

## Statement of Need – October 2016

### Statement of need: high level summary

1. The facilities at St Lawrence Church are totally inadequate for the needs of both the worshipping community and the wider village
2. Specifically, there is a single outside toilet, a very basic kitchen area and no sound proofed space for separate groups to meet. There is no fixed provision for disabled access to the church and no disabled toilet facility. There are no office facilities.
3. As a result the potential community use of the church is compromised, and initiatives to encourage the growth of the church congregation are restricted.
4. The financial support of the church comes largely from a faithful but ageing congregation. A thriving younger congregation is being nurtured but we cannot expect to retain them for the longer term, or attract succeeding generations, if we cannot provide the 21st century facilities which they rightly expect. Doing nothing is not an option.
5. Two significant building plans have been developed in the past 10 years: the first was to reorder the interior of the building without extending it, the second to build a linked community hall in the churchyard without altering the interior of the church. Both had significant support but also met objections from some or all of English Heritage, the planning authorities and members of the church and the public.
6. The intention is therefore to develop a new proposal which learns from the previous two.

The new proposal will include some internal reordering of the church together with building of a small extension to the NE side, avoiding the disturbance of any sensitive graves.

The aim of the extension will be to meet the need of providing a welcoming, easy access entrance area, modern toilet facilities, kitchen and office facilities together with a meeting room with active walls to enable it to be divided into three separate usable spaces.

The aim of the reordering will be

a) to create a flexible, more open space to facilitate different forms of worship and a performance or presentation space for church service and community use.

b) to release the current vestry space to be used for that purpose, to create adequate areas for the music group/choir; a seating area; a small service space in the chancel and storage space.

## **Section A: General Information**

### **1 Bovingdon and St Lawrence Church**

The large village of Bovingdon lies three miles south-west of Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire, within the Borough of Dacorum. With a population of approx. 5500, Bovingdon is the largest part of the ward of Bovingdon, Flaunden and Chipperfield (population 8819). The Parish Church, St Lawrence, in its 4.5 acre churchyard, lies in a conservation area near the thriving village centre. Bovingdon's population has more than doubled over the last 30 years. There is huge potential for new housing on adjacent farmland should green-belt boundaries be relaxed.

Bovingdon is a mixed community with many young families. The village does not experience high levels of crime, but vandalism and 'youth nuisance' often draw comment. It is acknowledged in the community that planning for better provision for youth is overdue.

St Lawrence Church seats approximately 250 adults and children or 350+ when used by Bovingdon Primary Academy. Typical Sunday attendances (regular – peak) are

8.00am – Communion	:	12-20
9.30am – Family Praise	:	40-80
10.30am – Parish Communion/Morning Prayer	:	50-100
10.00am – Family Communion (1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday)	:	75-125

These peak numbers rise on occasions such as Easter and Christmas, or large funerals, weddings or baptisms to 150+.

The last Quinquennial Inspection of the fabric of the church was completed in July 2013. The report identified 34 (of a total of 84) action points categorised as of utmost urgency or essential to address within 18 months. These have, or are being systematically addressed

### **2 Worship, mission, ministry, outreach and community life at St Lawrence**

For over 25 years the Church has expressed a growing desire to develop alongside the Church a building which can extend the life of the Church and draw the community closer to the life of the Church. Recent experience of Church growth and fresh vision for development has created an appetite for change.

With congregations aged predominantly over 50, growth and outreach were essential. 'Family Praise' was started in 2006 to address this. It offers a 'family friendly' effective outreach to more than 100 families; 50 families are now regular worshippers. Based in the north aisle, this service utilises a cramped 12 x 4 metre space created by the removal of a section of pews in 1988; this is the only space in the building without boxed pews and offering limited freedom of movement.

This service is limited only by available space: it is not possible to accommodate more than 25 adults and 20 children at these services with any comfort.

Accommodating children attending Sunday school has been a long-standing problem. There are no suitable premises within the village since all involve long and potentially dangerous walks; several have been tried. The only option is to use St Lawrence Hall with children being escorted by adult marshals in fluorescent jackets walking along a hazardous, narrow lane without footways.

Parents expressed frustration and a reluctance to bring children to Sunday school because of this problem, and attendance declined to the extent that Sunday school has now stopped. The notion of 'church family' is hard to sustain where the 'family' cannot learn, work, worship and take refreshments together.

Recognising that families with older children (6+) were not being catered for adequately, the format of Family Praise has recently been changed to allow three separate simultaneous teaching sessions to take place. The youngest children (1-6) stay in the north aisle, the older children (7-13) go to the SW corner and adults go to the choir stalls. The total lack of sound proof spaces and seating areas means it is a very makeshift activity.

The pews in the Church make flexible worship patterns and community use impossible. The Building has no separate Vestry, and a very small Kitchen (3 x 4 metres). St Lawrence has no disabled access. There is one outside W.C. (not accessible to the disabled).

Serving refreshments at St Lawrence is challenging and potentially hazardous. Hot water is currently transported in an urn on a trolley or in Vacuum jugs.

No office workspace exists in either the Church or St Lawrence Hall. Stationery etc. is stored in a portakabin next to the hall and the photocopier is temporarily housed in the Vicarage study. For more than ten years a commercial property at some distance from the Church was leased but this became unaffordable.

In 2007 and in an attempt to overcome some of the difficulties the PCC submitted plans for internal alterations (with no external building) and engaged in preliminary discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and English Heritage.

In the face of the strong reservations of the bodies consulted and a reluctance to disturb our attractive Victorian Church, the PCC decided not to proceed; the social function of the church would be better addressed in a new, attached, modern building.

Over a period of three years a detailed plan was developed for a community hall, to be built to the northern side of the church and parallel to it, with a direct link to the church building. Despite a lack of support from the planning authorities and EH it was decided to present a full plan publicly in the hope of demonstrating the 'overwhelming local support' of which the planners had indicated they would take notice. Although there was strong support from a number of people who attended a public presentation, significant objections were raised by families –

one of whose family graves would be affected – about the impact on the churchyard and two petitions were started objecting to the scheme.

### **3 St Lawrence Hall and other Bovingdon Amenities**

St Lawrence has never had a traditional church hall, but has made use of the very limited facility called 'St Lawrence Hall'. This is 300 metres from the Church in Vicarage Lane, a narrow, busy unlit lane without footways.

Regularly hired by smaller Community Groups, this hall offers a single meeting accommodating up to 60 people. There is one (disabled) toilet, a kitchen and limited storage facilities in an adjoining portakabin. The Hall is in regular use by church and community groups but is not attractive to those seeking a modern, comfortable venue with good facilities.

The Hall has a restricted three-position car park in a narrow lane, thus hall users and local residents experience difficulties with traffic congestion and road safety.

Bovingdon's Memorial Hall on the High Street was built to serve community needs after the 1914-1918 War and has a capacity of 200. This hall has been recently modernised and is in frequent use for community purposes, but the large capacity discourages smaller enterprises. Since the construction of the Hall, Bovingdon's population has increased by more than 200% without the provision of additional community spaces.

## **Section B: The need**

### **1. Spaces for Children's ministry**

1.1 Providing an appropriate space in which the young may experience and learn about Christian faith is essential to the mission of the Church. Many years experience teaches that such space needs to be attached or immediately next to the place of worship.

1.2 A growing congregation of young families in a community with increasing numbers of children needs appropriate and properly designed crèche and baby-changing facilities for which there is currently no provision.

### **2. Spaces for more flexible worship**

The church was designed in the Victorian era when the congregation was expected to remain largely passive and static. Modern understanding and expectations of church worship are very different, including greater participation, the use of modern technology, music, drama and movement.

### **3. Spaces accessible to the Community**

3.1 Church and community deserve better flexible spaces which can serve a large group or a number of smaller groups simultaneously. Location on the congested High Street or on the inaccessible Vicarage Lane is not an alternative, but a

location close to the heart of the village is vital. St Lawrence Churchyard is the only place where space, car-parking and accessibility come together in a situation without immediate neighbours.

3.2 The church is already used periodically and very successfully for community events:

- Bovingdon Primary Academy brings its entire population of 300+ children into church for its harvest, Christmas and Easter concerts and services
- As part of the village Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012 the church and grounds were open with a variety of stalls and displays, demonstrations of organ playing and bell ringing. A string quartet played and over 200 cream teas were served.
- The church and churchyard have subsequently been used for Summer Fetes and the church for a Christmas Market, attracting many people from the parish in addition to the church congregation
- Music concerts including Chamber Orchestra and Opera Group have been presented in church to great acclaim and attracting audiences of over 160.

3.3 The church is open daily providing access for quiet time, prayer and visitors

3.4 All of those who visited the church for these events commented on its beauty: the building is clearly loved by its parishioners. With more modern and flexible facilities, the range and capacity of potential future events could be greatly expanded, and visitors made more welcome.

#### **4. Spaces for Outreach, Service and fellowship**

At St Lawrence there is vision for a range of activities which current premises do not permit e.g. after-school clubs, community lunches, and senior citizens gatherings.

The Church greatly enjoys hosting courses and teaching events requiring the provision of refreshments or light meals for participants, but struggles to cope without appropriate catering facilities.

The church building, with its fixed pews and little open space, prevents the expression of the social aspect of church life. Additional, flexible open spaces for meetings, exploratory patterns of worship and all-aged church social gatherings is vital.

#### **5. Spaces for the disabled**

The Church is currently in contravention of disabled discrimination legislation, and can only be accessed by the disabled when the building is fully manned. The single outside toilet is too small to be furnished as a disabled toilet, and has no disabled access.

## **6. Spaces for Staff**

Church administration needs office space for two people plus equipment at the centre of its operations.

## **7. Spaces for Equipment**

The church is in need of better storage and equipment for Verger, Flower Arrangers, Musicians, those working with Children and other regular users.

St Lawrence Church stands in a 4.5 acres churchyard, yet there is no provision for the extensive gardening equipment, including the ride-on lawn mower. 'Outside' toilet and wash facilities are needed.

## **Conclusion**

A clear and pressing need exists to provide better facilities for worship, teaching, social and community activities. Given the constraints on extending the building these needs are likely to be met by a combination of internal reordering and a limited extension.

## **Section C: next steps**

This 'Statement of Need' has been approved by the PCC.

A Building Projects Group has been established to coordinate proposals, liaise with relevant authorities and bodies, and facilitate the agreement and delivery of extension and reordering plans.

The document is intended to form the basis of consultation with the DAC and, on their advice, with other bodies.

Weal Architects has been appointed to assist in developing plans to meet these stated needs.

Charles Burch, Vicar

## **Current Proposal**

A proposal has been drawn up by Weal Architects showing a small single storey extension to the North East of the existing church building together with internal reordering.

### **1. Spaces for Children's ministry**

The extension shows a meeting space, divisible into three using 'active' walls, providing spaces for the concurrent use of different age groups.

The sitting area created in the South West corner of the church serves as a break-out area during church services and comfortable seating for casual church visitors.

### **2. Spaces for more flexible worship**

Removal of boxed pews makes the body of the church a flexible worship space, with chair arrangements being possible to include greater participation and varied uses of music, drama and movement.

A platform extending the front of the chancel into the nave gives a more centred and more visible focus for worship.

Reordering and removal of the choir stalls reveals the original chancel floor and an existing door, creating a space for small services, vigils and prayer and quiet times during the week and improving emergency access.

### **3. Spaces accessible to the community**

St Lawrence Churchyard is the only place where space, car-parking and accessibility come together in a situation without immediate neighbours.

Chairs can be removed to accommodate the children of Bovingdon Primary Academy sitting on the floor, leaving performance space for its harvest, Christmas, and Easter concerts and services.

Similarly, this space can be used for stalls at the Summer Fete and Christmas Market while maintaining easy and safe circulation of those attending the events. Music Concerts can be accommodated with sufficient performance space, in a more welcoming seating environment with toilet facilities and kitchen facilities to serve refreshment.

### **4. Spaces for Outreach, Service and fellowship**

Activities such as outreach and study groups, PCC meetings, after-school clubs, community lunches and senior citizen gatherings are facilitated by the new kitchen, toilets and flexible meeting room.

### **5. Spaces for the disabled**

Provision has been made for disabled access to the church building in the entrance to the extension, which also contains appropriate toilet provision.

### **6. Spaces for staff**

An office is created in the space of the existing kitchen and the vestry is made larger and 'fit for purpose'.

## **7. Spaces for equipment**

Areas of storage are included to meet the needs of Verger, flower arrangers, musicians, those working with children and other regular users.

## **Conclusion**

An appendix is attached showing how regular activities of the church might be accommodated in the reworked space with the extension, together with notes showing how the proposal would enhance these activities.

However, the aim of the proposal is not only to improve our current activities, but to provide the flexibility, accommodation and facilities to expand these activities and so do more to respond to the needs of both the congregation and the community.



## The Use of the Church and Hall in accommodating the regular activities of the church

<b>Time and Frequency</b>	<b>Activity in Church</b>	<b>Activity in Extension</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Sunday 8.00am	Communion		Chancel Used
First Sunday in month 10.00am	Family Communion (75-100 people)	Creche Refreshments	Reordering provides space for all age activities (e.g. drama, sketches, junior choir, small group discussion)
Sunday 9.30am	Family Praise – Parents and 0-4yr	Sunday School Groups 5-7yr, 8-11yr, 12yr+	Extension provides separate spaces for groups
Sunday 10.15- 11.00am		Refreshments	
Sunday 11.00am	Adult Service - Parish Communion Or Morning Prayer		
Sunday 12.30am	Baptism	Baptism Party Gathering	
Sundays monthly 5.00pm	Come and Praise		Reordering provides music group platform and flexile seating
Sunday Evening	Evening Service	Youth Group	
Weekdays	Funeral Service (12- 20 per year)	Funeral Teas (up to 50 people)	Area now provided to accommodate travelling visitors
Weekdays	Weddings (8-12 per year)	Wedding Gathering	Area now provided to accommodate travelling visitors
Weekdays	School events – Assemblies (3-4 per year) Visits (3-4 per year)		300+ children
Weekday afternoon and evenings	Choir Practice Concerts (4-5 per year) Summer Fete Christmas Fair Harvest Supper Community Fund Raising Events Flower Display	Group Meetings – Study Groups Baptism Preparation PCC PCC Sub Groups Changing Facilities (concert performers)	Extension and Reordering provides staging and seating; a defined refreshment serving area; Unrestricted circulation around the building; Disabled access and toilets