

Buildings committee response to the Mission to the Wider Community Paper.

[The church plan](#) calls for us to put Christ Church at the heart of the community by creating a beautiful, flexible, welcoming, cost effective, accessible and sustainable resource both for our congregation and the wider community in Swindon. We have had great successes with our local engagement with the people of Old Town and beyond through our affiliation with the OTF, the beer festival, Christmas Market, Autumn Fayre, concerts and events held both in the Church itself and the community centre.

The plan calls for us to continue to develop this strategy by bringing a new resurrection feel to the church building and this has very much shaped our thinking on the various projects underway to deliver this vision.

The committee was asked to consider the impact of some new proposals () on the currently proposed strategy.

Mark Antell felt strongly that the committee process has been rather subverted since our previous proposals have been ratified by both standing committee and PCC and work has been undertaken on the strength of this acceptance. He felt that the new proposals may represent a barrier to progress since they will necessarily lead to further consultation and debate.

As a group, we want to present a constructive and pragmatic response to the new proposals - our main concern is to continue to deliver a plan that allows us to complete our church vision. We didn't however feel that the paper justified the complete removal of all the pews. This is a significant step that will have a considerable impact on both the historic, architectural and cultural perceptions of the church building. Our current plan does create large areas of flat floor at the crossing and transepts, our intention being to create new space to enable more flexible worship styles. This approach, we felt, would allow a more gradual development of worship styles and other uses of the church. That said there is a powerful logic in creating a unified, good quality, flat, wooden floor throughout the church rather than just in the aisles and crossing.

For this reason, we now propose that consideration is given to removing the pew platforms completely and installing the floor throughout the church. To give even more flexibility for new styles of worship alongside our traditional ones as proposed, the dais should be reduced in size and up to the first 4 pews on each side at the front of the church could be removed and replaced with up to 50 chairs. The (minimum of 9) remaining pews on each side towards the rear of the church should be replaced on the new flat floor. (This will involve some engineering to ensure that the pews can be safely free standing but should not represent too big a problem).

It will be important to recognise the impact of any changes to the currently proposed renewal project strategy will have upon the management of chairs, costs for new chairs, storage and cleanliness of the new floors. These have all been brought up previously as possible barriers to removing some or all the pews. If

however we all come to believe that changes to the currently proposed strategy is an essential stage in delivering our overall vision for the church, then these issues can be planned for and addressed. The most important thing needed to make a success of these plans is for everyone to understand what and why we are taking this course of action and to wholeheartedly support and accept it. The committee is fully committed to continuing to work to understand the church's requirements and suggests that more detailed thought is applied to layout, location, scope and scale of services that might constitute new ways of offering more inclusive worship.