08.00 - 95% over 65 years

09.30 - <10 yrs, 10%; 11-20 yrs, 18%; 21-40 yrs, 10%; 41-65 yrs, 25%; 66+ yrs, 37%

11.15 - 21-40 yrs, 5%; 41-65 yrs, 25%; 66+ yrs, 70%

18.30 - 21-40 yrs, 5%; 41-65 yrs, 25%; 66+ yrs, 70%

At particular times of the year (e.g., Christmas Eve Evensong, some concerts and some funerals) the church can have up to 350 people attending, and numbers are also much higher than on average at services such as the Parish Requiem or at Easter. On Christmas Eve some of those attending may have to stand through the service. In addition to these services there is a Messy Church (30-100) 'Messy Toddlers' (30-40) for pre-school children under 5 years runs once per month on Friday mornings in term time. Messy Church is a larger event run in the school holidays or weekends at key times in the church year, for example, Good Friday and a Saturday in December for Christmas Messy Church. It is aimed at children of all ages and currently has to make use of the church, Octagon and library which creates logistical difficulties. Craft activities take place as well as a short, very informal, service. Periodically there has been an occasional outdoor Forest Church which runs in the churchyard to celebrate the changing of the seasons. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals take place regularly. St Peter's has built a very strong relationship with Marlborough Road Methodist church and its minister (including shared

Lent courses, for example). We also have other good ecumenical links in St Albans.

Parish statistics

Parish population: around 10,900

Number of households: 5,000+

Proportion of the population who say they are Christian: 52% (the national average is 59%)

Proportion of the population from an ethnic minority background: 14% (a little less than the Diocese as a whole)

Proportion in the 30–40-year age range: 30% (higher than the Diocese as a whole)

Proportion in the 60–74-year age range: 5% (lower than the Diocese as a whole)

Proportion in managerial, administrative, professional occupations: 62%

In the 10% least deprived areas for the percentage of working age persons (16–74 years) with no qualifications

In the least 50% nationally for children under 16 years in poverty

The church is very busy with a range of activities alongside prayer and worship. There is a regular and vibrant lunchtime concert programme which is very well attended (often up to 100 people or more) as well as International Celebrity Organ recitals, recitals of the biennial St Albans International Organ Festival and other special musical events. Some of the provision of activities for youths and children are set out in the *Statement of Significance* but in addition there are regular Toddler Time and Baby Time groups held in the Octagon room in the north Transept.

There is a range of other cultural and social events including ones organised by the Friends of St Peter's, meetings of the St Peter's Society of Change Ringers, parenting courses, visits by local school groups, music lessons, choir practices, pastoral meetings, meetings with pre-wedding couples, invitational events for newly married couples and those who have recently had children baptised. There are Church Supper Nights when a meal is served in the Octagon which currently has very limited space and catering facilities, Film Night, Lent Groups, Quiet Days, Lectio Divina gatherings and so on. The nave, chancel and north extension may each be booked for events of meetings. Examples include circle dancing, birthday and

pancake parties, Rainbows, AGMs (e.g., St Albans Ramblers), University of the Third Age, music concerts put on by external concert organisers and music examinations. Other booking requests are frequent but currently some have to be turned down due to lack of availability. The church attracts visitors, often tourists, at both weekends and throughout the week, but currently cannot always be open and badly requires enhanced welcome reception facilities.

St Peter's church's ministry team includes the Vicar, three Readers, a Curate, and several Associate Priests (see *Conservation Management Plan* for more details). The church had had a part-time Youth Worker and a part-time Children's Worker until comparatively recently but has been unable to finance their continuation. There are three part-time administrative staff including a church manager, a part-time Director of Music and part-time Assistant Organist and a full-time Verger. Unusually, the church has three church wardens.

St Peter's owns an old school building located out of sight of the church and beyond the churchyard in Hatfield Road. This is a 19th century building (formerly a school) containing 656m² of space which has been leased for many years to a variety of tenants, although the Northern end currently contains the Curate's suite (i.e., office, meeting room, small kitchen, and WC). Tenants currently include the Courtyard Cafe, MIND, Radio Verulam, Gymboree, and Talking Newspapers for the Blind. The rental income from this property is currently approximately £70,000 pa and forms an integral part of the income on which St Peter's depends and which underpins the annual budget and meeting of the parish share. The church also owns No 78 St Peter's Street which is a four bedroomed semi-detached house currently occupied by the Verger and his wife.

St Peter's has been altered in major and minor ways on numerous occasions over the centuries, including by Lord Grimthorpe at the end of the 19th century (Appendix 1) (see also *Conservation Management Plan*). The last major alterations were in the early 1980s when the current north extension containing the Octagon meeting room, a modest kitchen, library/meeting room, choir vestry, lavatories and church office were added. However, there have been no major alterations inside the church building for nearly 125 years, although the organ has been replaced several times including most lately in 2006.

Recently, steps have been taken to commence re-ordering, initially in a piecemeal manner, to address particularly urgent needs. The interior church lighting began to fail and became obsolete in 2018 and so it has been replaced with appropriate modern

lighting. Following a long series of complaints made to the PCC, a major refurbishment of the lavatories has been completed. The church's boiler was at the end of its life and became uneconomic to maintain and so has been replaced by more economically and environmentally efficient one. In 2020/21 the two vestries on the South side of the church have been completely refurbished and a mezzanine floor with staircase fitted to provide extra storage space. The linked chairs in the chancel, which had deteriorated and were very cumbersome to move, have been replaced with Trinity Theo wooden stacking chairs. The exterior of the church and the roofs require fairly regular expenditure and have been well-maintained. However, the 2018 Quinquennial Inspection report identified cracking and instability in the North-West corner of the nave and this now may now need some attention. More details are provided in the *Conservation Management Plan*.

The PCC recognises that substantial funds will be required to undertake re-ordering beyond the piecemeal re-ordering which has already been recently completed. The church's financial position is currently strong and is underpinned by significant annual income from the Churchlands Trust which has a substantial property portfolio and annual rental income. The church has several thousands of pounds of reserves which may be made available. The church also possesses a number of valuable assets, one of which (the old church hall) generates a significant annual income. However, it is anticipated that additional significant fund raising will be necessary, from a variety of sources including the congregations and over a number of years, for the full re-ordering proposals to be successfully funded and to be completed by leaving the church in a sound financial position. This fund-raising will be challenging in the aftermath of the Covid emergency.

The Need

St Peter's has now reached a moment in time at which a significant re-ordering of facilities and fabric is overdue, necessary and, in some cases, urgent. Our duty of stewardship is to make St Peter's a place that captures the wonder of its heritage while, at the same time, upgrading our building and facilities to be more accommodating and accessible. We need to do this for not only for the current church community but for future congregations and the local community for whom St Peter's is a significant resource.

The future of every parish church is in a general sense at risk from a diminution in the worshipping community and St Peter's is no exception. Since a temporary increase in the worshipping community up until 2013, numbers have been falling gradually

since. Although St Peter's does not rely solely for its finances on giving from the congregation, a parallel decline in giving is reducing potentially available resources and places some limits on mission initiatives. However, the principal issue is that the church is in danger of steadily losing the vitality that hitherto associated with its larger worshipping communities. This is felt most acutely in shrinking numbers at some services, difficulties in finding replacements for retiring church wardens and shortages of volunteers for initiatives and activities to enable the mission action plan to be successfully implemented.

Sustaining heritage assets does not mean fossilising them, but it does mean managing change carefully so as not to damage what is special.

In short, the church is vulnerable in terms of:

- Human sustainability – sufficient numbers, capabilities and skills and motivation to implement the mission effectively, and
- Financial sustainability – revenue and capital to support the care and maintenance of the building and to provide sufficient resources for achieving mission.
- Heritage asset sustainability – the church and its historic assets are vulnerable to deterioration through inappropriate change, wear, misuse and insufficient care and maintenance.

There also issues of energy and environmental sustainability. In this regard a more environmentally efficient boiler was installed in 2018 as part of our re-ordering process.

Fortunately, the church building is currently in very good condition but our ability to maintain this position in the future must be in question. However, over the past ten years, consultations with members of the congregation and those using the church for various community activities, including at 'Have your say' sessions, have made it clear that the church's facilities have simply not been up to the standards and capacity now generally expected in public buildings, including churches, in the 21st century. Indeed, our lavatories, kitchen and vestry facilities were a distinct source of complaint.

A number of principles have guided our re-ordering considerations:

1. proposals should emerge from and be consistent with our evolving Vision for Mission and Ministry (Appendix 2).

2. we should seek to enhance the sense of worship and the worship experience.
3. we should seek to protect and enhance St Peter's heritage assets while striking an appropriate balance between the traditional and change required to safeguard the future of the church.
4. we should seek to emphasise outreach by providing a more appropriate space and facilities for community activities; and
5. we should seek to provide a bright, inspiring, accessible, warm, and comfortable church with modern facilities of a standard and quality expected now and likely to be expected in the future; and
6. we will consult widely before finalising our proposals.

The current re-ordering initiative follows one begun in 2013 under the previous Vicar who subsequently departed to take up the position as Bishop of Aston in September 2015. She was convinced that a major re-ordering was necessary. Unfortunately, the ensuing period of vacancy, which was almost one year long, took the wind out of the sails of this initiative. However, the PCC's decision that nothing should be progressed until a new Vicar had been installed and had had time to become familiar with the church and its community, was a wise one. Then, in January 2018, the present re-ordering process commenced taking full account of the significant work done previously, including a very useful on-site meeting in March 2014 with members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). That meeting resulted in a detailed set of notes from the DAC which made a number of recommendations, which have been followed up by us. Since then, we have undertaken a detailed audit of activities and accommodation.

Re-ordering proposals

Re-ordering proposals designed to meet our needs are divided into two Phases: **Phase 1** (mainly, but not exclusively, relating to the interior of the church building) and **Phase 2** (mainly relating to the North extension and Octagon room constructed in the early 1980s). Appendix 1 provides a timeline of fabric changes at St Peter's to date.

Phase 1

Replacement of the concrete floor of the church

Currently, apart from six ledger stones, the floor of the nave is mainly concrete (Figure 1) but has some areas of thermoplastic and vinyl tiles and woodblock. The chancel floor is also of concrete with a number of stone slabs. The concrete floor was installed during Lord Grimthorpe's renovations in the 1890s. Views on the attractiveness or otherwise of this concrete floor vary but the floor is uneven, broken and cracked in places and is generally regarded as somewhat crude and unsightly (see *Conservation Management Plan*).



Figure 1: Concrete floor in the nave

Over time repairs have been made leading to some unattractive infillings. Furthermore, the concrete has led to sulphate damage to the 15th century, soft chalk nave columns (Figure 2), the base of one of which has been repaired by excavating the concrete and replacing it with stone. Following the inspection of 2013 and 2018, the Quinquennial Reports recommended that by 2023 there should be a programme of removal of the unattractive concrete floor and its replacement with a suitable stone floor. This would reduce the impact of sulphate damage to the columns. The 2018 Quinquennial Report¹ comments as follows: "the concrete flooring is both unattractive and harmful to

¹ Dales, M. 2018. St Peter's Church, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Quinquennial Report and Recommendations, MDP



Figure 2: An example of the damage being done by the concrete floor to the base of the 15th century nave columns

stone fabric in that salts and sulphates migrate with moisture from the concrete to the softer stone. The PCC should consider a long-term program of replacing concrete with a breathable stone flooring. This would not only improve the fabric but enhance the interior and contribute towards a unifying of the internal space.”

Options have been considered and an estimate of the cost of replacement with York stone has been obtained by our architects (Michael Dales Partnership Ltd). The proposal is to replace the floor in both the nave and chancel, with the exception of the floor beneath the organ (which is considered to be too costly to move) and in the last bay to the East in the North aisle of the nave, which is adjacent to the organ.

Given the scope of our overall re-ordering proposals and their likely total costs (including the costs of disruption over the 7 – 9 months during which the works will be completed), the PCC feels that it is now important to replace this floor and protect the columns of the nave arcade, subject to sufficient funds being available. However, the PCC also believes that we should proceed with the architect’s proposal enhance the floor at the Crossing by introducing a large and attractive, radiating York stone ‘insert’ centred on a circular pattern. This will be inspiring and will enhance the worship experience.

As part of this the PCC are also considering the call from General Synod for all parts of the Church to be ‘net zero carbon’ by 2030. The replacement floor also therefore includes the provision for underfloor heating designed to provide the background heating of the Church utilising both the current heating system and enabling the use of lower carbon producing energy efficient systems/renewables in the future which typically operate at lower output temperatures.

We propose removing the ledger stones that form part of the floor of the heavily used central nave aisle and relocating them. Three of the ledger stones – two of which commemorate members of the Strong family – will be relocated to the bay in which the Strong memorial is located. The remaining three ledger stones will be relocated to a suitable location in the floor at the west end of the North aisle. Several radiators near the West end of the nave will need relocating nearby.

Replacement of the pews with chairs

The nave currently has pew seating (Figure 3) whereas stackable wooden chairs now provide seating in the chancel and for the choir. St Peter’s pews have been progressively removed and replaced by chairs throughout the 20th century. Early 20th



Figure 3: The pews at the West end of the nave

century photographs of the nave from the West end show that there were many more pews and that they extend towards the East to one bay short of the chancel screen. A photograph of the Lady Chapel circa 1950 reveals that the pews there had been replaced by chairs (Charles Lacy, 2014). Although the extant nave pews on both sides of the central aisle present an impressive frontispiece to the congregational space (Figure 4), unfortunately they provide a major obstacle to flexible use of the principal space in the church, especially its use for outreach functions other than church services and those services associated with special offices. For example, the running of a well-attended Messy Church is significantly complicated and hampered by having an insufficiently large enough space



Figure 4: The nave pews looking towards the West

available in the nave. Similarly, because of this obstacle the church is currently unable to provide a seated meal for more than 40 people (i.e., the capacity of the Octagon Room) although there are aspirations to have larger events of this kind. Further opportunities exist which cannot be taken advantage of currently to accommodate larger events. In addition, various liturgical options which the Ministry team would like to pursue are currently infeasible because of the pews.

A further problem with some of the pews is that they have had to be bolted to the concrete floor to make them stable and to prevent accidents (Figure 5). Given that we propose replacing the concrete with York stone, we feel it would be unfortunate to have to continue with bolted down pews.



Figure 5: One of the twelve pews bolted to the concrete floor of the nave

Depending on their design, replacement chairs are likely to be more comfortable than the existing hard pews which are also poorly designed for current services because the pew shelves are far too shallow to be useful. We are aware that the replacement of

pews with chairs are an emotive issue in many churches yet it has not prevented many churches from doing so in order to gain space flexibility and greater comfort. Unsurprisingly, there are mixed views about pew removal at St Peter’s although in the last few years the balance of views has moved decisively towards their replacement with more appropriate chair seating.

In proposing to take this course of action we are cognisant of arguments that removal of the remaining Victorian nave pews may have some negative impact upon the church when viewed in totality as an example of a Victorian-Gothic church. However, this argument is to some extent diminished because it is clear from Charles Lacy’s 2014 assessment that the remaining central aisle “pews’ aesthetic value is minimal” in comparison to those installed elsewhere. The other plain pews are assessed as of “little art-historical significance”. We have weighed the likely costs and benefits of replacing the rather ordinary and inflexible pews with stackable chairs and believe that the benefits of being able to use the large spaces provided by the nave in the absence of pews greater than the costs. We propose providing for about 342 seats in the nave and chancel.

This proposal helps the mission of the church, especially its community outreach objectives which involve providing a much greater opportunity for groups in the local community to use the church’s facilities. Through increased event and activity bookings, this proposal also potentially helps our financial situation by generating more income. This item of our proposal is considered by us to be highly desirable.

Glazing of the South Door

The South Door (Figure 6) is currently the most heavily used entrance to the church by members of the congregation and visitors as it faces the car park, several pathways and the churchyard gateway leading towards the main part of St Peter’s Street.

The West Door is also used during services, especially weddings, but often remains closed at other times so that entry can be more securely managed. The North-side entrance to the North extension (adjacent to the Tower stairs) is also quite heavily used but more so by bell ringers, those seeking access to the church offices for administrative purposes, choir vestry and Octagon room. We propose introducing glazing to the upper half of the panels in the tracery of the inner South



Figure 6: The inner South door

Door in order to present a less-closed impression to those using and visiting the church and to increase accessibility. The outer South Doors will remain as they are and are closed when the church is locked up: otherwise, these outer doors are normally left open so that access to the inner doors can be gained. We do not believe that there is any significant negative impact in this proposal to weigh against the positive impact that will be gained. We consider this item of our proposals to be highly desirable.

Refreshment of facilities in the nave.

Those involved in providing hospitality (i.e., drinks and small refreshments) in the nave after particular services (e.g., themed Evensong services) or events have found the current layout of the church, particularly the distance between the West end of the nave and the kitchen in the North extension, very inconvenient. Discussion has suggested that a fold-away kitchenette at the West end of the nave would help enormously. The parish therefore wishes to install a small, well-designed fold-away kitchenette at the Western end of the South aisle.

The design being contemplated comprises three panelled concertina doors to open right to left against the South side panelling, revealing sink with work surface for kettle, coffee machine, cupboards, and drawers under and wall mounted cupboard and side shelves above to fill the whole unit. In front of that would be a trolley that wheels away from the fitted unit with work surface and shelves under for cup saucers, mugs etc. and a trolley for items to be taken to the dishwasher in the vestry. The trolley would be panelled to match the unit behind.

It will be necessary to move the existence book of remembrance to a suitable location in the Lady Chapel. As this facility will be largely concealed behind the wooden panelling of the West end of the nave when not in use, we believe that it will have

only a minor impact, but the convenience gained will be substantial.

Modernisation of audio-visual aids and new opportunities provided by audio-visual technologies

We propose updating the church with appropriate modern audio-visual systems. We have sought the advice of an audio-visual technology consultant with experience in church installations and also our architects to finalise the specification. We are also aware of the Church Buildings Council's guidance on audio-visual equipment in church buildings and we are aware of the need to carefully consider how audio-visual equipment will impact on the church.

During the Covid lockdown we have experimented with the use of screens and cameras, including the use of cameras to stream services to those joining in remotely. These experiments have been valuable in beginning to work out what is practicable and acceptable.

The present mobile sound desk is capable of being set up in three stations and each is used. Currently, the desk seems overcomplicated to operate and we therefore wish to simplify arrangements as well as review a possible permanent location. The areas of the church inadequately covered by sound amplification (i.e., the chancel and the north-west end of the nave) need improved provision.

The ability to show video and PowerPoint needs to be built in so that the current makeshift arrangements are no longer needed. Currently, there is no fixed provision for screen or projection at all. Sometimes a screen has to be precariously mounted on two tables in front of the pulpit and the data projector has to be placed on a stand in the pews leading to trailing power cables and leads which have to be taped down each time. The projector is vulnerable to being knocked over by children and others and therefore a row of pews is effectively sterilised. There are also sight-line problems. Our strong preference is for one or more retractable projection screens visible to all or virtually all of the congregation in the nave, including the aisles but we are willing to receive advice on alternatives. The side aisles will need their own projectors. We will seek advice on reconciling our audio-visual aims with the need to respect the heritage of the church as a sacred space and listed building.

The primary objective is to make simpler and better provision for preaching and other presentations, but we have other needs as well. We want the set up to be suitable for projecting liturgy and hymns for congregational use. The Covid lockdown has

enabled us to pilot several types of arrangement. We have live-streamed services to those at home and such arrangements may be used in future for the benefit of people sitting in remoter parts of the church, including the Octagon room. We will be seeking advice on mounting information screens near the South door, the North extension and in the Octagon, with the ability to loop visitor greetings, notices and (at least in the Octagon) a live video feed from a service. We will also want advice on enhancing the heritage of the building through one or more information screens recording the history and purpose of the building and churchyard.

This proposal will also encourage local community groups and others to make bookings at St Peter's thereby supporting our mission and financial objectives. This proposal is becoming more urgent on safety grounds and is also considered to be highly desirable.

Redecoration of the nave and chancel

The nave and chancel were completely redecorated in 1998. Deterioration had occurred notably beside the South Door where a damp problem has now been rectified, and also at the base of the nave columns and in various other places. Redecoration is proposed in the present white colours on the walls. Complete redecoration is likely to be very costly and we may propose doing this in stages over a few years. Complete redecoration is not considered to be urgent but desirable in due course.

Enhancement of the nave bay immediately to the East of the Mander organ and creation of a small prayer space

Currently, the Mead window and Strong memorial are somewhat inaccessible and hidden from view, partly because the Mander organ projects outwards beyond the line of the nave columns in the nave bay immediately to the East of the organ. These are arguably the most important historical memorials in the church.

Over time, this bay has become used as a convenient storage space for organ music, the Bosendorfer grand piano, choir stalls (when not in use) and chairs (Figure 7). Apart from containing two of the most



Figure 7: The Mead window, Strong Memorial and items stored in the nave bay immediately to the East of the Mander organ

exceptional memorials in the church, this bay is immediately adjacent to the exceptionally significant Temple Moore chancel screen. Unfortunately, a significant conflict exists here at present between the need for a convenient storage space and the need to enhance attention and access to three of the church's most exceptionally significant fittings.

A way forward which provides convenient storage space at the same time as freeing up and enhancing this nave bay and its heritage assets needs to be discussed and determined. One proposal is to move the more mobile items currently stored to a more suitable location nearby thereby freeing up the floor space in this nave bay. At the same time a small, intimate prayer space could be provided by moving the oak screen, which is currently located between the nave columns opposite to the space between the nave columns immediately East of the Mander organ.

This will enhance worship possibilities. Currently, the Lady Chapel acts as a larger chapel but services held there could easily be moved to the chancel or, if small, to the new prayer room which would add a more enclosed, intimate area for private prayer.

Creation of a more appropriate visitor welcome area inside the South Door

Unless they have come for administrative purposes, most visitors to the church use the South Door as do most of the members of our congregations.

Currently welcome facilities at this door are uninspiring and poorly developed. There is an obvious need to enhance them. Glazing the upper

parts of the South Door and providing information screens is part of the proposal. However, we also need more appropriate information and signage as well as an appropriate welcome counter. We need a welcome area that is not only in a visible and accessible location but one which is equipped with resources to provide first time guests and regular attendees who may well be interested in a forthcoming event. This area is also a key location where people can inquire about the church's history and its ministries and volunteer opportunities. This item is considered by us to be highly desirable.

Enhancement of the South entrance to the churchyard and the approach to the South door of the church

The 2018 Quinquennial Report comments that "The south approach to the church is understated. The combination of noticeboard (at times in place) and bollard, suggests no entry. The visibility of the church would benefit from trees having crowns lifted to allow more daylight and visibility of porch and church." The approach and path are the most heavily used entry to the church including by hearses which draw up to the South Door. Currently the path is relatively uninspiring, overgrown at its edges and overgrown by rows of trees which have not received any appropriate attention for years.

There is an opportunity here to draw more people to and into the church if the approach and pathway can be significantly improved. We believe that the cost of laying York stone along the whole length and width of the path will be prohibitive and so the proposal is to widen the area immediately outside of the South Door and to lay York stone there. The remainder of the pathway can be improved introducing an appropriate resin surface and by introducing edging to the path. The bollard and signing will also need attention to mitigate the no entry suggestion. The trees need attention and the council arboriculturist will be approached to this end. This item is considered by us to be highly desirable.

Redesign of the North-West end of the nave for the purposes of the crèche

In order to create more circulation space at the West end of the nave, we propose removing several rows of pews which will not be replaced by chairs. More space will be provided in this way for children's push

chairs and buggies which are regularly brought into services in the church. On balance, parents of young children prefer the crèche to remain roughly in its

present position in the North-West corner of the nave and not to be closed off from services. In addition to improving the furniture and storage for the crèche, we propose creating a small meeting area in the South-West corner. This will be a useful addition to meeting spaces within the church as a whole as currently sometimes there is insufficient meeting space for the demand for such space. Removing several rows of pews will mean relocating the radiators that are currently located immediately behind the last row of pews. This item is considered by us to be highly desirable.

Exploration of the potential for external architectural lighting of the church

St Peter's has hardly any external lighting at the moment. Although it is an important landmark in daytime, the church is dark at night-time unlike many of the properties in St Peter's Street and St Albans Abbey. As long as it is sympathetically designed and installed by a specialist company, seeks to take into account the wishes of nearby residents and receives the necessary approvals, we propose installing subtle external architectural lighting of the church and its tower. We believe that this will contribute significantly to the night-time townscape of St Albans. This item is considered by us to be highly desirable.

Phase 2

The church has now outgrown the facilities and space provided by the North extension 40 years ago. This is reflected in the 2018 Quinquennial Inspection Report which comments "The whole site is a very busy place with many activities happening through the week. Success is now reflected in the need for the church buildings to develop further, to accommodate growth, new activities and forms of worship and improved facilities."

A larger reception area or lobby/hall-way close to the Octagon room is needed. The Octagon room is currently just about the right size to accommodate the weekly Toddler Time (25-40) and Baby Time (10-20) as well as some small to medium sized meetings and events such as small-medium sized supper (maximum of 40 seated comfortably at tables) or coffee gathering after services. However, there is totally insufficient space in the North extension to accommodate the children's push chairs and buggies associated with toddlers and babies. Currently, push chairs and buggies, which can number up to 20 or so at a time, have to be crammed into the Transept corridor and often overflow into the chancel thereby blocking access, which is clearly unsatisfactory (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 8: Children's pushchairs parked inside the North extension corridor and entrance to the chancel



Figures 9: Parking of pushchairs in the chancel for Toddler Time

If it was not for the Phase 1 proposal to replace the pews with moveable and stackable seating, thereby making the large space of the nave available for larger events (e.g., large suppers, large meetings etc.), we would need to propose a significant enlargement of the Octagon Room. However, this would be likely to lead to an increase in the footprint of the extension which needs to be kept as close to the existing as is feasible.

A means of significantly improving circulation is needed. Currently, there are difficulties with circulation or the way in which people move around the church and its buildings. Members of the congregation who need to use lavatories during a service or event such as a concert in the nave either have to exit by the West door and walk outside and around the North side of the church and re-enter by the door near the entrance to the tower or make their way conspicuously past the nave altar or the Lady chapel and past the choir stalls and then through the chancel to the door to the North extension. They then have to retrace their steps to reach their seats. The

first route is unattractive when it is cold or raining and the second route is all too visible to everyone. This can be a particular problem for parents with children using the crèche. The PCC has considered the possibility of fitting one or more lavatories into the West end of the nave but has concluded with a strong preference not to do so.

A larger choir vestry is needed, up to fifty per cent larger than currently exists. The full male and boys choir alone can number 36 persons and in the 30 minutes or so before services in which they participate, the Director or Music needs them to don their surplices and to practice singing in the choir vestry which contains a grand piano, music storage shelving and rails for surpluses. At the moment the vestry is overcrowded on these occasions.

A more convenient arrangement for the church's offices is needed. Currently, there are two small to medium-sized church offices containing three administrative. A new arrangement is needed which locates at least one of the church offices immediately adjacent to a new reception and lobby/hallway area so that visitors can easily find a reception and assistance when required.

Adequate space for meetings of different types and sizes (including private sound-proofed counselling meeting space) is required bearing in mind that sometimes a number of meetings is happening at the same time. Currently, the church is often short of meeting space. One new meeting space will be available outside of services, events, and music rehearsals in the nave by the Phase 1 proposal to create such a space in the South-West corner of the nave. The existing library is used for meetings accommodating up to about 15 people. One further medium to large meeting space and one private meeting space is needed.

There is a clear desire expressed by the PCC that the existing North extension structure should be retained as far as practicable to minimise further archaeological impact, extensive groundworks (given the current building has piled foundations) and the sustainability/waste impact of demolition.

Outline concept proposals to address these needs have been submitted by the Michael Dales Partnership Ltd as an application for early consultation purposes (see below).

Evidence of need

The current re-ordering proposals are the latest in a long line of re-orderings which St Peter's has undergone from the late C13 to the present day, all

designed to ensure that the church is kept relevant and appropriate for its mission and activities of its communities (Appendix 1).

Consultations with the PCC and church members have taken place over at least the past six years as follows:

October 2013: Members of our congregations were invited to complete a questionnaire entitled “Your views about space use and facilities at St Peter’s”. This generated completed questionnaires, letters, and verbal responses.

2013 and 2014: A number of discussions with members of the PCC, including at an Awayday in 2013 and another Awayday when the PCC visited a redesigned church in Cambridge.

September 2014: A comprehensive informative display was mounted in church for 5 weeks entitled “St Peter’s Re-ordering and extension project. A project to improve space and facilities while preserving our historic pilgrim church - What’s it all about?” This was aimed principally at providing information but drew verbal comments from members of the congregations.

March 2017: A ‘Have Your Say Day’ was organised for St Peter’s congregations. This drew many observations regarding re-ordering.

March 2018: The PCC was invited to study and give feedback on our needs and the range of re-ordering options produced by Mike Dales Partnership Ltd in 2015. At the same time the Children’s Worker, Youth Worker and Director of Music were canvassed for their views on our needs as a church.

2018-2019: Regular re-ordering updates have been included on St Peter’s Newsletter which is produced 5 times per year in order to keep everyone in the church, and all those who consult our website, up to date with re-ordering news and progress.

January 2019: A group representing various interests in the church (e.g., ministry, music, sound operation etc.) was convened to consult about audit-visual needs. This group produced the thinking behind the proposals being put forward.

March 2020: The full re-ordering proposals and plans were presented with illustrations twice at meetings open to all members of the church on a Saturday morning. Everyone was invited and about 50 participated in the ensuing discussion.

May 2020: Views of the small number who attend the 08.00 Sunday service were canvassed regarding re-ordering proposals.

Taking the results of these consultations as a whole, it is clear that there is widespread support for significant re-ordering at St Peter’s. Indeed, at the 2017 ‘Have Your Say Day’ the general message was along the lines of ‘get on with it, it is overdue’. Among the needs which are mentioned in feedback are: the lavatories are inadequate; the kitchen is too small; the Octagon Room is too small; the ‘lobby’ in the transept is too small; the Flower Vestry requires improvement (it is described as ‘a dump’); facilities for serving drinks and refreshments at the rear of the nave after special services are non-existent; space for larger numbers such as Messy Church is problematic; some or all of the pews should be removed; better access from the nave to the lavatories is needed; a South Door reception area is needed; make the transept more welcoming; meeting rooms are often unavailable; and the area around the South Door is inadequate for Sidesman’s work

Consultations with the Diocesan Advisory Board (DAC)

A meeting with members of the DAC to discuss re-ordering needs and options was held in early 2014. The notes of this meeting (dated 13 March 2014) recognise that space, resources, and facilities had become stretched and that pressures meant that the current church building, and Octagon were often not large enough for the demand. The notes of the meeting set out a number of ‘next steps’ which have now either been taken or which are included in our planned re-ordering process. Another meeting with the DAC took place on site on 11 June 2019 during which the re-ordering proposals were presented and discussed. Statutory consultees were invited to this meeting and some participated.

Phase 2 Concept explorations

Proposals for Phase 2 are at an early ‘concept’ exploration and discussion stage.

A full activity audit of February 2019 highlighted the issues faced, and the capacity needs at that time. That the current facilities are only 40 years old is not long in the life of the church, nor as a return for the significant capital investment made. The design of the current building is such that adapting to meet the current and projected future needs is impractical. Proposals need to go beyond addressing the basic spatial needs identified for now and the short term but allow for greater flexibility and sustainability to ensure viability beyond the current generation, whilst

The current North extension building is single storey with steep pitched tiled roofs and is connected to the church by an enclosed walkway link. The Victorian North aisle wall is therefore clearly visible as are the upper stages of the north walls to the tower and chancel from much of the Northern side of the churchyard as well as from glimpses through the trees from St. Peter's Street. Whilst there is little coherence in architectural style to the relationship between the Octagon and church the form of the church is clearly legible, and a hierarchy of space exists between the two with community use clearly separated from the church.

Historically there has been significant change to the form and appearance to the North side of the church since the 1860s. When the North Aisle was extended by Lord Grimthorpe, the earlier North Vestry (accessed through the North wall of the Church opposite the South Door) was demolished (Figure 15).

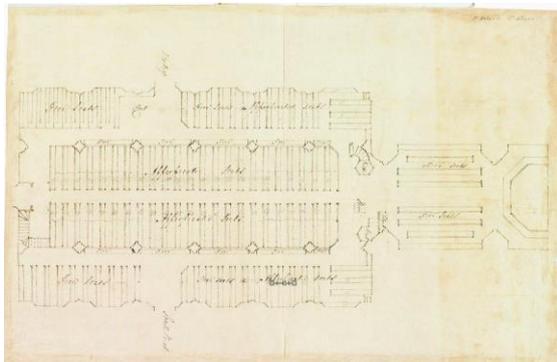


Figure 15: A drawing of the plan of St Peter's church in 1847-9 clearly showing a doorway, which no longer exists, in the North wall of the nave

Similarly, earlier, traditional forms of transept had existed both to the North and South of the tower. They were both demolished as part of major works in 1803, as can be seen in the illustration below by Baskerfield of 1787 (Figure 16).

The area of the Octagon is largely shielded from view from the street by the trees within the churchyard to the to the North of the church. The



SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, SHOWING TRANSEPTS.
From a Drawing by BASKERFIELD, 1787; now in the British Museum.

Figure 16: Baskerfield's sketch of St Peter's showing both the transepts no longer in existence, as well as an external staircase to the tower, most of which no longer exists

current arrangement (Figure 17) provides linked separation of the Octagon and church. The physical and visual separation allows a clear view of the North aisle and chancel as well as separating the function of each element. Significant crossover between the Octagon and related facilities and the church exists and is needed, as church administration, choir vestry and lavatories are currently entirely within the 'community' element.



Figure 17: 3-D sketch of the linked separation between the North extension and church

From consideration of the space requirements and context there are a number of options available in both positioning and potential scale. The first element is that of crossover – the link between the North extension facilities and church which has been identified as needing to be strengthened symbolically and physically, providing a welcome with access to both church and extension facilities as well as linking the nave directly to the facilities (Figure 18).

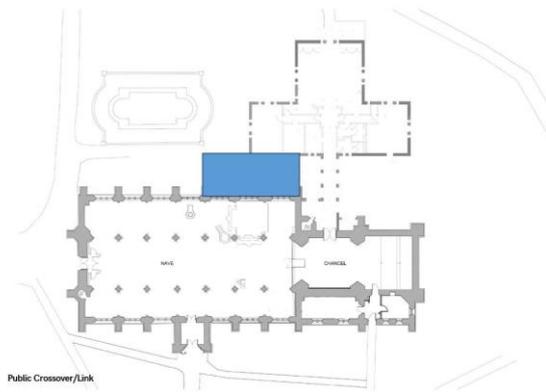


Figure 18: Strengthening the link between the North extension facilities and the church through a link between the nave and extension

Creating a physical link such as that suggested in Figure 18 impacts upon the North wall of the North aisle directly and is a key consideration due to the visual effect on the context in which the church is seen, and the point of interface between new and historic fabric.

As the PCC has expressed a strong desire to reuse as much of the existing North extension's structure and foundations as practicable, the first option apparent is the creation of a first floor over the existing footprint. This minimises potential new footprint creation, albeit the height requirements over the Octagon and choir vestry, together with the need for compliant stair/lift and increased facilities, means that this alone would not provide sufficient floor area.

Based upon more recent examples of large extensions and the issue of the crossover leads to the option of a completely new North-North aisle replacing the current Octagon (Figure 19), whether akin to the 2012-13 works at Clare Priory, Suffolk, by Inkpen Downie, or even slightly separated and more in the style of the Hostry/Refectory at Norwich Cathedral.

However, the potential visual impact upon the North aisle and contextual setting of the church, together with the increase in footprint and archaeological implications of the suggestions in Figure 19 would be significant as would the likely cost (given the probable foundation requirements too). This option would also fail to achieve the PCC's desire to re-use the existing structure as far as practicable.

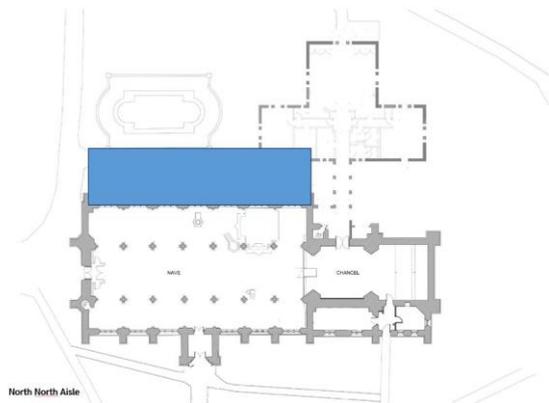


Figure 19: Creation of a new North-North aisle which could possibly replace the Octagon

Another apparent option apparent is the reintroduction of a longer but more traditional style North Transept (Figure 20). This would extend from the North side of the tower at similar height as the pre-1803 North Transept extending over the Octagon.

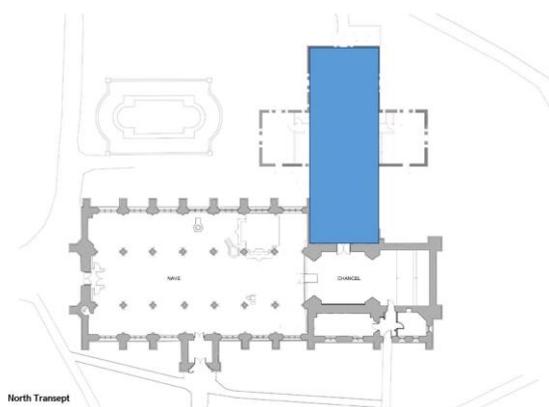


Figure 20: Reintroduction of a longer but more traditional style North Transept similar to the pre-1803 North transept that was demolished

This option benefits from leaving the North aisle visible and legible (subject to detail of the link to the nave) (Figure 21). Intersection between the tower and new element would also be at the point where the pre-1803 North transept intersected and therefore any new disturbance might be minimised. As is the case with the first option, the height requirements over a main hall space together with the need for compliant stair/lift and increased facilities means this alone will not provide sufficient floor area to meet the needs identified.

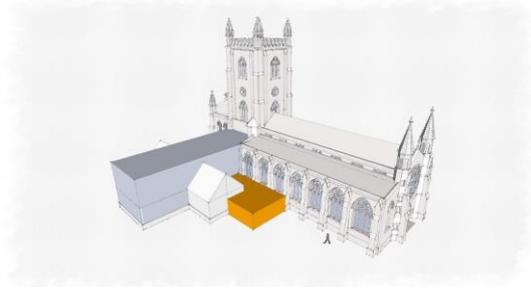


Figure 21: The traditional-style former North transept 'recreated' with a direct link to the nave

2014 – 2015 sketch schemes

In 2014 and 2015 when re-ordering was being investigated, sketch schemes (Figures 22 – 25) were the start of the process for the development of the current proposals with the options for the location of the North access link considered, along with works to the West end bays of the Nave and Aisles, and a degree of infill between the Octagon and chancel.

None of the alteration schemes considered were felt to meet the needs of the PCC and a new-build option was considered the most favourable at the time, albeit that the initial sketch scheme for this did not fully resolve the access issue from the North aisle.

The PCC subsequently entered an interregnum period and halted scheme development. Following this period, the PCC re-evaluated their needs in 2018 and established the modified needs that form the basis for the current multi-phase approach, with Phase 1 already underway and focussed upon the church building and infrastructure to meet the more immediate needs.

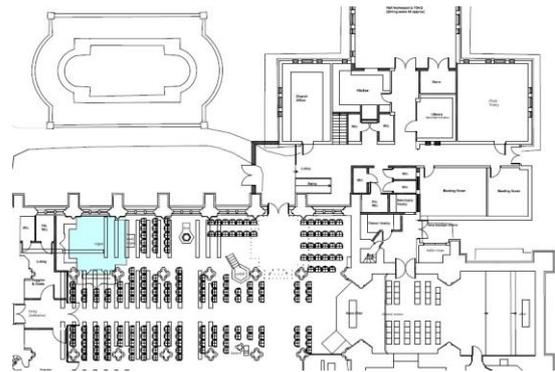


Figure 23: 2014/2015 Scheme C (Ground Floor) – Considering organ re-location and facilities at the West end with partial infill between Chancel and Octagon

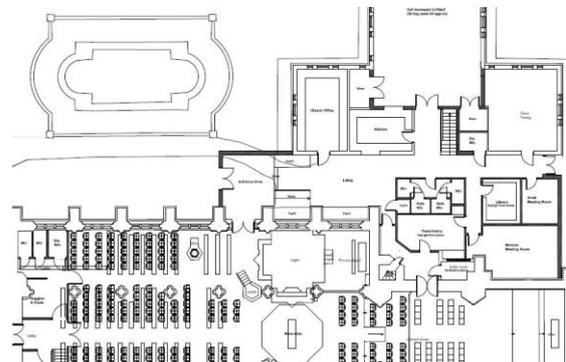


Figure 24: 2014/2015 Scheme E (Ground Floor) – Considering access at third bay from East with facilities at the west end and full infill between Chancel and Octagon

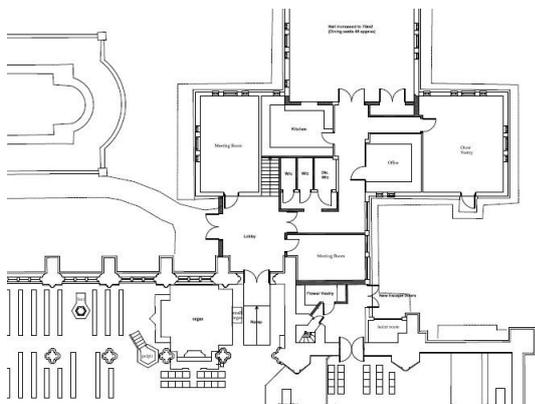


Figure 22: 2014/2015 Scheme B (Ground Floor) – Considering access at the East bay of the North aisle

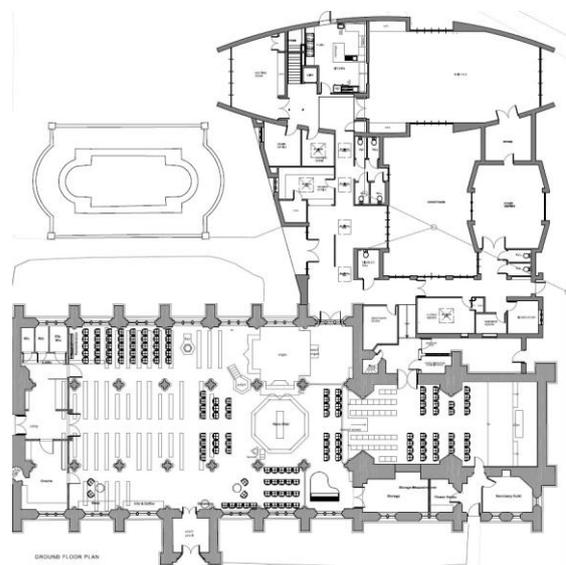


Figure 25: – 2014/2015 New-Build Sketch Scheme (Ground Floor)

At present the hall link interface with the North side of the Church is at the North side of the Tower. There is a small infill lobby area between the link and North aisle providing means of escape from the Chancel and Tower stair, and a lean-to boiler house. The windows to the chancel have high level cills such that any single storey element adjacent to this wall would be below this level.

Clear views of the Church from this side are restricted by the trees within the Churchyard and the Octagon. The area between Chancel and Octagon currently exists as an area without any clear identified purpose and as such is underutilised other than for access to the boiler house and escape from the Choir vestry. The lower section of the Tower is seen internally within the link to the Octagon.

2019 schemes

The 2019 schemes utilise the first window West of the organ in the North aisle (3rd from the East) as the linking access point. This is one bay West of the pre-Grimthorpe vestry but was identified (from the 2014/2015 sketch schemes) as the most suitable link point not only for the glazing at low level in this window being of plain quarries and that the panels of 14th century glazing fragments would not need to be disturbed.

- Moving the organ is not considered practical nor financially feasible which rules out access via the second bay from the East.
- The Eastern bay (East of the organ) is also East of the Nave altar position and therefore fails to resolve discrete access for worshippers/audience member to facilities during a service or performance. The window to this Eastern bay is also stained glass and the stonemasonry to each of the North aisle windows is different so the entire window would need to be relocated to enable access.
- There is no clear view from the third bay from the East of Nave or High altar positions .
- There is clear space naturally defined between font, pulpit, and organ.
- The third bay from the East offers minimal encroachment across the North aisle externally.

- The central bay would align with the South door but would require relocation of the font and extend the overlap externally across the length of the North aisle.

From the identification of the spatial needs and activity peak times, analysis of how spaces need to interact has been undertaken. Initial sketch schemes were developed based largely upon the footprint of the existing Octagon building, with the reinstatement of the pre-1803 North transept footprint (between current Octagon and tower), some further single storey infill between Octagon and chancel and the connective link to the nave (Figure 25).

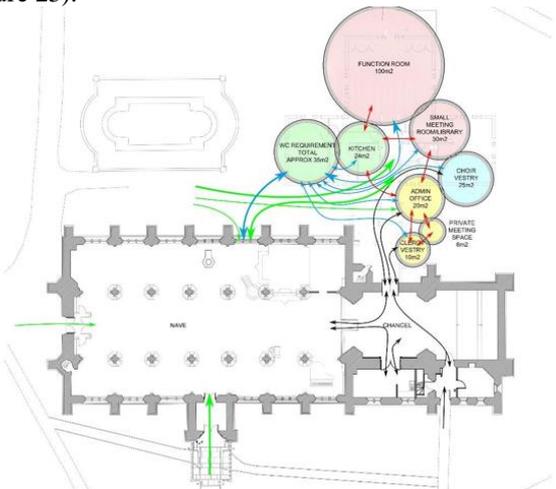


Figure 25: Spatial needs, activity peak times and space interaction

Initial Sketches focussed upon scale relative to the church (Figures 26 and 27).



Figure 26: Initial sketches of new North transept



Figure 27: Further initial sketches of new North transept

Options in terms of general massing were subsequently explored with the major element orientated North to South (as a transept) and East-West over the main length of the existing Octagon and also trialled set further North across the existing main Octagon space itself to re-create a greater space separation between the major hall element and the Church (Figures 28 – 30)



Figure 28: Main Element North-South as Transept



Figure 29: Main Element East-West over similar element of existing Octagon



Figure 30: Main element East-West over existing Octagon to increase separation

These three options were each worked up to full spatial schemes to assess their potential impact and relative merits (Figures 31-34). Consideration was also given to the potential of excavating within the current footprint to reduce above ground massing. This would further minimise the potential impact



Figure 31: (2019) Initial Sketch scheme showing Ground Floor option



Figure 32: (2019) Initial Sketch schemes showing East-West First Floor option

upon the historical setting by maintaining the appearance a single storey height building above ground. However, this proved counter-productive due to increased escape circulation space requirements and the need to provide natural daylighting significantly impacting useable floor area.

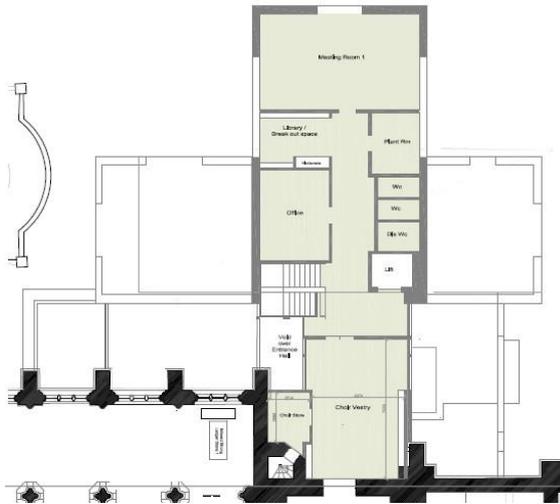


Figure 33: Figure 31: (2019) Initial Sketch scheme showing North-South First Floor option



Figure 34: (2019) Initial Sketch Scheme (Ground Floor Plan) for alternate arrangement with main block set further North

The current proposed scheme (as of 2020) has been developed through a process of numerous iterations, each time reviewed by the PCC's Building committee and the architects as the style and form of the proposals has been clarified.

Reviewing the initial schemes, it was clear that a low-level link was problematic as the cill heights of the North aisle windows are too low for a doorway to fit beneath, albeit that the nave floor is approximately 200mm below the floor in the chancel and Octagon in its current form, and so a low link stepping forward from the main body of a new transept building appears out of scale and alignment in relation to the church. It was also noted that a low ceiling height in the link presented numerous issues with detailing against the North aisle wall in terms of weatherproofing, alignment and reading of the building. It was also noted that the current Octagon alignment does not address the garden of remembrance, nor does it align with the scale and rhythm of the North aisle.

The principle of the new link providing a coherent entrance and welcome space for community and church use, whilst maintaining a clear view to allow the reading of the historical context, remains central to the development of the current proposals. The proposals have also been further modified to increase facilities and form a parish centre encouraging community access, use and engagement with the church.

Appendix 1

Timeline of significant changes to fabric of St Peter's Church and churchyard, St Albans (compiled by R Butler)

10 th Cent.	Reputed foundation of St Peter's. Original floor plan probably marked by line of the present nave arcade up to the most Westerly columns.	Saunders, 1995, N&T, 194
13 th Cent.	Earlier West wall and doorway constructed in the position of the present most Westerly columns.	Carey Morgan, 140
unknown	Original chancel of 40-foot length.	Kinn, 2
Late 12 th / early 13 th Cent.	Tower constructed, 33 feet square.	Gesta Abbatum. (Rolls Ser.), i, 388-9 Kinn, 2
Late 13 th / early 14 th Cent.	North and South transepts built out from tower crossing.	N&T, 287
Early 14 th Cent.	Charnel chapel founded at South West corner of Churchyard	Page
Early 15 th Cent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nave arcade constructed in its present form, on Saxon foundations. North porch entrance to nave, demolished 1893. 	Saunders, 2001 Carey Morgan, 141 E.M. Brabant sketch 1865
1725	Gallery erected at West end to receive the 1660 Ralph Dallam organ from the Chapel Royal, Windsor.	Bell
1728	Private oratories (one in the South aisle and one in the North) existed at this time, subsequently removed.	Salmon, 90
1756	Tower arches removed and loftier ones inserted, ringing room floor raised to improve perspective view of the chancel from the nave.	Kinn, 2
1785	Tower underpinned with timber.	Kinn, 2 Reyn, 5
1799	Bells removed and top of tower taken down in view of parlous state of the tower.	Carey Morgan, 167-8
1801	Belfry floor and temporary tower roof collapsed.	Kinn, 2 Reyn, 5 Carey Morgan, 168
1803	1803/4 Demolition and rebuilding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both transepts and chancel demolished, and materials auctioned. Former transept openings into crossing sealed up. Stub chancel built in brick (with the exception of the east face). Many old memorials believed lost at this time. Present tower erected and rendered in rough cast to match rest of church. 	Kinn, 10 HALS Faculties DP93/6/4 1802-1931
1830s	Gas lighting installed?	Saunders, 2001 p4
1863	Pulpit by J. A. Goyers of Louvain installed, initially to the South of the chancel arch and later moved to present position.	Reyn, 9
1893	Grimthorpe Restoration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15th Century nave wall North demolished and present wall erected four feet further north to widen the aisle. North porch and entrance demolished. West wall and doorway demolished, and present West wall and turrets built a bay further West with new rose window. West bay of arcade added to nave. 	Saunders, 2001 Reyn, 7-9 Carey Morgan, 170

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gallery demolished and organ moved to North side of choir chancel. • 1803 stub Chancel demolished, and present Chancel erected. • Nave roof raised to present height from position indicated by decorated corbels and chevron cill on tower wall. • Clerestory windows added. • Rough cast render removed from all external facings to reveal present brick or flint facings and stone quoins. • Nave floor raised to present level. 	
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chancel Screen erected • Oak panelling in present choir chapel • Font moved 	Reyn, 9 HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric lighting installed 	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New heating system • Organ rebuilt and extended to South side of present choir chapel on girders over old choir vestry as well as North side 	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1953	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lady Chapel screen erected. • Lady Chapel altar rail installed. • Oak panelling of South wall of Lady Chapel 	Reyn, 9 HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1955	Font moved	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1972	Re-wiring and new lighting	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old organ removed and new Bishop & Son organ with movable console installed at East end of North aisle • Pews removed from front of nave to create choir chapel 	Bell
1982	New boiler house erected and boiler linked to existing system	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churchyard to North cleared ready for building of extension • Northern extension comprising corridor, office, library, WCs, choir vestry, library, storage, kitchen and Octagonal meeting room erected 	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car park on South side of churchyard created • Existing footpath widened 	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Font moved • Drop-in central section added to existing high altar communion rails 	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wooden doors of lobby at West end removed • Replaced by etched glass doors 	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1998	New lighting system installed	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2005	New Mander organ installed in the place of the 1975 organ	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's

2005	Octagon Kitchen upgraded	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2008	Chancel re-roofed	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2013	Office area created within the existing 'library'	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2013	Introduction of a Memorial Sculpture by Sarah Dilley into the Garden of Hope	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's