The Mustard Seed Project

St John the Baptist Parish Church

Crowthorne

(No 627483)

Statement of Needs

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Location and setting

St John the Baptist, is a mid-sized Victorian church situated in the town of Crowthorne, which sits within the Local Authority of Bracknell Forest. The Church and the Lychgate are Grade II listed.

St John's is located within the Crowthorne Conservation Area, designated in 2009. It is equidistant between Broadmoor Hospital and Wellington College and is the only Anglican Church in Crowthorne.

Crowthorne is a prosperous town, situated in the M4 corridor, some 20 miles west of Heathrow airport. The last census lists the population of Crowthorne at around 8000, but it is undergoing rapid growth with a 63% increase in housing between 2013 and 2026[1] and a considerable redevelopment of brown space at Bucklers Park.

[1] https://crowthorne-pc.gov.uk/downloads/neighbourhoodplan/Crowthorne-Neighbourhood-Plan-2018-2036.pdf p.10

About our Church

St John's Church, Crowthorne is a welcoming church that seeks to be nurturing, joyful, creative and inclusive. It serves both a worshipping congregation and the wider village community. The Church is valued for its peaceful atmosphere and significant Victorian heritage.

Our worship has a strong liturgical focus, and we maintain a choir affiliated with the RSCM. Regular Sunday services are Sung Eucharists, with a mid-week BCP communion. The regular congregation on a Sunday is about 90 adults and 6 children. There are 123 on the Electoral Roll.

Figure 2: Our lectern and pulpit

St John's is a busy church, with many active groups, including Mothers Union, Bible Study and Prayer Groups, Pastoral Care, Sunday Club and Choir. The church runs after school drop-ins once a month, a weekly baby and toddler group and a weekly meditative service. It hosts regular music concerts and is a much sought after venue for Crowthorne's community events including Green Week, Crowthorne Carnival and Flower Festival. We host a regular table games afternoon and a book club. Many of these activities take place in the Nave and the Church Hall.

St John's also hires out its hall to private hirers; the hall has many regular bookings which generate income. However, it means the church congregation is limited in its use of the hall for additional church activities and drop-ins. Using the nave for church events when the hall is in use is limited by the difficulty of moving large heavy pews.

The church is open 9-3pm every day for private prayer and has prayer stations set up in the Lady Chapel.

St John's also holds a monthly community singing group which has led to a choir of 30+ people for 9 Lessons and Carols, and Easter Sunday.

School, civic and Christmas services bring in 150-250 people on many occasions each year. Occasional offices of funerals, weddings and baptisms make up an important part of the ministry of St John's.

As a church, St John's has identified several key priorities for the coming years:

- nurturing children and young people,
- deepening discipleship,
- supporting occasional offices,
- caring for the planet, and
- nurturing the gifts, talents, and callings of those within the church and the wider community.

The current facilities increasingly limit the church's ability to fulfil its mission and these priorities for ministry and community engagement.

What are our needs?

Summary of our needs

In this section we set out our perceived needs. They are as follows:

a) Reducing our carbon emissions throughout the building
b) Repairing/renewing the nave floor
c) Improving access into and within the church
d) Renewing poor facilities
e) Creating more space in the church
f) Welcoming large congregations
g) Enabling more activities by improving the soundproofing & safeguarding
h) Increasing comfort in the hall

A. Reducing our carbon emissions throughout the building

We are among the highest carbon emitting churches in the Diocese, with 12 tonnes of carbon emitted each year. Three gas boilers power hot water radiators in the Church and Hall.

The Church is currently heated by a pair of gas boilers which provide 80kw. They were installed in 2012. The Hall is heated by a single gas boiler which provides 25kw. This was installed in 2019.

Our Mission calls on us to care for others and our planet. St John's are responding to the Diocese of Oxford's call for Net Zero by 2035 by changing the heating in the Church and Hall and replacing our existing gas boilers to reduce our carbon emissions to zero.

B. Repairing/renewing the nave floor

Figure 3: Taken from the Floor Investigation report 2017

The quinquennial reports of 2018 and 2023 note the increasing urgency of the need to do something with the floor of the church, whose original Victorian tiles have been damaged by the addition of carpet at some point in the 1960s.

Some tiles have already been replaced, some have been removed and other are in a very poor state of repair. In 2019 we received a quote to repair the floor and this was at a cost of £50,000.

C. Improving access into and within the church

Figure 4: the Nave

There are two steps from the hall into the Nave and a further two steps up from the Nave to the Choir Vestry and Sanctuary.

We have an increasing number of people using pushers, wheelchairs and pushchairs and these experience problems getting into and out of the Nave. We have a ramp, but this is heavy and awkward to deploy and causes a trip hazard for others using the Nave.

Figure 5: Church doors showing steps up from the Nave

Several people are unable to sit in the pews and need separate, comfortable upright chairs. We have stopped serving communion at the altar rail due to problems experienced by people climbing the steps.

D. Renewing poor facilities

The kitchen and toilets in the hall were built in the 1980s and are now an embarrassment. The kitchen is now very dated and needs modernizing as it is currently unfit for purpose and in need of new units, storage and equipment.

The church community is very hospitable and there are many occasions for enjoying food together, such as at the Harvest Supper, Shrove Tuesday Pancake evening, Lent Lunch, and Patronal festival. However, these events are very much done in spite of the kitchen, rather than aided by it.

We also let out the Hall and kitchen for community events, such as weddings, funerals, and birthday parties. However, because the facilities are not modern enough, those who visit us from the community often choose to hire elsewhere.

Figure 6: Urinals in the men's toilets

Our men's and ladies toilets are totally outdated and in need of complete renewal with modern cubicles, including a new disabled toilet, with two toilets available for baby changing.

E. Creating more space in the Church

Figure 7: The biannual flower festival fills every space

The building is very well used, but sometimes the church community is limited in what it can do by the lack of available space in the nave or by the Community use of the hall. It has proved difficult to use the church in the week as it is cold and very expensive to heat during the winter, and it is packed full of pews. We do move the furniture around but it takes a team of people to do this and we need to make this easier. We are also unable to store the pews in a space other than the Nave which creates an eyesore and a safety hazard.

We have lots of plans for using the Church, but these are conditional on freeing up some space and making the church warmer. This will be outlined later on. We are also seeing an amazing increase in baptisms. For smaller baptisms we gather around the font for the duration of the service to suit the needs of the family but this requires moving heavy oak pews around.

Freeing up the side aisles and replacing those pews with chairs would mean that the space would be more easily adapted.

Figure 8: Mothers' Union Prayer meeting in the church

F. Welcoming large congregations

We are very blessed in having some really large community services. The local schools have services at Easter and Christmas and they bring all the children and lots of the parents too. Adults often stand in several rows at the back of the church, making access difficult. It is not unusual to have very large congregations in the church for our special services with schools, Remembrance, Christmas and Easter. We are fortunate that the hall is adjoining, but the wooden church doors mean that we cannot easily spill out into the hall. Therefore, we need to remove the church doors between the hall and the church and replace them with more appropriate sliding doors to provide more capacity and a feeling of continuity and togetherness, especially if we are removing some of the pews.

G. Enabling more activities by improving the soundproofing & safeguarding

There is a folding screen between the hall and the church and this allows some separation of activities. However, the screen provides almost no sound insulation and this causes issues when we would like to honour the stillness of the church in worship or when holding groups, while having more noisy activities going on in the hall. It is cumbersome to move, and is in a poor state of repair. Therefore, we need a new soundproof folding screen.

Figure 9: The Wooden doors between the Narthex and the Church and the folding screen between the Hall and the Narthex

H. Increasing comfort in the hall

The windows in the Hall and associated rooms are single glazed and the frames are in a poor state. We need to replace the windows with modern double glazed units so that any heat that is generated doesn't escape as easily, and so the space stays cooler in the summer months.

The impact of these issues

These issues prevent St John's from living out its vision of being a joyful, nurturing, inclusive and creative community where all can flourish in their relationships with God, themselves, others and creation.[2]

More practically, the impact of these issues whilst not exhaustive, include:

- A lack of honour and respect to the heritage of the building, and it's purpose as a place of worship.
- Individuals who no longer attend church as they are not comfortable.
- Trip hazards and accidents by the steps, loose carpet and tiles.
- Undue stress on welcomers who help physically vulnerable people down and up steps.
- We are unable to charge a higher hire rate, because of the state of the facilities thus reducing St. John's potential income. Individuals also choose to hire somewhere else for their group or celebration because of our lack of storage/ up to date facilities.
- We do not host multiple groups at a time- often having to honour hall hirer's contracts which means discipleship opportunities are often negated.
- We are unable to host expressions of church in the nave owing to expensive heating costs and lack of flexible space e.g. come and share[3], come and see[4] and come and sing[5] and so we host them in the hall.
- It is difficult for us to live out our mission of being generous in our hospitality around food as the kitchen is not fit for purpose.
- Safety issues when schools come to visit and there is no space for parents to sit.
- Disruption to quieter services when other activities are happening.

[2] https://stjohnscrowthorne.co.uk/our-vision-and-mission-statement/
[3] A more relaxed family eucharist held in the hall with coffee and cake
[4] An after school gathering for families with food
[5] Once a month Sunday afternoon informal gathering to sing together

What is the evidence for the need?

Our list of needs has developed over a period of more than two years. We started in early 2024 with a grant from the Oxford Diocese to investigate the feasibility of going net zero.

The steps we followed were as follows:

- Investigating the heating system
- Consulting more widely

Investigating the heating system

The Green Team partnered with our Fabric Committee to undertake this work. It was initially fairly technical – how might we achieve a completely new heating system for the Church and the Hall which would be net zero.We initially contracted Cook&Cardenas to provide a feasibility report. That report provided a great deal of analysis and looked at nine potential approaches.

They concluded that the most suitable system for the Hall was a system of warm air blowers across five different zones and powered by air to air heat pumps. This would be supplemented by an array of 28 solar panels on the roof and a battery bank of 40Kwh. All this was based on modelling and analysis. The heating in each zone would be controlled remotely – this offered a major improvement on our current system for the hall which has no zones.

The team visited Christ Church Abingdon to see the system in operation and were impressed.

Our PCC was pleased with this proposal and approved it for inclusion in our proposal.

Regarding the Church, Cook&Cardenas offered us a choice – warm air blowers similar to that proposed for the hall, or radiant heaters.

With approval from the Diocese, we commissioned Cook&Cardenas to investigate these two options further to enable us to make a choice.

The radiant option was quickly dismissed. We currently have a 100amp 3-phase supply. Cook&Cardenas calculated that we would need to upgrade this to install Halo type heaters in the Nave. Our Network Supplier SSEN quoted £35,000 to install a 200amp supply and quoted £6,000 in annual standing charges. This is more than our current energy cost.

We visited Adderbury Church to see the Halo heaters. Opinions were very mixed about their operation. We were already thinking about making much greater use of our Church and these heaters are extremely expensive to run.

Therefore, this option was dismissed.

Starting the consultation

We began to consult on the remaining warm air option with our church community. There were significant concerns about the noise of these heaters in church, particularly during times of silence in the service, and for those who have sensory processing issues or are hard of hearing.

In discussions with Cook&Cardenas, an additional option of having underfloor heating was raised.

Again, with the approval of the Diocese, we commissioned an architect following a tender process. The architect appointed was our long standing architect who conducted the previous Quinquennial Inspections, so is very well acquainted with our Church.

We asked him to look at our options. He considered five options based on warm air or underfloor heating. The options and capital costs are as follows:

Capital Costs

Option	Cost
1. Repair the floor. Warm air heating	£599,000
2a Raise the floor. Timber Frame Structure. Warm air heating	£737,000
2b Raise the floor. Limecrete construction. Warm air heating	£706,000
3a Raise the floor. Timber Frame Structure. Under floor heating	£686,000
3b Raise the floor. Limecrete construction. Under floor heating	£642,000

The running costs are as follows:

Running Costs

Option	Cost
1. Repair the floor. Warm air heating	£1,100
2a Raise the floor. Timber Frame Structure. Warm air heating	£1,100
2b Raise the floor. Limecrete construction. Warm air heating	£1,100
3a Raise the floor. Timber Frame Structure. Under floor heating	£3,300
3b Raise the floor. Limecrete construction. Under floor heating	£3,300

Assumptions
1. That we install solar panels and batteries at a potential cost of around £40,000
2. That we run the systems for 4 hours each day

Consulting more widely

It was at this point that we undertook a much wider consultation.

Our Incumbent Revd Laura Wheatley Downs and Curate, Revd Jen Green, conducted consultations over 8 months with our building users, local schools and members of the public.

The church held a vision day for members of our congregation led by Rhodri Bowen, and this was followed up with several “Listening Spaces” led by our vicar, Revd Laura Wheatley Downs.[6]

This process gave rise to a mission based approach, just as mentioned by Sir Robert Buckland is the recent Net Zero Impact Report 2025.

It “*brought people together, sparked new conversations and renewed a sense of purpose.*”

Extract from the Net Zero Impact Report 2025

What has struck me most is the spirit behind this work. Time and again, churches tell us that caring for creation has brought people together, sparked new conversations and renewed a shared sense of purpose. For many; particularly younger generations, this work speaks powerfully of a Church that is serious about hope, responsibility and action. It has become a visible and authentic expression of our faith, rooted in love of neighbour and care for the world we share.

Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC
Third Church Estates Commissioner and Chair of the Net Zero Carbon Programme Board

We discovered together that we need a warm, more accessible and welcoming space in the church and hall, not just from a place of practicality, but a missional imperative.

Based on these key needs the PCC decided that raising the Nave floor, laying down a new ceramic floor and installing underfloor heating is the best option for St John's.

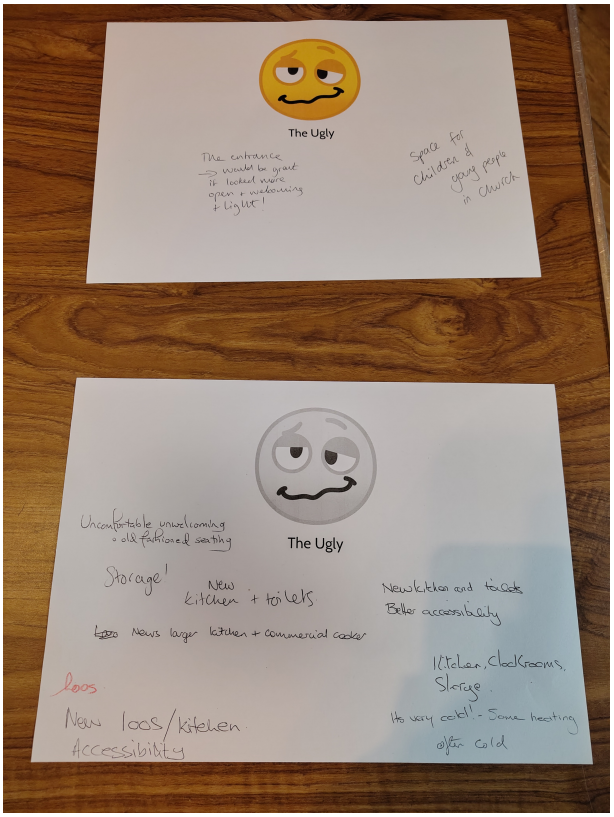
This is option 3b in the list of options on page 16

[6] Please see Appendix 013 and 014 for more information

The capital cost of this option is only £43,000 more than option 1, which would simply repair the floor and install a warm air system. Option 1 would do nothing to improve access.

The estimated running cost of the selected option is £3,300 per year, compared with our current energy cost of £5,238 (2024 figure), a saving of 37%. Option 3 would provide us with a warm church throughout the week during the winter.

This addressed the first three on our list of needs on Page 6.



The remaining 5 needs were:

d) Renewing poor facilities
e) Creating more space in the Church
f) Welcoming large congregations
g) Enabling more activities by improving the soundproofing
h) Increasing comfort in the hall

A. Renewing poor facilities

The need to renew our facilities came out strongly from our respondents.

What was unexpected for us as part of this project was the strength of desire to renew our toilets and kitchen as this wasn't in our original brief when we started exploring a Net Zero Project. However, there was a strength of missional imagination here with ideas surrounding a community café, afterschool youth drop ins and cooking lessons all emerging from those both within and outside of our church community.

B. Creating more space in the church and
C. Welcoming large congregations

The need to create more space in the church and welcome larger congregations has arisen from the Ministry and Project Team realising that whilst creating space in the Nave would open up our options for creative worship, removing pews would reduce the capacity within the church, and we therefore need to make it easier for larger congregations to spread out into the Narthex. To do this, we have decided that we need to replace the wooden doors with a sliding glass door that can be slid back for large services.

D. Enabling more activities by improving the soundproofing

Opening up the back of the Church also means improving the soundproofing between the narthex and the hall. Our desire to host multiple groups at a time also meant that we recognised the need for safeguarding each group with the need for a clearly defined separate space for people to use if we were to have multiple groups using the building at any one time.

E. Increasing comfort in the Hall

The final need for more comfort in the hall by replacing the hall windows is work that is going to be required due to the poor state of the current windows.

By creating a warm, accessible and welcoming space in the church, we believe we can serve our community better. We believe that more people will be able to use our Church throughout the week in a wide range of missional activities which will give us more opportunities to tell others the Good News.

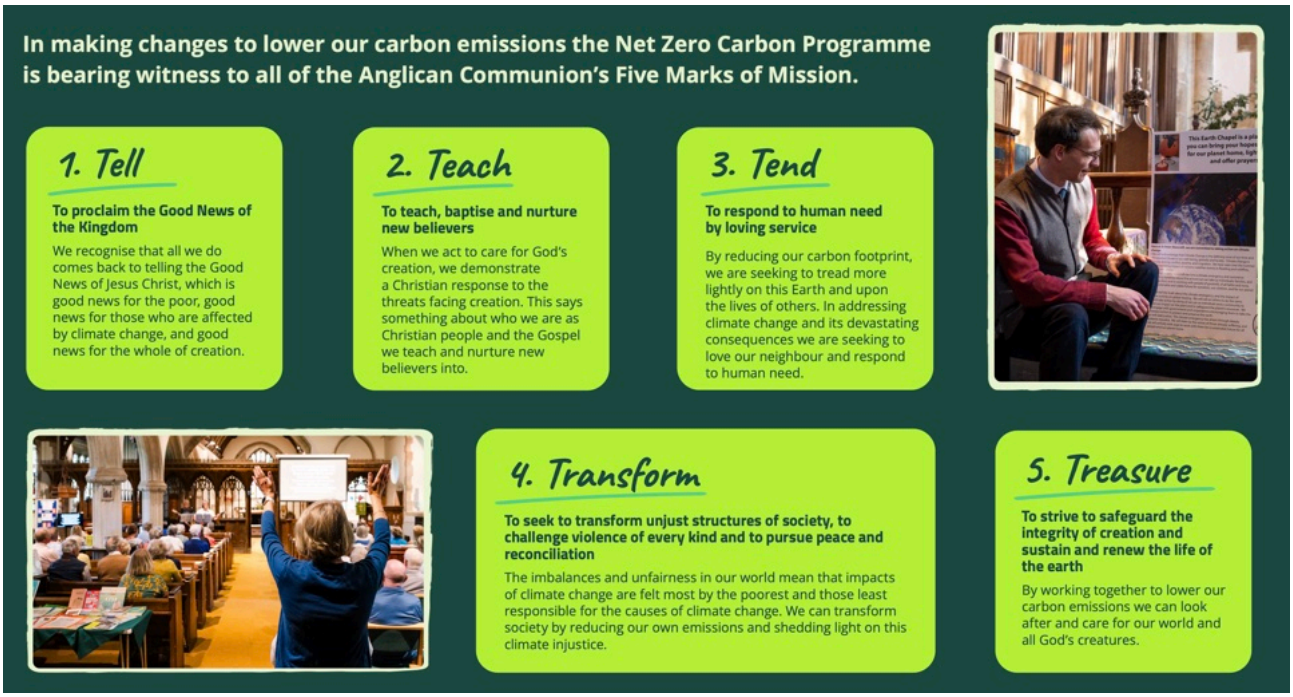


Figure 10: Diagram taken from the Net Zero Impact Report 2024

We will have the opportunity to teach and to nurture new believers. Our net zero church will set an example for others to follow as we share the benefits with other churches through our local Green Networks and our local community through the Bracknell Forest Community Climate Action (BFCCA).

We are pledged to use our new space to reach out to the community and to offer hospitality and a listening ear. Once we have completed our project, we will return to our goal of achieving a Gold Eco Church Award.

Disability audit

The Oxford Diocese Disability Advisor, Revd Katie Tupling, visited St Johns on 12th May 2026. She provided us with very useful advice which has been incorporated into our project design.

In particular, Katie proposed a ramp from the Lady Chapel up into the nave and this has been incorporated. Katie also advised us on the design of the new toilets and on other adaptations we could make around the church in the meantime.

Our proposals

Heating in the hall

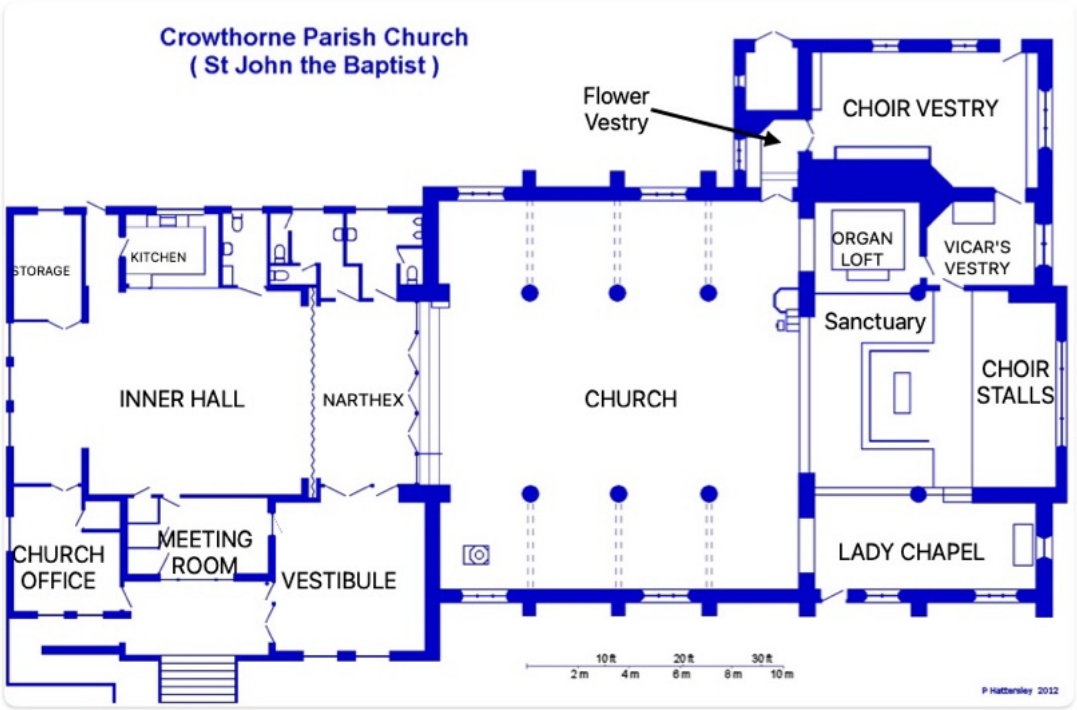


Figure 11: Plan of the Church and Hall

We will install an air to air source pump for the hall. There will be warm air blowers in the following areas:

- The main hall (3)
- The Church Office
- The Vestibule
- The Meeting Room
- The Narthex

Our Fabric Committee will programme these remotely to set the heating for days and times throughout the week. There will also be local hand controls. The system will be switchable between heating and air conditioning.

We will install 28 solar panels on the hall roof, designed to avoid areas of shading, together with a 40 Kwh battery system. The power generated will be available to the hall and the church.

Heating in the Church

We will install an underfloor heating system in the Nave, powered by air to water heat pumps.

Some of the radiators currently in the Nave will be repurposed to provide heating in the Sanctuary.

The vestries (choir, flower and vicar's) will continue to be heated by radiators, as will the Lady Chapel.

The organ loft will have a small heater to maintain a suitable environment for the organ.

The underfloor heating system will be on constantly throughout the winter, maintaining a comfortable warm space for our new activities.

The Nave Floor

We will raise the nave floor by around 30cms to provide level access from the hall into the nave and from the nave into the sanctuary. We will lay a completely new ceramic floor which will bring beauty into our church that has been lost for many years.

The Lady Chapel

The floor of the Lady Chapel will not be raised. There is a beautiful external door and a beautiful original floor which will be retained. There will be a new ramp enabling wheelchair access between the Lady Chapel and the nave.

The Pews

The pews in the side aisles of the nave will be removed, as will the chairs in the sanctuary and lady chapel. They will be replaced by comfortable chairs, spread as required around the available space. An additional one hundred new stacking chairs will provide seating in the hall and church as required for large services and other occasions in the hall. These will be stored in the furniture cupboard on trolleys ready to be rolled out when required.

Staging

We will dispose of the current heavy iron staging which is brought out for concerts and replace this will lightweight staging to be used for concerts and other occasions.

Church doors

The current wood and glass church doors will be replaced by a new glass sliding door. This will be more welcoming and less of a barrier to people entering church.

The folding screen

The current folding screen which separates the hall and the narthex will be replaced by a new acoustic folding screen.

Hall windows

We will replace all or most of the hall windows with new double glazed units. We may retain some smaller windows, ie kitchen, meeting room, vestibule, depending on the assessment.

New Kitchen and Toilets

A new modern kitchen will be installed. Our existing separate men's and ladies' toilets will be replaced by four self-contained unisex toilets, included toilet for disabled users and two with baby changing facilities. These will all open onto the Narthex. The previous disabled toilet which opened into the hall will be converted to a store cupboard

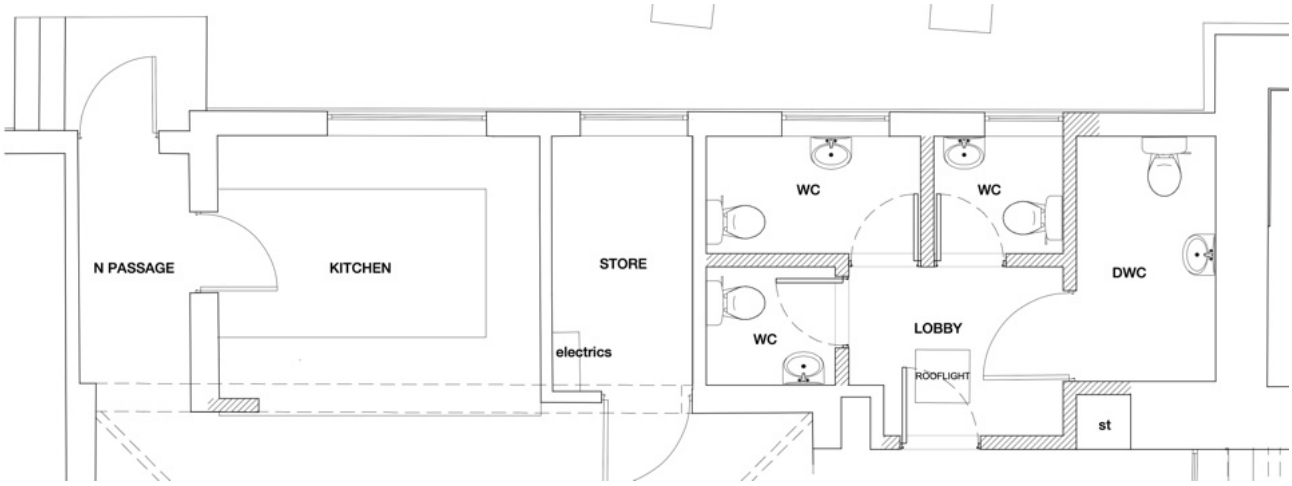


Figure 12: New kitchen and toilets

St Johns is going green
All electric - zero carbon
Solar Panels and batteries
New raised floor for better access
New kitchen and toilets
Underfloor heating in the Church
Creating more space in the Church for families
Will this affect you?
Tell us more - please turn over
www.stjohnscrowthorne.co.uk.

Other options considered

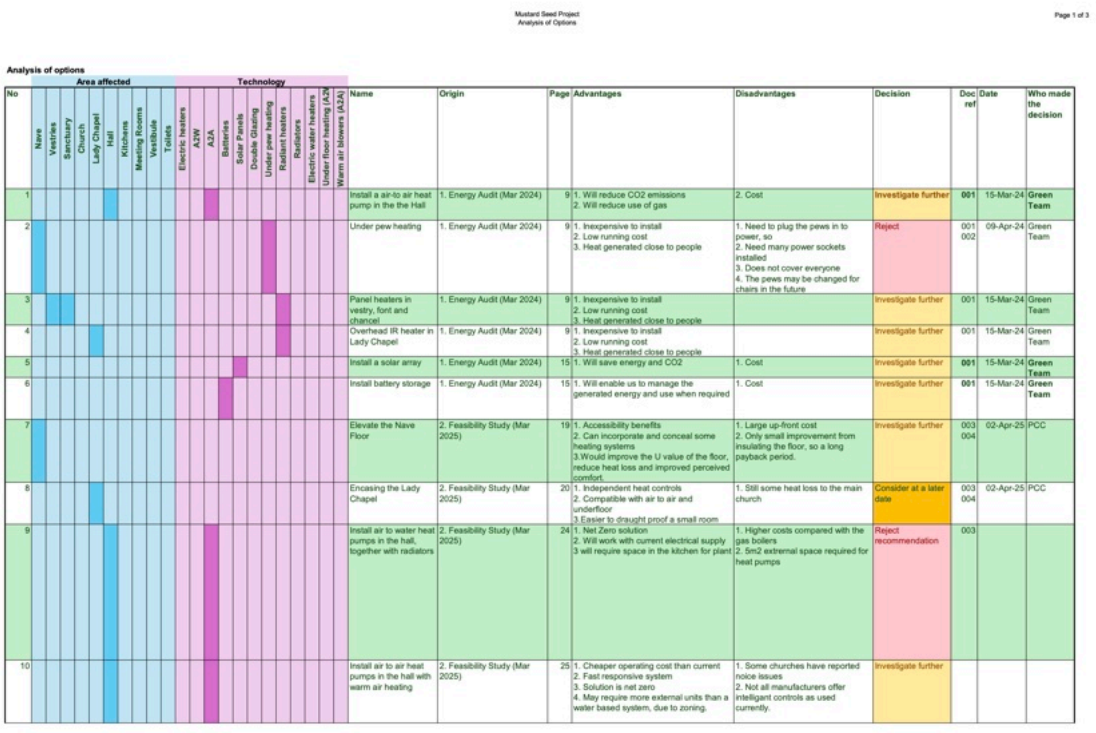
We have prepared an analysis of all the options we have considered, and provided a set of evidence to support those investigations. We have been aided by:

- Inspired Efficiency (Energy Audit)
- Cook&Cardenas (Feasibility Study and Options Appraisal)
- John Radice (Architect)

These companies provided 11 reports. These are listed on page 44.

Over the period of 2.5 years we investigated 23 options across 10 areas of the church involving 12 different technologies.

The results are summarised in our Analysis of Options spreadsheet. A copy of this has been uploaded to the DAC.



Mustard Seed Project
Analysis of Options

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Analysis of options

No	Area affected										Technology											Name	Origin	Page	Advantages	Disadvantages	Decision	Doc ref	Date	Who made the decision
	Nave	Vestries	Sanctuary	Church	Lady Chapel	Hall	Kitchens	Meeting Rooms	Vestibule	Toilets	Electric heaters	A2W	A2A	Batteries	Solar Panels	Double Glazing	Under pew heating	Radiant heaters	Radiators	Electric water heaters	Under floor heating (A2W)	Warm air blowers (A2A)								
1																							Install a air-to air heat pump in the the Hall	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	9	1. Will reduce CO2 emissions 2. Will reduce use of gas	2. Cost	Investigate further	001	15-Mar-24	Green Team
2																							Under pew heating	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	9	1. Inexpensive to install 2. Low running cost 3. Heat generated close to people	1. Need to plug the pews in to power, so 2. Need many power sockets installed 3. Does not cover everyone 4. The pews may be changed for chairs in the future	Reject	001 002	09-Apr-24	Green Team
3																							Panel heaters in vestry, font and chancel	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	9	1. Inexpensive to install 2. Low running cost 3. Heat generated close to people		Investigate further	001	15-Mar-24	Green Team
4																							Overhead IR heater in Lady Chapel	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	9	1. Inexpensive to install 2. Low running cost 3. Heat generated close to people		Investigate further	001	15-Mar-24	Green Team
5																							Install a solar array	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	15	1. Will save energy and CO2	1. Cost	Investigate further	001	15-Mar-24	Green Team
6																							Install battery storage	1. Energy Audit (Mar 2024)	15	1. Will enable us to manage the generated energy and use when required	1. Cost	Investigate further	001	15-Mar-24	Green Team
7																							Elevate the Nave Floor	2. Feasibility Study (Mar 2025)	19	1. Accessibility benefits 2. Can incorporate and conceal some heating systems 3.Would improve the U value of the floor, reduce heat loss and improved perceived comfort.	1. Large up-front cost 2. Only small improvement from insulating the floor, so a long payback period.	Investigate further	003 004	02-Apr-25	PCC
8																							Encasing the Lady Chapel	2. Feasibility Study (Mar 2025)	20	1. Independent heat controls 2. Compatible with air to air and underfloor 3 Easier to draught proof a small room	1. Still some heat loss to the main church	Consider at a later date	003 004	02-Apr-25	PCC
9																							Install air to water heat pumps in the hall, together with radiators	2. Feasibility Study (Mar 2025)	24	1. Net Zero solution 2. Will work with current electrical supply 3 will require space in the kitchen for plant	1. Higher costs compared with the gas boilers 2. 5m2 extremal space required for heat pumps	Reject recommendation	003		
10																							Install air to air heat pumps in the hall with warm air heating	2. Feasibility Study (Mar 2025)	25	1. Cheaper operating cost than current 2. Fast responsive system 3. Solution is net zero 4. May require more external units than a water based system, due to zoning.	1. Some churches have reported noice issues 2. Not all manufacturers offer intelligent controls as used currently.	Investigate further			

Figure 13: Analysis of Options

Why are we making the changes now?

Our Church has a Mission Action Plan and one of the key tasks was to investigate moving to net zero. This is part of our caring for others and for the planet.

The national Net Zero Strategy is for Churches to move to Net Zero by 2035.

Our Diocese has a plan to assist churches in moving to Net Zero.

We believe that our church has the technical and leadership skills to achieve early implementation of net zero and thus be a good example for others to follow.

We have already been engaging with other churches on a similar journey and we want to play our part in promoting net zero and showing people how this can enrich their whole mission.

We believe that the time to act is now and we need to encourage other churches to play their part.

Justification: How does this help our mission?

Our Vision and Mission are as follows:

This project provides benefits across every aspect of our Vision, Mission and Priorities & Values as will now be outlined.

VISION

At the heart of who we are here at St. John's is the belief that we want all to flourish in our relationships with God, ourselves, others and creation. In the PCC's initial exploration of what it means to do this, becoming a Net Zero Church became a core priority as we looked to engage with God's creation around us.

What we discovered is that when we started to think about our care for the planet in the emissions we produce and the materials and resources we use, what followed after was an inevitable desire to also care for those around us as an expression of our love for the God whose image is reflected in each of us.

Because of this, our plans aren't just a Net Zero building project. They are the beginning of an exciting new chapter at St. John's.

During our Vision Day in March 2026, Rhodri Bowen, our Diocesan Parish Advisor, said:

"The most striking thing to me, noted during our time together, and once again when writing up, is the almost universal outward focus reflected in ...our hopes and prayers for the future.

This sets a clear vision for the church: one that is seeking to further embrace its community and extend the reach of its tent (Isaiah 54).

This suggests that you share amongst you clear priorities and an understanding that whatever building project is planned should address those priorities and serve that vision.

I am delighted that I was part of a gathering where the vision for the future expressed in the room was so consistent, and consistent with the previously discerned vision summarised by Laura in the morning service. There are differences of opinion in how your agreed priorities should be addressed, reflected across section 5, but given the consistency of vision your community has the potential to be united in purpose so that the implications or outworking of your vision might be decided in a culture of humility and respect, committed to continue to listen to God and to each-other."

MISSION

Listening undertaken through the church's Vision Day in March 2026 confirmed a shared aspiration for the church to be used more widely throughout the week. Participants expressed hopes that the building would be open more often for prayer and reflection, provide welcoming spaces for community groups and those experiencing loneliness or isolation, and offer opportunities for music, creativity, and learning. There was also a strong desire to see the church nurture the gifts, talents, and callings of its members and the wider community — particularly through hospitality, music, volunteering, leadership, and service.

Without investment, the limitations of the current building will increasingly restrict the church's ability to grow its worshipping community, develop younger generations in faith, offer meaningful discipleship opportunities, and respond to the needs of the village.

This project will address these needs by creating a more sustainable, accessible, and flexible church building. By enabling the church to care for the planet, welcome families and young people, support life-event ministries, and nurture the gifts and callings of those who gather there, the project will ensure that St John's can continue to serve Crowthorne as a place of worship, hospitality, community, and spiritual growth for generations to come. With Revd Laura's guidance and leadership, our congregation has grasped the vision and mission for our church going forward with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. This was clear to Rhodri, and we are keen to affirm this.

Our Mission will be fulfilled through:

1. Worship
2. Caring for others and our planet
3. Practising generous hospitality
4. Engaging in partnership

1. Worship

A. Liturgical Benefit

Our proposed building project will strengthen the ability of St John's to sustain and deepen its liturgical life. The church's worship is rooted in the rich traditions and symbols of the Anglican tradition, and the existing building already provides a beautiful and prayerful setting for services. Improvements to heating, accessibility and the fabric of the building will ensure that the church remains a comfortable, welcoming, and dignified place for worship not just on a Sunday and a Wednesday, but throughout the week, and throughout the year. A key proposal within the project is to raise the nave floor to create a step-free space. This would enable the congregation to journey together to receive Holy Communion without barriers, reflecting the theological conviction that all are invited to God's table. There would be greater accessibility for members of the Ministry Team and choir as they serve within the liturgy.

At present, the congregation enters the church by stepping down into the building. While this is a historical feature of the architecture, it does not fully reflect St John's commitment to welcome and inclusion. Creating level access into the church expresses our belief that all people are welcomed equally into the life of the Church, and more importantly, the life of God. While increasing accessibility and flexibility, the project will ensure that the altar continues to hold clear prominence as the focal point of worship, maintaining the theological and liturgical integrity of the space. The project will also help protect and enhance the qualities that make the space valuable for worship, and to the congregation and local community, including its sense of sacredness, peaceful atmosphere, and strong acoustics which support congregational singing, choral music, and concerts.

B. Supporting Different Styles of Worship

St John's seeks to honour traditional Anglican worship while also exploring creative and varied ways of gathering as a church community. Greater flexibility within the building will allow the church to support a wider range of worship styles and formats. For example, changes to seating arrangements, including the introduction of flexible seating in place of the side aisle pews, would allow the church to use the nave more creatively for worship. This could enable services where people move prayerfully through the building, such as during Stations of the Cross, as well as reflective services, prayer stations, children's activities during worship, youth gatherings and musical events.

It will also allow different groups to gather simultaneously in the nave for prayer, discipleship, or small-group worship. This is particularly important as currently we often choose not to run something owing to the cost of running the heating when another group is using the hall. These possibilities

will help us to nurture faith across different age groups and traditions whilst not losing our much-needed revenue from hall hirers.

2. Caring for others and our planet

A deep sense of love and care is what drives the community of St. John's. Because of this, one of our key priorities at St. John's is to serve and steward creation. Our net zero plans will reduce our emissions from 12 tonnes of CO^2 to zero. This would be an incredible way of safeguarding creation by doing what we can with the resources and power that we have.

A. Safeguarding and holistic care

Reducing our carbon footprint brings benefits to the world's climate and to people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. St. John's has a heart for financial missional giving, offering 12.5% of our planned giving every year to local, national and global charities that we have a partnership with. We have increasingly seen how climate change affects those we support, and this project would be just one way of knowing we have done all that we can in the face of more extreme weather patterns. More locally, air conditioning and functioning heating within our hall because of air source heat pumps and consistent underfloor heating in the nave would mean that we can offer our church to those who need it in times of extreme temperatures or difficult economic situations.

Thinking further about safeguarding, a level floor would ensure that accidents which have previously taken place such as tripping or falling down or up steps or the ramp would be mitigated. It would mean that those who use pushchairs, frames and wheelchairs would be able to access the church and hall safely and independently, which is not currently possible. New toilets would also create dignified access to those who need to use them as currently the disabled toilet opens straight out into the hall. A new kitchen would become a space which is less likely to cause harm through jammed

drawers or old appliances, and new furniture would be lighter and easier to carry for those who need to move it. A new soundproof screen between the hall and narthex would allow for multiple groups to use the church when pulled across, creating safe spaces for groups to meet. St John's also recognises that people with sensory processing needs, hearing loss, or sight loss may be significantly affected by the appearance and feel of a space, and by how easy it is to navigate and engage with it. All the proposed work has taken this into account. Our new facilities will also enable us to extend care to new groups and partners in the community.

B. An example to others

As one of the largest emitters of carbon in the Diocese, we will be able to set an example to others as to what is possible. St. John's has historically been a source of care-driven pioneering within Crowthorne, from its involvement in Broadmoor Hospital to the building of the Morgan Centre in Crowthorne which is still used for community groups including the local parish council. We hope that this project can be another example of this, not just to other churches, but other businesses, groups and organisations that we are in contact with and partner with.

3. Practising generous hospitality

Figure 14: Hospitality

A. Community Café and Space

We already have an amazingly generous and hospitable congregation. One of the example of this is when we offer meals and refreshments over the three day period of our bi-annual Flower Festival, which is part of the Crowthorne Carnival. However, we are keen to extend our hospitality offering, particularly during the week as part of our new engagement with our local community. A consistent idea which has emerged from our church congregation and the local community is beginning a community café, which provides income for the church, but more importantly creates opportunities for people to connect with each other and with God. A lot of cafés and food establishments in the local area close by 3:30pm, are very small in space and are expensive. This means that for those with babies or

children, a place for them to go and catch up with others in a third space is not readily available unless they are involved in clubs. There is also a need for provision for pensioners who are unable to access the different paid for community groups . Once a week we would look to provide a simple dinner for those who need it, creating an intergenerational space for those who are lonely or need support. Other ideas which have emerged surrounding a community café have included cooking classes, after-school drop-ins for young people and language classes.

B. Hospitality packages

We currently offer ad hoc hospitality to those who are known to us at St. John's for weddings, baptisms and funerals. However, we would like to formalize and extend this offer with the renovation of our kitchen and toilets. Once again, these packages would provide a source of income for St. John's, but also a continuity of care and nurturing that speaks to our vision, mission, values and priorities.

4. Engaging in partnerships

A. Charities

Having a welcoming, accessible, flexible, warm space in the church will enable us to offer to host community groups, such as Parkinson's Groups, mental health support, SEND, bereavement or loneliness groups. Furthermore, we would hope to partner with different charities as part of our community café. For example, inviting those from Yeldall Manor, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation charity, Mind or other local charities to provide volunteers, with percentages of the income being given to them. By providing space and hospitality we hope to serve our community better and live out the Gospel in both word and action and be transformed into God's likeness as we work with them.

B. Local Organisations

We are already partnering with Crowthorne Parish Council as part of Churches Together for large key events across the year. Our desire is that we can continue this close relationship to help deliver their Neighbourhood plan (2018-2036)[7] which states that residents noted in their community consultations, the importance of 'Provision of associated infrastructure for new developments such as doctors' surgeries, schools, parks/SANGs, roads, Post Office, community hubs/spaces is needed within Crowthorne. We would hope that St. John's could be a part of helping achieve this.

Residents also commented that *'existing green infrastructure is very important to the local community'* reflecting the communities desire for creation care as seen in the council's CROW and Big Green Week initiatives.

Moreover, in their High Quality Design Policy: CR1,they state: *'Development proposals in the neighbourhood area should demonstrate high quality design that responds to and integrates with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment.... as well as enhancing the impact of key buildings such as the Church of St. John the Baptist;'* We believe that our proposed works do just this, as well as meeting their need to provide *'associated infrastructure for new developments such as doctors' surgeries, schools, parks/SANGs, roads, Post Office, community hubs/spaces.'* Our local and borough councils have endorsed this project, along with our local MP and other charities that we have partnered with. Letters of support have been written and can be accessed.

[7] 202111081409080.Crowthorne Neighbourhood Plan.pdf

PRIORITIES

Informed by our Values and Mission, below are our outlined Priorities which set out our focus for our vision at St. John's. A more in-depth version of what we have set out to do here is set out in our Mission Action Plan.[8]

The above vision for St. John's was shared with the congregation in May 2026. It nods to our ambition and desire to be missional through the honouring and renewal of what has gone before to engage those we encounter in the future.

[8] Please see Appendix 012

This was drawn together as a result of our Mission Action Plan priorities and 10 months of consultation with the congregation, building users, local schools and the community as part of the Mustard Seed Project.

"St. John's has been a sacred space for over 150 years. It is a space which envelops those who enter into it in the peace and presence of God.

Imagine this Nave in 5 years time.

Still a sacred space which evokes comfort and familiarity through its stained-glass windows, and deep red brick. Fabrics and fittings which nod to the rich heritage of its Victorian foundation. The floor renewed so that it is worthy of this beautiful building, in keeping with what makes this place so special.

A sacred space reflective of the glory of God through its warmth of air and heart, and welcome. A sacred space where all can enter into it without barrier, restraint or hesitation. With doors wide open, and people to receive them. To listen, welcome and pray. Not just on a Sunday, but throughout the week as they come to rest, to pray, to worship, to learn, to talk, to support and care and love.

A sacred space where Christ is encountered through his Spirit in inclusive, joyful and creative ways that nurture our relationships between ourselves, creation and God:

Through Come and Be and Come and Sing, and precious story moments in Come and Play.

Through concerts and choirs and art exhibitions, through prayer spaces and festivals. Schools visit, not just for services, but to learn more about our faith and the church as their curiosity grows around the works that have taken place.

Through visiting community groups as we invite them to come and celebrate the renewal of our precious heritage, but also our steps forward to include and work with those others and the earth that this church's foundations rest on.

Quiet days and still moments in the week. Creative contemplation sessions.

Through the meeting of community wellbeing groups who build each other up when times are hard: Support groups for those suffering with mental ill health, caring for others, or bereavement.

Through the discovery of God's word through discipleship groups and talks that touch on everyday parts of our lives.

A sacred space there for those at the beginning, middle and end of their lives, in baptisms, weddings and funerals.

A sacred space where our services grow, not just in number, but in depth of encounter.

A sacred space where all can physically gather around the altar to be fed and filled, so that the God who is unknown to many, may be made known to all.

Imagine our hall in 5 years time

Where the things which take place in the Nave, spill out into our service of others, to make all that we do saturated with the love of God.

Sacred, if you will.

Perhaps an affordable community café running out of a well-equipped kitchen which partners with different charities or activities through the week so that our financial mission giving not only transforms others, but transforms us into God's likeness. Its income used to further the mission of the church, and to bless the charities it's partnering with.

We become a place in the week where people bring their crafts and puzzles. Where people make friends and make connections.

Where GPs socially prescribe their patients to come and visit us because they know they won't be alone here and will be embraced as one of our own.

We become a place in the week where parents and carers can experience love and care and freedom for them and their children to be themselves as they sip on their coffee and eat their cake.

We become a place where young people drop in after school for a hot chocolate, or to do their homework, or a space for them to revise.

A place where young people can find belonging, care, guidance, rest, joy and creative expression.

We become a place of learning- English as a second language, basic cookery lessons, intergenerational life skills- darning a sock, fixing a fuse, gardening techniques.

A place where we put on meals for those who access the foodbank, or who cannot access COATS[9], school meals in the holidays or who are lonely or without a home.

A place where those with SEND needs and their families can experience community, learning and advocacy.

As people begin to know us, people begin to make their way from the hall into a warm, space in the nave that cocoons them, just as God has done with each of us wherever we find ourselves.

Like the birds that nest in the branches of the mustard seed plant, St. John's becomes a place where even more people might find a home, glorify God and share his love.

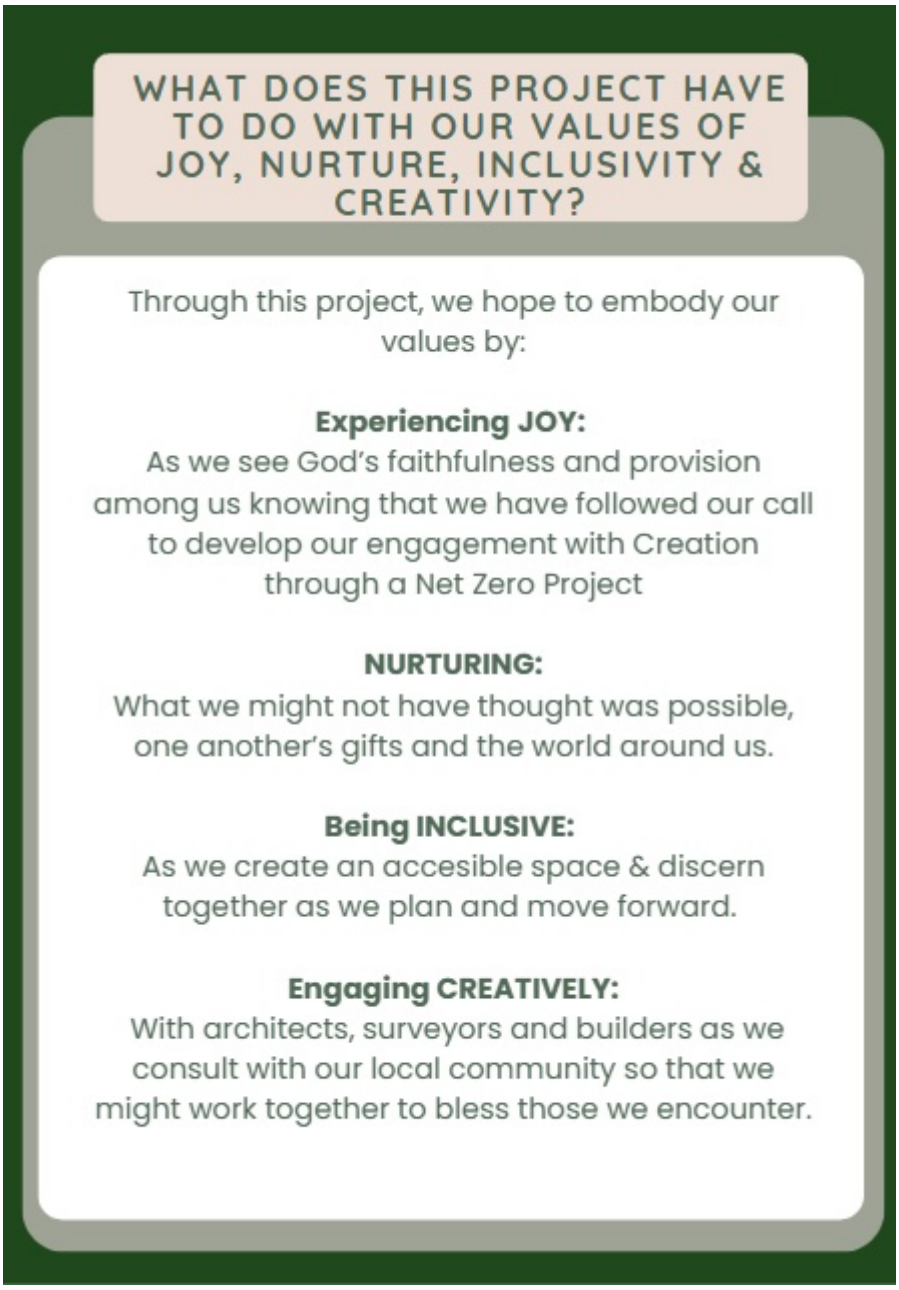
Where our deep-rooted gifts of worship, care, generous hospitality and partnership working are given expression beyond what we could possibly imagine in this space today.

[9] Crowthorne Old Age to Teen Society - a charity that support elderly people with lunches and social activities

So Let us be courageous. Let us listen. Let us be curious. Let us witness to the goodness of God. Let us leave a legacy of hope and joy and love in the ways that only we can, so that in 153 years time, St. John's will still be bearing fruit worthy of God's kingdom, and that God might say of us 'You have made me known throughout the generations. You good and faithful servants.'"

VALUES

In all of this we have been guided by and hope to continue to grow in our embodiment of our values of being joyful, nurturing, inclusive and creative.



How does the project contribute to environmental sustainability?

The largest environmental impact will be the reduction of 12 tonnes of CO^2 each year.

Our 28 solar panels and 40 kwh battery system will generate a great deal of electricity which can be used to offset the amount of energy we consume from the grid.

Having five zones in the hall means that we can restrict the heating to particular rooms, rather than heating the whole building.

Double glazing will reduce the power consumption in the hall by around 30%.

The underfloor heating will save around 37% of our total power consumption.

The new floor will be constructed using limecrete

- **Lower Embodied Carbon:** Traditional cement-based screed has an estimated embodied carbon of 100 kg CO_2e per tonne. Limecrete generates as little as 13.58 kg CO_2e per tonne. [1]
- **Carbon Re-absorption:** While making hydraulic lime does require energy and releases greenhouse gases, the lime passively reabsorbs CO_2 from the atmosphere as it hardens and cures, helping to neutralize its overall environmental impact. [1, 2]
- **Breathability & Moisture Control:** Unlike concrete, which is completely impervious to water and can force moisture into surrounding historic masonry, limecrete is vapour-permeable. This allows water vapor to evaporate naturally, minimizing damp and mould. [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Flexibility & Longevity:** Limecrete is more flexible than concrete, allowing it to adapt to a building's natural expansion, contraction, and settling. This greatly reduces the risk of structural cracking. [1, 2]

Appendices

Documents provided by contractors

Reference	Document	Author	Description
001	2024 Energy Audit	Lydia Hogg	Energy Audit sponsored by the Oxford Diocese and conducted by Lydia Hogg in March 2024
002	Under Pew heating	Green Team	Minutes of meeting held on 24th Sep 2024.
003	Net Zero Feasibility Report	Cook&Cardenas	Feasibility Report funded by a £3,000 grant from Oxford Diocese. (4th March 2025)
004	Green Team Report to PCC	Green Team	Report to PCC meeting held on 2nd April 2025
005	Possible plan for installation of ramps	John Radice	John drew up possible plans for the installation of ramps in case we do not select the option to raise the floor
006	Solar Panel report	Cook&Cardenas	Analysis of the capacity for solar panels and batteries
007	Solar tender pack	Cook&Cardenas	Tender pack for the procurement of solar panels and batteries
008	SSEN quotation	SSEN	
009	Architects report	John Radice	Investigation into heating options for the Church
010	Plan for the kitchen and toilets	John Radice	Draft plan for the modernisation of the kitchen and toilets
011	Double Glazing report	Cook&Cardenas	Analysis of costs and benefits of double glazing the hall

Documents produced by St Johns

012	St. John's Mission Action Plan	St. John's PCC	Mission Action plan for the parish of Crowthorne
013	Consultation Write up and Images	Revd Jen Green and Revd Laura Wheatley Downs	An analysis of consultations undertaken from September 2025-August 2026
014	Vision Day Write Up	Rhodri Bowen	A write up of a facilitated Vision Day in March 2026