

Statement of Needs: **St Andrew's Church, Stapleford**

Draft as at 23 August 2026

Table of Contents

What are the needs?	3
CONTEXT	3
WHY WE ARE SEEKING IMPROVEMENT	6
WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD BE ADDRESSED BY THE PROPOSALS?	7
What is the evidence for the need?	9
Describe the proposals	13
CEILING	13
HEATING	13
LIGHTING	14
SEATING & FLOORING	15
SEGMENTING THE SPACE	16
STORAGE and SERVING REFRESHMENTS	17
ACCESSIBLE TOILET	17
ENTRANCE DOORS	18
SUMMARY	18
What other options have been considered? Why have you chosen the proposed option and discounted others?	19
CEILING	19
HEATING	19
FLOORING	20
SEATING	21
SEGMENTING THE SPACE	21
STORAGE and REFRESHMENTS	21
Why should the proposed changes be made now?	23
How would your proposal help the worship and mission of your church?	24
How does the project contribute to environmental sustainability?	25

What are the needs?

Here, talk about the reasons for seeking improvement, not the proposal.

- *Why are people seeking improvement?*
- *What problems would be addressed by the proposals?*
- *Remember to be specific and people-based.*

Make sure this includes information for someone who does not know your parish. For example:

- *How is your building currently used for worship or community purposes?*
- *How many people live in the parish/ village/ town?*
- *How many people are on the electoral roll?*
- *What different types of services take place in the church each week/ month and how many people attend each of the different services on average?*
- *What is the age profile of the congregation? What provision for children is there? How many children attend these activities?*
- *Are there any plans for the development of housing in the parish or nearby?*
- *Is the church normally left open during daylight hours?*

CONTEXT

Stapleford has a population of about 1975 (2021 Census). Many people in our community have never, or rarely, been to church. In the 'National Census 2021 Dashboard for the Parish of Stapleford: St Andrews' (hereafter Census), almost as many people describe themselves as of 'no religion' as 'Christian.

Our community is expanding, recently through a major sheltered housing development and care home. We anticipate significant house building within the next decade. We want to be ready to serve our new neighbours.

The Census shows that we have diverse household composition in our community. We live in an area of comparatively low deprivation, yet still with people who have very significant need. Employment rates are high but people are extremely busy and can become isolated. Our community has relatively low ethnic diversity and more older people than many similar villages. We want to make busy people, whatever their life and family stage, whatever their religious and ethnic origin, whatever their gender and sexual orientation, welcome and we want the church to be relevant to the challenges they face. As the only church in our community we want to show the transforming power of God's love and forgiveness in everyday life.

Our church building is used mainly on Sundays, typically for two or three services for a total of 80 people, and lightly during the week for music, prayer and concerts – see the table overleaf. We use the Johnson Hall and Verger's Cottage, 200m down the road, fairly intensively for small events for many community groups. We also use the churchyard for events in warmer months.

We seek to meet the needs of our community by offering diverse styles of service (BCP Communion, All Age, Messy/Forest Church, Evensong), groups for particular people (e.g. parents with toddlers (Little Fishes), older people (JOY), men, women) and open events (concerts, festivals, newcomers teas). We place high value on safeguarding throughout.

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
0900	BCP Communion				Morning Prayer		
1000	Mid-morning service		Organ or piano practice		Monthly Communion		
1100							
1200							
1300							
1400		Singing lessons		Funerals etc			
1500							
1600							
1700							
1800	Monthly Evensong	Evening Prayer		Music lessons & choir practice			Concerts & other events
1900		Monthly prayer meeting					
2000			Handbell ringers				
2100							

	Area of church used	Frequency of usage
	Chancel	Every week
	Chancel	Once a month
	Whole church	Every week
	Whole church	Once a month
	Whole church	About six to eight times a year, could be on any day or time
	Lady Chapel	Three times a month
	Eastern part of nave	Every week in term time
	South eastern part of the nave	Weekly in term time (organ/piano practice could be any day or time)

WHY WE ARE SEEKING IMPROVEMENT

Although the church building is beautiful at its best, and is kept unlocked at all times, you can't see into it. It is often dark, making seeing, reading and participating difficult. The lights are poorly designed, unreliable, hard to repair and inflexible.

Following a helpful initial visit in November 2019, Geoffrey Hunter stated in his subsequent notes that: 'The current oak pews appear to be of mid-late 19th century date. I could see no sign of earlier work incorporated into them. While the pews are in reasonably good condition, they are very small with low vertical backs and it is easy to understand why the PCC might want to see them removed.' As well as being uncomfortable, they are dark, inflexible and their design incorporates a dangerous trip hazard. They limit the use we can make of the building.

The building is physically challenging. The heating system fails frequently, takes a long time to warm the space, cannot provide local heating and is carbon intensive. The space is visually fractured by the use of many different floor materials. Ceiling plaster has fallen several times in the nave and needs to be repaired, probably wholesale, although temporary netting provides protection in the meantime. It is hard to move around the building if you are in a wheelchair and the toilet is completely inaccessible.

It is difficult to run children's activities successfully without separating them completely from the main church services, because of the remoteness of the Johnson Hall. This is particularly frustrating given that we have had up to 20 children attending Forest/Messy church, but typically far fewer or none during other services.

The ringing chamber is very difficult to get to because of the steep ladder and many ringers are not able to reach it safely.

It is hard to offer refreshments because of the inflexibility of the space within the building.

Together, these factors hinder our welcome, stop us building on what is working well (eg: attracting children and young families through Little Fishes and Messy/Forest Church) and limit our flexibility and ability to make better use of the building during the week.

WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD BE ADDRESSED BY THE PROPOSALS?

The ceiling repair would keep everyone safe.

The new heating system would provide thermal comfort, controllability and reliability, and substantially reduced carbon emissions.

Better lighting would show off the historic beauty of the building and make it easier for people to see, read and participate. It would also simplify maintenance.

Segmenting the space within the church would make it better suited to small meetings and allow us to run children's activities as part of the service rather than completely separate from it.

New seating in the nave would give greater comfort and flexibility, and let us offer different styles of service and event. It would be much easier to provide refreshments to make people feel welcome. Retaining the beautiful and comfortable pews in the chancel will help us make connections to the history of the building.

A level-access floor throughout will make it much easier for people in wheelchairs, or who are unsteady on their feet, to gain access to all parts of the building. A single flooring material throughout the nave would also visually unite the space and lighten its appearance. Using high quality flooring would better complement the beauty of the rest of the building.

Installing a toilet, suitable for people with disabilities, in the vestry will make the building more pleasant and accessible.

Moving the font to near the main door of the church will make it easier for the families and friends of people being baptised to participate in the service.

Glass doors will open the view into the church and make it easier and safer to enter the building.

Bringing the building up to date, while respecting its heritage and beauty, will help us welcome people and show God's love in a warm and practical way.

What is the evidence for the need?

- *How can you demonstrate to the decision maker that there is a strong rationale for this change?*
- *Is the work recommended in the Quinquennial Inspection report?*
- *Has change in the congregation or community created a new need?*
- *Are facilities lacking in the church or community?*
- *Does this give you an opportunity to expand current activities or worship styles held in the church?*
- *Have you done an accessibility audit?*
- *Have you completed or undertaken any of the following to support the proposal:*
 - *the Energy Footprint Tool (on the Online Parish Returns system)*
 - *the Practical Path to Net-Zero*
 - *a heating checklist*
 - *an energy audit / decarbonisation action plan*
 - *registration, an award, or working toward an award with Eco Church (an A Rocha UK project)?*
- *Have you done any consultation or surveys? Have you spoken to people in the church and community? Have you received any letters of support?*

We are working with Archangel Architects in Cambridge to develop the proposals in this Statement of Needs. We chose this firm, with its long experience of church re-ordering, because of its ability to act as a thought partner and critical friend. This has repeatedly been beneficial. We intend to use Archangel to manage the re-ordering work as it goes ahead to make sure it is done efficiently and well.

The proposals described below were informed and guided by a very helpful discussion at St Andrew's Stapleford, with Geoffrey Hunter (Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral, Diocese of Ely), based on 'St Andrew's Church, Stapleford - A Vision for our Buildings Preliminary Report- September 2019'. As part of that discussion, we talked about building a new building (church hall, vestry, office and storage space) onto the back of the church or connected to the church and within the church grounds, perhaps extending into diocesan glebe land, which Ely Diocese has indicated may be available. We also explored making parking space available. However, after exploring these options, and given our resources, we settled on the current proposal based on re-ordering of our existing building. We may in the future make a separate proposal in the based on an additional building. The current proposals are designed to be useful even if we subsequently go ahead with constructing a new building.

The changes we propose all build on what we are already seeing. When people feel welcome they are happy to come to church (as when our Forest Church removed barriers to people who have never been into a church building). Children and parents are happy to come to church when the activities take account of their needs. Physical comfort avoids distraction and lets people benefit from participating in worship and other activities. Some older members of the congregation have stopped coming to services because they find the pews so uncomfortable.

The Quinquennial Inspection report (Oct 2025) focusses on maintaining the building. Beyond that we want to maximise the value the building to our community.

The church clearly lacks facilities that it ought to offer (accessible toilet, flexible space, a place to enjoy refreshments). We have audited ways to improve accessibility: physical, visual, aural, mental.

We have audited heating systems using these criteria: carbon emissions (now and in the future), cost (installation and running costs), controllability and reliability, visual and physical impact on the building. A typical pattern of use for the church building is: Sunday 5-8 hours (for services) using the whole space; spread through the week 10 hours (for choir practice, music/singing lessons, organ practice, handbell group, prayer meeting) using small areas within the church.

We have gained an A Rocha bronze award for sustainability and are looking at how to gain a silver award.

Immediately before Covid-19 we carried out surveys of both the congregation and the community. The congregational consultation was in November 2019. The community consultation was in February 2020, in the village magazine *The Messenger* (620 copies distributed) and community. The consultations were not about specific proposals, but about the purpose of the church building. Across these surveys we found good alignment on the following points:

- The church building should be comfortable, accessible and welcoming, a space suitable for both traditional and modern uses. It is a superb building in a lovely setting. The church should be a flexible space for use by both church members and the wider community. It should, within the constraints of its age, be sustainable, and reasonably economical to run, and suitable to be hired out for a variety of purposes.
- During the consultation we noted that the main space should be suitable both for worship and other functions. It should be easy to change from one event to the next, suitable for traditional front facing services, services in the round and in other layouts such as for 'Messy Church does All Age Communion', and

suitable also for a variety of social events, meetings, classes, and other events both for the church family and the community.

- It is clear that the building needs to be wheelchair accessible from the outside and internally with no restriction on where a wheelchair user can sit or go except for the upper vestry storage area. In this we include access to the chancel up to the sanctuary steps, though thought may need to be given in the future as to how to facilitate access to the sanctuary for possible future clergy with mobility difficulties.
- Any adaptations needed for multi-function use should not detract from the essential sanctity of the building and its primary use as a place of prayer and worship.

Having formulated plans and obtained a budget estimate of costs, and having received initial feedback from the DAC it was always our intention to consult again with the congregation and community about the proposed changes. We are now at this stage. Our aim is to sharpen our thinking through the consultation process, not simply to gain support.

Describe the proposals

Include enough detail so that, alongside any drawings, your proposals are clear to someone who does not know the building.

- *What are the changes?*
- *Where are the changes?*
- *How do the changes impact accessibility, including lighting, sound, circulation spaces and locations for activities?*
- *Is there any professional supervision?*

The overall plan for re-ordering the church is shown in attached *Plan 0606-111b Ground Floor Plan - Proposed*. Here is a summary of the proposed changes.

CEILING

Close inspection from scaffolding of all areas of the nave, remove plaster from all loose areas, clean the lath, apply lime plaster¹. If lath has to be replaced, we will use riven chestnut lath.

HEATING

Our plan is to install new electric-source heating to move towards net zero carbon status. We propose to install:

- three Herschel Halo infra-red chandelier heaters along the main axis of the nave and one in the Lady Chapel and wall mounted infra-red heaters high on the aisle walls;

¹ G Cook & Sons <https://www.georgecook.co.uk>

- under-pew heaters in the chancel, not least to preserve the character of the most distinctive and historic part of the building;
- infra-red panel heaters in the upper and lower vestry and toilet.

The heating control system is designed so that we can heat only those parts of the church that are needed for whatever activity is under way. The control system will be designed to come on a short time before the building is to be used and turn off again shortly afterwards.

We will remove the gas-fired boiler from the small underground room beneath the vestry. We hope to be able to use this area for storing items that are insensitive to damp. We will also remove the radiators and air blowers from the walls of the nave and chancel.

LIGHTING

The Herschel Halo heaters include LED up- and down-lighters but they will be insufficient to light the nave. We will install a system of LED lights to accentuate the beauty of the building, improve quality of illumination and light only those sections of the building that are being used. We will also design LED lights for the chancel, in a way that complements that nave lighting. We will update the lighting in the porch, vestry and tower with LED lights.

The interior of the church is made much darker by the presence of large yew trees close to the windows. Geoffrey Hunter (see reference above), commented that 'I do not think any of the yews I saw are particularly ancient... The Yews on the south side of the church do appear to exclude a significant amount of sunlight from the church.' We

would like to remove or significantly trim them so as to maximise natural light entering the building and reduce the carbon footprint of the church.

SEATING & FLOORING

We intend to replace pews in the nave with Howe 40/4, Trinity Theo or equivalent chairs with timber back and seat, which can be arranged according to need (see plan *0606-161 Furniture Layout Options*). We will remove the small and very uncomfortable pews from the nave, though retain the more architecturally and historically interesting pews in the chancel. We will continue to use the moveable choir pews and stalls. The number of those needed for any particular service varies, so we will make space to store surplus choir furniture in the south aisle of the nave.



We also intend to replace the mish-mash of current flooring in the nave with a locally-sourced limestone (eg: Ancaster) floor similar to the one in All Saints' Church, Harston (see photograph). A new subfloor will be installed throughout nave, aisles and tower base comprising limecrete slab on glass bead insulation.

We have measured the height of the current floor in the nave – it varies by about 80mm from place to place – and found that it is possible to

produce a single flat floor spanning the nave and providing level access to the vestry, porch and chancel (with minor localised adjustment in each case). Levelling the floor in

the nave, and from the nave into the chancel, porch and vestry, will substantially improve accessibility.

The orientation of the stone slabs is designed to hide the irregularity of the building's construction.

We will look at the cost of installing underfloor pipework for a potential future underfloor heating system, possibly connected to a heat pump, which might be needed if the church building becomes much more heavily used in the future.

SEGMENTING THE SPACE

We plan to separate two parts of the church, as follows:

- We intend to separate the Lady Chapel using glass partition walls to enable separate children's work to take place for part of services, and to make it easier to use the Lady Chapel for prayer, and for this to be heated separately, in line with ChurchCare guidance. We will incorporate built-in storage within the Lady Chapel, eg: for storing children's craft activities, along the north wall of the Lady Chapel, and a new wall-mounted communion table on the east wall to replace the large freestanding table. Entry will be by glazed double doors on the west side.
- We also plan to separate off a space under the bell tower for use, eg: as a creche, and to provide a staircase for safe access to the ringing chamber (replacing the very steep ladder that is currently used for access). We will incorporate full height, built-in storage along the north wall. There will also be storage underneath the staircase. The design of the staircase will be open to allow light to enter from the west window. Entry to the creche area will be by

glazed double doors which can be left open when we want to include the area in high-attendance special services.

STORAGE and SERVING REFRESHMENTS

We have designed built-in storage on the west wall 'full height' (up to window sill level) at the back of the church, either side of the tower, including areas for storage of folding Gopak tables and unused stacks of chairs on mobile trolleys. We will move the parish chest from the west wall to the south wall, creating space by moving book shelves further east (now positioned next to the main door).

At the west end of the north wall, will create a kitchen area incorporating an integrated sink, fridge and dishwasher that will be disguised, using a folding top, when not in use, and a mobile serving console that can be used for refreshments. The mobile console will be stored against the north wall when not in use.

The designs of the storage areas, kitchen facility and serving console will use high quality woodwork, consistent with the quality of the building.

ACCESSIBLE TOILET

We will install an accessible toilet in the lower vestry. The design of the toilet satisfies the relevant regulations. The toilet includes a baby-changing unit.

There will still be space in the vestry for the choir to robe. The lower vestry incorporates full height wardrobes or hanging space for storing choir robes.

In order to make these changes we will remove the current, very cramped toilet in the north east corner of the lower vestry and the cramped and dilapidated sink and cupboard area on the north wall.

ENTRANCE DOORS

We will also replace the wooden doors from the porch to the nave with glass doors to make the church more inviting and open. We will replace the current outer glass doors in the porch with new glass doors that remove the risk of injury caused by the door closure mechanism. We will ensure that the new designs provide a good air seal to avoid unnecessary thermal loss. Geoffrey Hunter (see reference above) commented that the current outer porch doors are not ones 'that I think anyone would wish to see retained... They could be replaced with frameless glazing.' And '[t]he current inner porch door is oak, possibly contemporary with the pews... The doors are fairly plain and of little historic interest. I would not envisage any insurmountable problem with removing them.'

SUMMARY

The changes will substantially improve accessibility, improve our ability to include children in weekly services, provide circulation spaces and enable us to adapt the use of the space to whatever activity is under way, while moving the building to net zero carbon status in line with General Synod's 2020 commitment.

All of the conceptual work, and preparation of plans, has been done in consultation with Archangel Architects. They have arranged for a Quantity Surveyor to help cost the planned re-ordering. We intend for Archangel to project manage the re-ordering work.

What other options have been considered? Why have you chosen the proposed option and discounted others?

- *What is the evidence that this is the best solution to meet the needs?*
- *Were alternative locations considered?*
- *Were alternative materials or designs considered?*
- *Is this the best option for accessibility, including consideration of lighting, sound, circulation spaces and locations for activities? If not, why has it been chosen?*
- *You can upload a separate options appraisal for more complex projects.*

CEILING

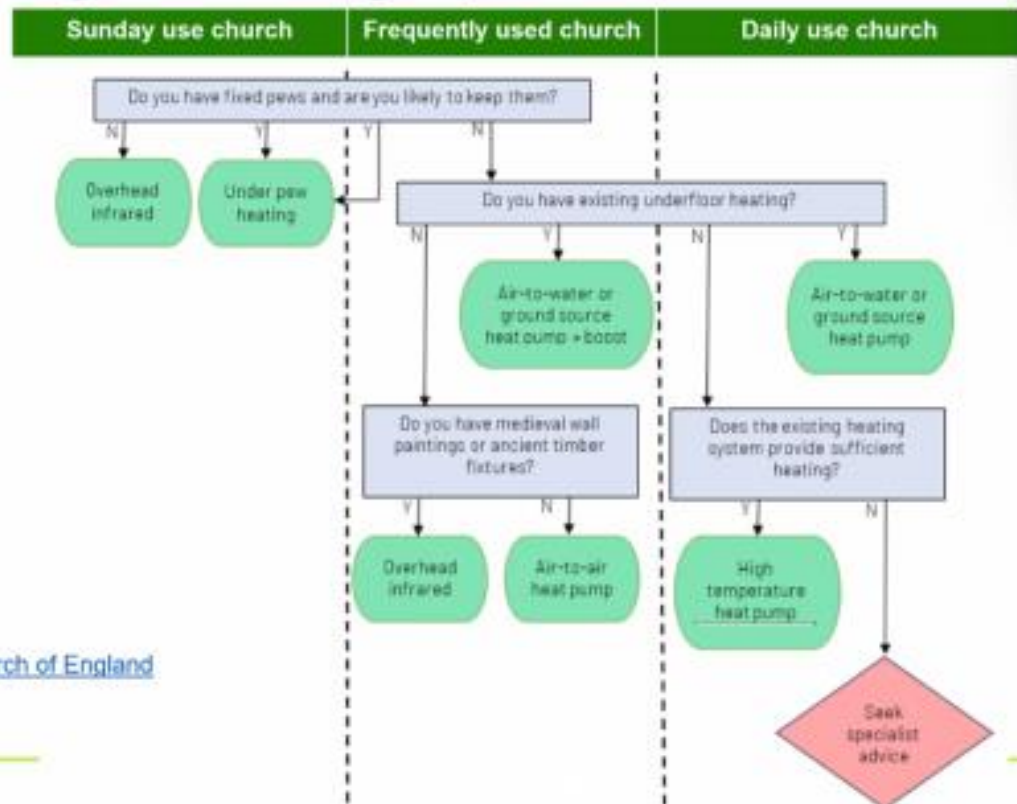
We propose to replace the nave ceiling plaster with similar plaster to that which is already there. Other ceiling solutions risked damaging the rest of the building and are inconsistent with a listed building.

HEATING

We considered various options, including installing a replacement gas boiler, air and ground source heat pumps, and underfloor heating but none performs better against our criteria for a building that is used relatively infrequently, namely low carbon emissions (now and in the future), cost (installation and running costs), controllability and reliability, and visual and physical impact on the building.

We were guided by the Diocese of Ely's training course *Net Zero Carbon - Church Heating - your questions answered* (see diagram).

Choosing a heating system



[Heating | The Church of England](#)

We were also guided by the:

- *Energy Footprint Tool*, which showed that the overwhelming contribution to our carbon footprint comes from the gas boiler;
- *A Practical Guide to Help Your Church Reach Net Zero Carbon*, which showed that the combination of far infra-red heating, LED lighting and locally-adjustable control systems will allow us to move rapidly towards zero carbon.

FLOORING

We considered retaining the existing flooring and installing ramps to improve accessibility. For completeness there would need to be three ramps, between the porch and the nave, the nave and the vestry, and the nave and the chancel. This would

be cheaper but would look messy, require substantial renovation after moving the pews, and limit our ability to use the space flexibly.

SEATING

We considered a wide range of chairs, making two visits to the Christian Resources Exhibition. We also consulted the congregation, obtaining samples for people to sit on and think about. Howe 40/4 and Trinity Theo – both with timber back and seat – are attractive, robust, manoeuvrable and stackable, and both are available with and without arms (we would need some with arms as some of the elderly find them easier to use).

SEGMENTING THE SPACE

The church owns and operates the Johnson Hall (formerly the village school room) and neighbouring Verger's Cottage. They have been used for children's work during services in the past, but we found that they are too far away from the church for the children to go back and forth during the course of a Sunday service so as to integrate them successfully.

Separating the Lady Chapel by glass panels will also enhance its use as a space for prayer and communion.

STORAGE and REFRESHMENTS

Current arrangements for serving refreshments are unsafe and unworkable in the long term.

We considered alternative designs and locations of storage space but were unable to find ways to provide sufficient storage.

ACCESSIBILITY

We have been guided by the Church Buildings Council's guidance *Equal Access to Church Buildings*.

We believe it is essential to provide a toilet suitable for people with disabilities. We considered other spaces and designs but they were not able to provide appropriate levels of privacy, or came at other unacceptable cost.

The levelled nave floor will make it much easier for people in wheelchairs or walkers (and those with pushchairs), or people who are unsteady on their feet to gain access to all of the building.

Why should the proposed changes be made now?

- *Are there urgent issues with the condition of the building or contents?*
- *Is there financial or human resource available?*

We need to replace the heating system as a matter of some urgency. The boiler frequently breaks down and its age is such that it is becoming difficult to source spare parts and an engineer willing to service it and certify it as safe.

The nave ceiling plaster is currently netted. Permission for the netting expires in September 2026, though we are seeking an extension. It is important to replace the plaster before installing the chandelier heaters.

Improving accessibility is important as we are excluding people now and a segment of our congregation is becoming increasingly frail.

We are keen to build on the new relationships we have built, through Little Fishes and Forest/Messy Church, with families with children lest we lose them again. Creating a separable Lady Chapel will help us to do this.

We currently have approximately £200,000 available for this work. The total bill is likely to be of the order of £1,000,000. We want to commence fund raising as soon as we can.

We plan to work with Archangel Architects on the further design of the scheme and the management of the building process. We have a team of people to lead and manage the work within the congregation, including a retired business leader who has supervised construction of new facilities and the CEO/Chairman of a local company.

How would your proposal help the worship and mission of your church?

- *Would it have liturgical benefit?*
- *Would it allow a different style of worship?*
- *Would it improve welcome?*
- *Would it support outreach or invite more people into the church?*
- *Would it improve accessibility – including lighting, sound, circulation spaces or location for activities?*

The proposed changes will allow us to provide a wider range of styles of service, which we believe is important as the only church in our community, and in seating that is no longer very uncomfortable.

Re-ordering the church will make our physical welcome more tangible and credible. This is essential for the mission of the church.

We aim to reach out more to our growing community. The proposed changes will help us to make people feel welcome and part of the church, particularly those less familiar with what a church is and does.

The changes we plan will substantially improve accessibility.

Since care for creation is the fifth mark of mission, the renewal of the church heating and lighting will enhance the credibility and effectiveness of our mission within the parish.

How does the project contribute to environmental sustainability?

- *Does the proposal increase biodiversity?*
- *Does the proposal safeguard wildlife or protected species?*
- *Does the proposal improve the energy efficiency of the building?*
- *Does the proposal reduce the carbon footprint of the church?*
- *How will the proposal minimise waste?*
- *Can any of materials be reused or recycled within the project or by others?*

The proposed changes do not impact biodiversity, or adversely affect wildlife or protected species. We address these issues through the way in which we manage the churchyard.

The proposed changes will substantially improve the energy efficiency of the heating system. Infra-red heaters, instead of heating very large volumes of air, which then rises and exits the building, heat surfaces and people. Although this may not reduce our energy bills, because of the high price of electricity compared to gas, it will substantially reduce our energy consumption. We already purchase our electricity 100% from renewables, and will continue to do so. Moving to electrical heating will allow us to take a major step forwards in our aim to reach net zero carbon.

The re-ordering of the building is designed to increase its use and usefulness, and will reduce the need for alternative buildings in the village. It will also help safeguard our historic building, since the beneficial use of buildings is recognised as essential to long-term survival.

We will use natural materials that are compatible with our ancient building whenever possible eg: locally sourced stone for the floor. We will seek to recycle the pews as benches and chairs. We will recycle waste material from the re-ordering work whenever possible.