

Church refurbishment project Architect's Brief

Version 1.0 approved by PCC 28 November 2018

Prepared by Refurbishment Working Party on behalf of Blockley PCC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this document

This brief has been prepared by the Parochial Church Council of St Peter and St Paul, Blockley. It is the result of an extensive survey of people and groups who use the church. The brief, together with its appendices, is being issued to a short list of architects with the intention that one will be appointed to design a refurbishment scheme for the church. Architects will be expected to use this brief together with liaison with a nominated representative of the PCC to produce a presentation to the PCC outlining their approach and explaining their credentials to undertake this project.

The church now

Blockley is a Cotswold parish of over 2,000 residents. For more than a thousand years, the church has been a landmark in the centre of the village and remains a very active part of the community.



The main Sunday service normally has an attendance of around 50. Special services, concerts etc. can attract up to 200. The church receives a large number of visitors throughout the year. These are a mixture of tourists to the Cotswolds and those who come to see the church where the Father Brown TV series is filmed. Few midweek activities are able to be held in the church itself as there are no meeting rooms. There is a small 'Church Room' adjacent to the vicarage but this is inaccessible to some because of steps. It is not good for Sunday children's groups as it is remote from the church building and has no toilet.

Issues and desires

There are a number of issues with the interior of the church which have been identified. Rather than deal with these piecemeal, and because some overlap, the PCC has decided that an overall refurbishment scheme should be designed so that a coherent approach can be taken. There is also a long 'wish list' of improvements which could be incorporated into the scheme. It is clear that not every wish can be accommodated so the document highlights the priority of the important ones. It is probable that, due to cost, it will be necessary to split a scheme into more than one phase.

Possible process

Oct 2017 - PCC appoints Refurbishment Working Party
Nov 2018 - Working Party presents draft Architect's Brief to PCC
Nov 2018 - PCC finalises and approves Architect's Brief
Q1 2019 - Shortlist of architects drawn up
Q1 2019 - Brief issued to shortlisted architects
Q2 2019 - Architects make presentations to PCC explaining their approach and capabilities (including reference projects)
Q2 2019 - Architect appointed
Q3 2019 - Architect works with the PCC to produce more than one proposed scheme
Q4 2019 - Presentation of schemes to the PCC
Q4 2019 - Refinement of scheme(s)
Q4 2019 - Start of consultation with church members and wider community
2020 - PCC approval of a scheme
 Faculty and planning applications
 Fund raising to supplement existing designated funds
 Phase 1 work starts

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Appendices (separate documents)

Appendix 1 - Consultation with groups

Appendix 2 - Consultations with individuals

Appendix 3 - Access audit

Appendix 4 - Diocesan heating advice

1. BACKGROUND

Triggers

In 2017, the PCC discussed a number of issues requiring improvements to the inside of the church building. These included:

- The boiler is near the end of its useful life giving an opportunity to re-examine how the church is heated
- The font is a trip hazard
- The dual use of the kitchen/choir vestry does not work
- The altar in the nave works well for services but not for the distribution of communion
- The area where people gather for coffee etc. is very congested
- The children's space excludes them from the worship and is cold, dark and there is a safety issue being so near the door

It was recognised that to tackle these piecemeal would not be sensible as they interact with each other.

The start of the project

The PCC decided that if a project was to be started to tackle the above issues, a whole lot more should be considered at the same time. These were identified as:

- Making the church more welcoming for all, especially children and families
- Making it more inclusive physically and spiritually
- Providing a space for personal prayer
- Improving the visitor experience
- Providing a toilet and baby change
- Completion of decoration of the nave
- Improving the lighting
- Reducing the noise from the organ blower
- Providing permanent projection facilities
- A permanent solution to the unsafe boiler house roof
- Maximising existing assets e.g. the room at the base of the tower and the beautiful South porch

In October 2017, the PCC set up a Refurbishment Working Party, reporting to the PCC, with the following terms of reference:

“To work together with all interested parties to prepare an architect's brief designed to protect the church building, enhance the worship and provide improved facilities for all who use and visit the church”.

The working party consists of PCC members - Robert Burch (Chair), John Taylor and Christine Moor.

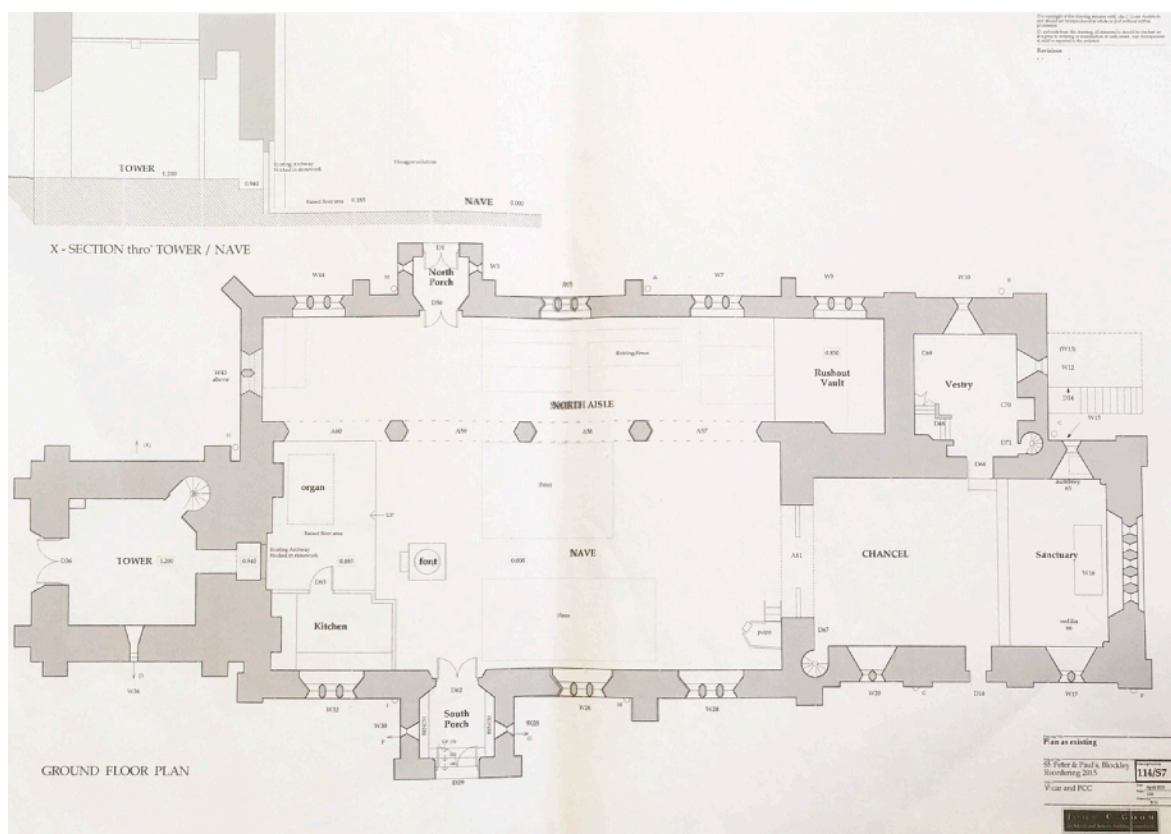
Process

The working party circulated a questionnaire (Appendix 1) to the church congregation. Copies were available in the church for any others to take away and complete. It was also made available as an online form. The questionnaire was advertised in the church magazine and web site. A summary of the questionnaire responses is in Appendix 2.

The working party then met with a number of groups who use the church to solicit their issues and needs as a group. A list of the groups and notes of the meetings is in Appendix 1.

Throughout this process, which has taken a year, it has been emphasised that the PCC are not trying to come up with solutions but to attempt to document a consensus of requirements that an architect can use to design schemes for further discussion.

Existing floor plan



Current services

The web site <https://www.blockleychurch.org.uk/services.htm> describes the regular services.

In addition, there are baptisms (both within the main service and at other times), weddings and funerals.

Services are held at festivals for the local primary school.

Some Occasional Offices, Confirmation and Christmas services can fill the church completely.

The Second Sunday at Six and 8:30am communion services are held in the chancel.

The church hosts other public events such as concerts. However, Blockley is well-endowed with halls and the church does not want to be seen to compete with these.

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For more than one thousand years, Blockley Church has been a landmark at the centre of the village. In 855 Burthred, King of the Mercian's granted to his friend Bishop Alwyn of Worcester the right to found a monastery at Blockley. The Domesday Book (1086) refers to a Saxon church, which was probably on the site of the chancel of the present church. By 1131 the bishop also had a palace at Blockley on the site of the Manor House that adjoins the south of the churchyard.

Blockley was important as a religious centre long before it became a commercial centre for the bishop's wool, supplying the market at Chipping Campden. As befitted Blockley church's importance, the building of a new church with a large nave joined to the chancel in the latest transitional Norman style began in 1180.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Blockley flourished as a silk-working village. The population increased and, in 1735, a gallery was built at the back of church to accommodate the mill workers. That gallery was demolished in 1923.

The Manor of Northwick had been of importance in Blockley for hundreds of years, first as the home of the Childe family, members of which are commemorated in the church. They were followed by the Rushouts whose memorial chapel now dominates the north aisle. The last squire of Northwick was Captain Edward Spencer-Churchill who died in 1964.

Because of storm damage in 1703 the original Norman tower became unsafe, and the bishop ordered that it be taken down. At a meeting of the Vestry in 1725, attended by Sir John Rushout and other village notables, it was agreed "that a tower shall be erected at the parish church of Blockley according to the Moddele Draught or scheme thereof drawn by John Kempster, and delivered by Thomas Woodward... using experienced workmen to build and finish the tower not exceeding the sum of £500."

The cost of rebuilding was kept to the agreed £500 by reusing stones from the Norman tower and constructing the stair from the original. It is probable that the foundations and some of the base of the tower are those of the original Norman tower. The large window lighting the first floor ringing chamber also incorporates some Norman stonework. The clock was installed in 1729.

The church is open every day, and is at the centre of village life, used for occasional offices, village gatherings, concerts and so on. The church tower features on local publicity and logos, for example as the emblem for Blockley Church of England Primary Academy. Worship on Sundays is broad, including both traditional and modern services, and there is a constant flow of visitors who come to visit the church for its historic importance and because the BBC series Father Brown is filmed in the church, churchyard and vicarage. The church is part of the Vale and Cotswold Edge Team of

eleven parishes in the Diocese of Gloucester. It shares training, groups, schools work and pastoral support across the churches.

3. PRINCIPLES

Any scheme must bear in mind the following key principles:

The overall aim is to make the church more welcoming (to all ages) and more accessible (in all senses of the word). Once people are inside, they need to feel comfortable and safe (in all senses of that word).

- The project has to meet the requirements of the church and local community for the next few decades. It is not possible to accurately predict the future so flexibility is key. The church must meet the needs of all ages.
- There are a number of people with limited mobility coming to church. Improvements to accessibility have been highlighted in the Access Audit (Appendix 3). The recommendations of the report should be incorporated into the scheme where relevant.
- The church is currently a mix of mainly medieval with Victorian and 20th Century additions. Most of these later additions are of dubious merit. New work should either be in keeping with the medieval or be clearly modern, sympathetically sitting alongside the medieval. This project is seen as an opportunity to enhance the appreciation of the architecture with improved lighting, cleaning, painting and restoration work.
- Churches in the past were designed for people to look up. Today, they tend to look more horizontally. Sight lines are important. The pulpit is seldom used. People expect to be able to see as well as hear what is going on.

4. SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

Must have

- Improve the porches

The South porch is an architectural gem and de-cluttering it (by providing alternative storage), possibly adding a glass inner door and improving the lighting is highly desirable. Consideration should be given to glass doors on the North porch so that visitors can see inside before venturing in and more light is let into the rear of the nave. It is essential that level access is provided into and through the North porch.

- Improve the lighting

The current lighting is barely adequate for services but very unattractive. New general lighting supplemented by lighting which enhances the architecture and memorials is highly desirable.

- Provide a children's area for use during services (*See Appendix 1 sections 1 and 3*)

Currently the children are in a cluttered area West of the North door. This is cold, unsafe because it is right by the door, has no sound isolation from the congregation and is in a place where the children and their carers cannot see the service nor hear well.

- Provide a toilet

Currently there is no toilet in church. There are public toilets beside the shop but these are locked in the evenings and are too far away to be useful. Ideally a toilet in the church should be accessible but this is not essential as there is a Radar key operated toilet beside the shop at the entrance to the churchyard. A baby change facility should be provided. The church is not on main drainage but there may be an opportunity to install a trench-arch system. If the scheme does not include access to the tower from the main body of the church, a toilet and a water supply for a kettle in the base of the tower should be considered for use by the bell ringers. This does not need to be accessible as all bell ringers need to be able to climb stairs!

- Continue to provide a 'safe space' in services and provide one for personal prayer
(See *Appendix 1 section 1*)

It is noticeable that a number of people prefer to sit in the Victorian pews in the North aisle during services. This enables them to slip in during a service without feeling they are disturbing others and retaining a degree of privacy. These pews are also used by parents who can easily get to and from the children's play area in the NW corner. The scheme must continue to provide this facility close to the door but not necessarily in the same way.

There must be a place where people can come into the church during the week and pray or meditate quietly without the possibility of interruption by other visitors.

- Make the font safe and not an obstruction to flow (See *Appendix 1 section 1*)

The current plinth is a trip hazard and the font is an obstruction. The plinth must be removed. This will also improve the view for children watching a baptism. Depending on the rest of the scheme, it may be advantageous to reposition the font. The only acceptable liturgical positions are close to where it is now or close to the North door to the West or East of it. Consideration is being given to having a new inner bowl made for the font which, for baptisms within a main service, could possibly be taken out and used on a portable stand at the front of church.

- Explore a better arrangement for communion in the nave (See *Appendix 1 section 1*)

Currently, consecration takes place at an altar in the nave with distribution of bread and wine at the main altar in the chancel. Consecration in one place and distribution in another is undesirable. Having the altar in the nave is preferable because of sight lines and reduced distance from the congregation. Currently there is insufficient room to distribute at the altar in the nave and no kneeling facility.

The altar in the chancel must be kept. It is used for services once a month and for large services and is in the expected place in the church. A nave altar needs to be removable. Distribution at a nave altar has implications for choir and leader positioning. A communicant does not want the choir too close looking at

them. It would be acceptable to move the pulpit to the other side of the centre aisle if that helped. The piano is currently in a bad position as it blocks access from the North aisle.

- There should be allowance for two wheelchairs in good inclusive positions in the church (not together) and with a seat beside them for a carer.
- De-clutter the rear of the church and provide improved catering/serving facilities and a choir robing area (*See Appendix 1 section 7*)

The current kitchen/choir robing room is unloved and dysfunctional. Coffee providers need to prepare before a service and cannot be in the same place as the choir.

A new dedicated kitchen area (not necessarily a room) is needed together with a servery and plenty of space around it for coffee and chat after services.

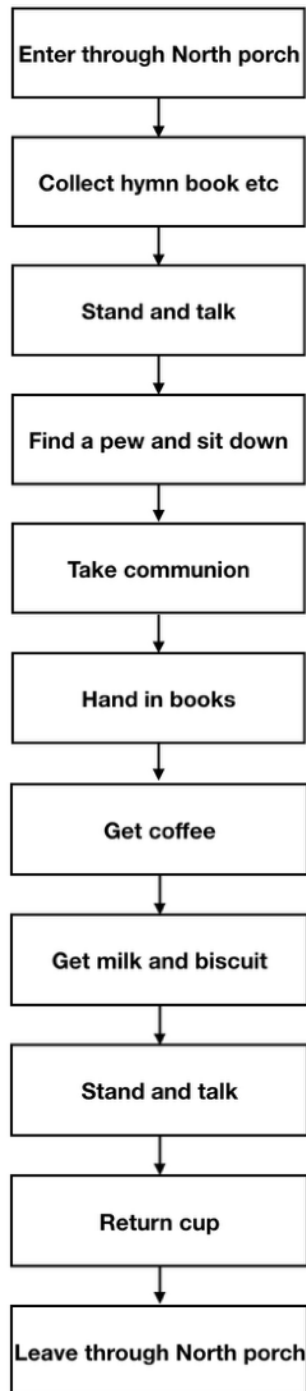
Facilities ideally required are:

- Oven
- Hob (probably not induction as people bring their own pans)
- Boiling water from an urn
- Somewhere to serve and for people to help themselves to sugar, milk, biscuits
- A facility for keeping soup warm on a servery for up to one hour (Lent) and mulled wine (Christmas)
- Washing up with hot water
- A dishwasher (fast domestic would do)
- Adequate worktop space
- Lockable storage (at least as much as at present)
- A fridge is probably not required now although might be in the future

If the current kitchen is removed, an alternative robing area for the choir must be provided. It needs storage for choir robes and music and a full-length mirror. Ideally, this would be somewhere from where the choir could process into the service.

Several notice boards are needed where people enter the church and elsewhere for rotas etc.

A typical flow for the 9:30am service is shown below:



There is congestion at almost every point of this flow. Solving this by good layout and space in the right places will make a significant difference as well as improving safety and accessibility. Somewhere to sit around tables after the service would be highly desirable.

- Provide better facilities for flower arrangers (*See Appendix 1 section 8*)

Flowers need to be stored (purchased on Tuesday, put out in church on Friday). Currently the South porch is used for this and the storage of up to seven flower stands. This is a convenient location and cool but frost-free. However, there would clearly be an issue if the South porch was opened up for visitors and another location for the flowers and stands would need to be found.

Flower arrangers currently use the sink in the kitchen. A separate sink which could be shared with cleaners is required. Hot water is needed at this sink.

- Provide a permanent solution to the boiler house roof (*See Appendix 1 section 2*)

The current roof of the boiler house (and disused water tank) which is below ground NE of the vestry unsafe so it has been propped with timber. What is done will depend on the scheme's solution for heating the church and storage. If the boiler room space is retained, the roof should be repaired and the steps refurbished. An idea has been floated for a single storey extension to the church above the boiler house to provide a storage facility or other purpose. Ideally this would have both external and internal access - the latter through what is now the vestry window. It should be noted that the vestry is damp and work in this area could help reduce this.

- Provide a new heating system (*See Appendix 4*)

The current boiler is close to the end of its useful life. The heating in church is inadequate on cold days. The church should provide a warm welcome in both senses of the word. The large cast iron heating pipes are an eyesore and get very hot. An initial consultation was held with the diocesan heating advisor but without coming to any definite conclusions as to the best solution (Appendix 4).

The requirements are:

1. The congregation should be at a comfortable temperature in all services
2. Separate spaces in the church can be heated separately to minimise heating bills. This should include vestry, chancel, bell ringing chamber and any separate rooms provided in the scheme. Ideally, some form of localised heating for choir practices would be provided. If the pews are retained in the

scheme, pew heaters are not considered desirable as that makes moving pews more difficult and removing them in a later scheme problematic.

3. There should be some work done to reduce draughts. Ideally ventilation should be controlled rather than random as it is at the moment.
4. Consideration should be given to an air curtain in the North porch to preserve heat as people are coming in to the church. Note that the current electricity supply to the church is only single phase.

- Provide an accessible meeting room (*See Appendix 1 sections 1,2,3&4*)

The Church Room (adjacent to the vicarage) is inaccessible due to steps and there does not appear to be any way to make it accessible. A meeting space for up to fifteen people seated around a single table is required preferably within the church building. This could be combined with other uses (e.g. a children's area or a choir vestry). Consideration should be given to the acoustics within the room and sound isolation for meeting privacy.

- Decoration and cleaning

The North aisle has fairly recently been repainted. The rest of the nave and chancel ceiling needs to be done and, at the same time, high level cleaning should be performed.

- Storage is required for (not all in the same place):

Children's toys

Choir robes and music

Cleaning kit

Flower arranging kit (and stands unless these are attractive enough to be left out permanently)

Altar frontals

Chairs and tables

Kitchen equipment, crockery and cutlery

Ladders

Tower Christmas tree erection equipment

Five candelabra

Hymn books etc

Hand bells (currently in Church room). Needs to be secure
Various items currently stored in the upper vestry

The Church Room belongs to the diocese. Selling it off would not result in any money coming to the church. If good meeting space is provided elsewhere the church room could be used for storage of items infrequently used such as the candelabra.

- Larger more prominent collecting box for visitors' gifts (*See Appendix 1 section 2*)
The current wall safe by the North door is not prominent enough and has too small a slot. This may need to be combined with a large automaton which is currently under construction.

Should have

- Provide access from the base of the tower to the nave

There is a blocked up doorway which could be re-opened. However, there is a 1.2 metre height difference in the floors. If a survey shows that the floor level in the tower could be lowered, it would be ideal to have near level access. If not, then steps will be necessary. The room at the base of the tower could then be much more useful than just a dumping ground. A benefit might be the opportunity to use the West tower entrance for grand occasions, better security for the bell ringers and access to facilities in the church (e.g. toilet and water supply and washing up). A hard surface path to the tower entrance rather than having to walk across grass should be provided.

If there is general access to the base of the tower, a locking door at the bottom of the stairs should be provided.

- Improve or replace the Choir stalls (*See Appendix 1 sections 1&4*)

The choir is mostly around 12 people and occasionally 15. It is unlikely that the size of the choir will increase. More flexible seating for the choir is desirable so that it can be moved for special services. Thought should be given to new choir stalls - possibly with two seats each. If the current stalls are kept, the lights need to be higher and the lip to retain music and books increased in depth.

- Provide permanent projection facilities (*See Appendix 1 section 1*)

There is a desire to be able to display video, hymn words and liturgy visible to the whole congregation. A portable system has been used up to now but is far from ideal. The Second Sunday at Six service, held in the chancel, always uses projection and a portable system is adequate.

The vicar envisages a projection system being used occasionally at the 9:30 service, more frequently at Open Door once a month, for children's services, at weddings, talks and possibly film events.

- Provide coat hooks

Coat hooks for the congregation and a separate set for bell ringers are needed.

Could have

- More flexibility in the layout of the church for different services and events (See *Appendix 1 section 1*)

Removal of some pews is expected. Removal of most or all pews is a possibility but would need good justification to carry people along. Seating for large events for up to 200 would be ideal but may not be possible. The largest events tend to be for school children who can squeeze up on a pew (not possible with chairs). Regular Sunday morning services attract around 50 people. On the basis that people like to leave gaps, a normal seating layout for around 75 makes sense with the ability to add chairs for larger occasions. A conventional East facing layout must be available for important occasions. Other orientations could be considered for regular worship if there are clear benefits.

It is desirable that the choir should be at an angle to the congregation (i.e. partially facing them) rather than the current sideways position. Putting them on the South side would give them better visibility of the organist and reduce glare from the sun in their eyes. This position, however, would need to be tested acoustically.

- Open up the window from the bell ringing chamber into the nave (See *Appendix 1 section 5*)

It is believed that this window was blocked up when the gallery was installed. It would be desirable to re-open it so that bellringers could see what is going on in a service and there is some visibility of the bellringers for the congregation.

- Restoration of memorials

Many of the memorials in the church would benefit from professional cleaning. There is one memorial, however, which is very visible and in a bad state. That is the one above the choir pews. Proper restoration of this is highly desirable. The Rushout tomb area would be greatly enhanced by a good lighting scheme. The steps up to the Rushout tomb are not very safe and should be improved if any work is done in that area.

Won't have

- The organ should not be moved

There is no obvious better location. It is a good organ and would be very expensive to move. However, sight lines between the choir and the organist are not good at present. Any scheme should address this either by re-positioning the choir or providing other means of communication. Noise from the blower on the organ is distracting for people at the rear of the church when the organ is not being played. Some way of reducing the noise is desirable especially if seating is provided further back in the nave than at present. The organ will, of course, need to be properly protected from dust and impact damage during the building project.
- Changes to the chancel

No significant changes to the chancel are expected other than improving heating, lighting and completion of decoration.
- Stained glass window repairs, restoration and cleaning

Some work has been identified in the last Quinquennial Inspection. This will be done but is outside the scope of this project.

5. BUDGET

The PCC already holds around £290k of designated funds for this work but it is unlikely that this will be sufficient. A fund raising campaign is likely to be necessary.

It is, therefore, unlikely that all of the requirements can be met in a single phase. This means that the architect should suggest a multi-phase project within an overall scheme tackling the higher priorities in the earlier phases.

6. CONTACT DETAILS

The designated PCC contact for this stage of the project is:

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