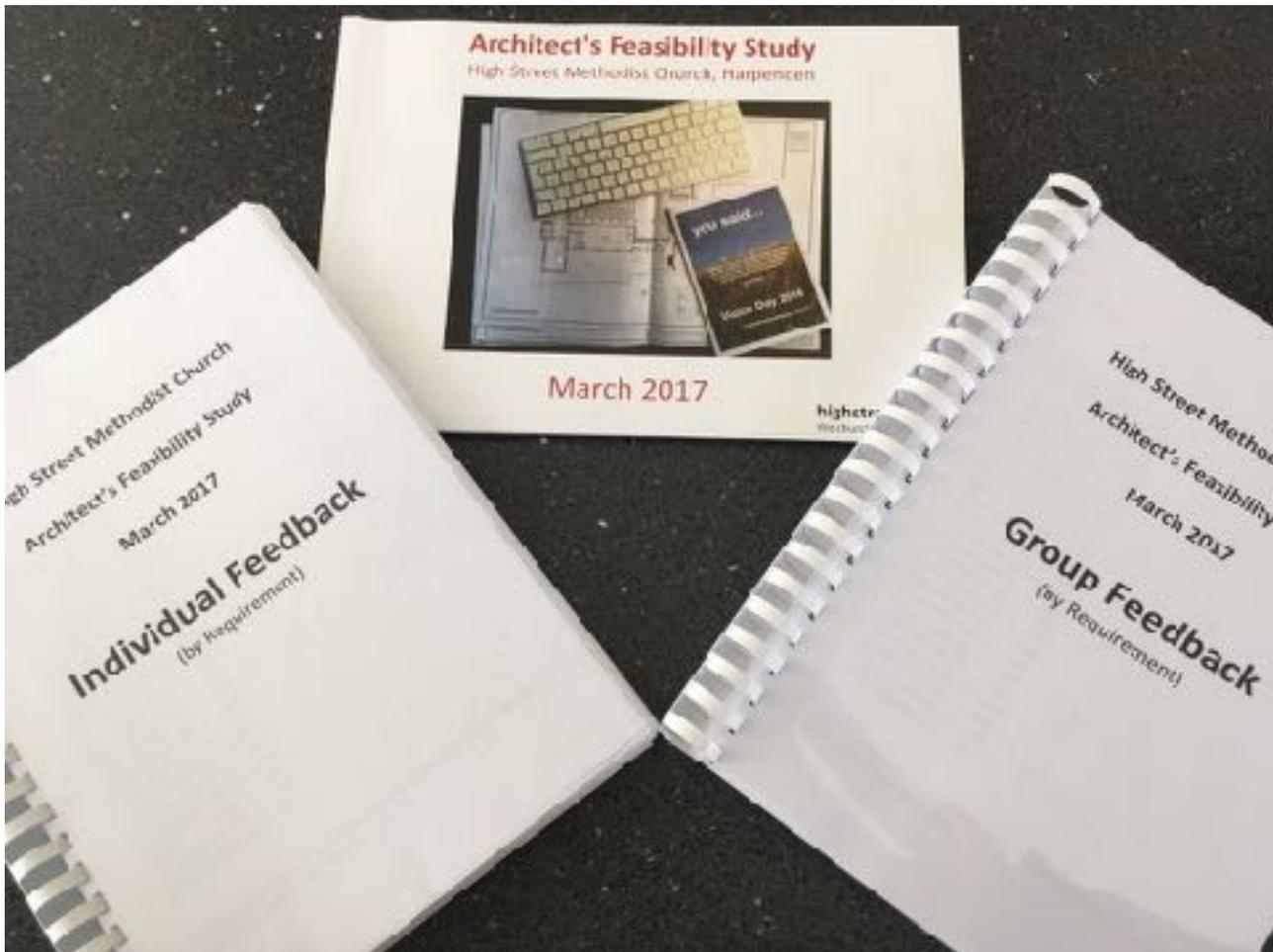


High Street Methodist Church, Harpenden



SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON THE ARCHITECT'S FEASIBILITY STUDY October 2017

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the church in the high street

Dear friends

I am so grateful to the large number of people who this Springtime studied our Architect's feasibility study and submitted their response. Our Church Administrator Louise Schlich was given the daunting task of collating all of your submissions, and then further sorting each comment according to the twenty-five requirements of our original brief. The result of all Louise's hard work is two volumes of feedback totalling in excess of 450 pages!

Given the sheer volume of feedback, and the great care you clearly took over your submissions, it has been important for us to take our time to consider it fully. So, over the past few months, a subgroup of the Church Leadership have carefully worked their way through all your feedback, and this (comparatively) small document contains a summary of their findings.

A total of 116 feedback submissions were received. 39 were group submissions from teams or fellowships. 77 were personal submissions from individuals, couples or families. In all, more than 200 people participated in this feedback exercise, with the majority doing so through the many discussions that led to the group submissions.

As we had hoped, it is clear that many of the group discussions greatly benefited from the contribution of those who are involved in many different activities and services, helping the groups to comprehend the complex interplay of the many sensitivities and practicalities we face within this wonderfully diverse church.

In June, the Methodist Church's Conservation Officer Joanne Balmforth visited the site and subsequently provided us with her initial response to the architect's study, and her feedback appears at relevant points throughout this summary.

What follows comprises three sections: Section 1 covers requirements 1 to 15, which all relate to the Main Church; Section 2 covers requirements 16 to 25, which all relate to other spaces; and Section 3 covers other issues that were raised within the consultation.

For ease of reference, much of the text is colour-coded. **The Conservation Officer's advice is in blue, those aspects of the feasibility study that are supported by your feedback are in green, those aspects not supported are in red, and those aspects requiring further consideration are in orange.**

The Leadership Team's recommendations to the Church Council regarding how to take things forward, will flow from the findings summarised here. These recommendations have been considered at length and agreed by all members of the Leadership Team. Please do continue to hold this process in your prayers.

With every blessing

Mark Hammond

SECTION 1 - BRIEF FOR THE MAIN CHURCH

KEY TO SUMMARY

Conservation Officer Advice -

Supported - More Detail Required - Not-Supported.

Requirement 1 - Flexibility

Enabling **different, flexible styles of worship and other church activities** to happen in the main body of the church with very little or no “set-up” time (e.g. services, X:Site, courses, concerts, children’s holiday clubs, prayer days, prayer installations, Christmas Carnival, etc.).

- ‘The creation of a flexible space is a common objective, but it is clear that this is a real need at High Street Methodist Church. As I mentioned at the meeting the church may need to emphasise within its supporting information, how the existing fixed seating prevents these uses, and why there is a need for wholesale pew removal.’
- Assuming a proven need for pew removal, replacement chairs should be a quality wood design – definitely NOT the chair design currently used at the front of church... We should also look to avoid upholstery, as this can be problematic in terms of spillage etc, and if in an inappropriate colour will take the emphasis away from the architectural interest of the building itself.’
- ‘We do recognise the need to have level access and to encourage improved circulation and connection between the worship space and the ancillary halls. Enlarging the existing openings into the church as proposed would achieve this. However, the architect needs to rethink their approach and work with the existing architecture rather than removing aisle columns. Ian Hume [the District Property Secretary] offered some good solutions, namely the opening up of the neighbouring arches to create openings on both elevations incorporating new glazed screens, with the existing symmetry being respected. Detail permitting, this could be supported.’
- There is a strong desire to ensure that any changes to the Church are fully in keeping with the architecture and ambience of this important space.
- The removal of pews: Taken as a whole, the thrust of the feedback was supportive, but many also recognised this to be a highly sensitive area. Indeed, some very strongly want to retain the current pews for various reasons including: heritage, aesthetics, orderliness, capacity, storage of books, hand-holds for standing.
- The provision of stackable chairs capable of being easily moved and stored, but also comfortable: Many support this in principle, with some strongly against, and others suggesting modern stackable pews.

- There was very little support, and many against, the reduction or removal of the two main pillars that divide the transepts.
- A number expressed concern about the reduction in seating capacity suggested in the feasibility study. It would be helpful to confirm and clarify definitively both the current actual seating capacity and the maximum possible seating capacity with chairs.
- A storage room will be required for the total number of chairs when stacked.
- The design of chairs is very important, along with default set-up and the personnel to move them as required.
- A number of submissions suggest that we consider putting a mezzanine floor at the West end of the Nave. This could provide:
 - Additional first-floor capacity for our largest gatherings;
 - A possible unobtrusive position for the Audio-Visual-Lighting desks;
 - A possible “extended” Foyer area underneath; and
 - (with the addition of folding glass doors under its East edge) an additional “sound-proof” space below providing extra circulation space between Sunday morning services and perhaps a “Cry Room” for parents of very young children.
- Creating wide access points into the Nave from both Wesleys and the Hall is seen by many to be a good thing in principle, but there are many widely-held concerns regarding:
 - the detailed design of the openings which would have to be fully in keeping with the church’s architecture (unlike the “goal posts” shown in the architect’s drawings);
 - the great importance of preventing sound leakage and visual distraction between rooms;
 - any negative impact on letting the three rooms separately.
- Creating direct access to the kitchen from the north transept is seen as a good idea in principle but there are various concerns about this (as described more fully in the feedback for Requirement 15 below).
- We need to seek expert advice regarding the effect upon acoustics of any redesign, to fully reflect the acoustic needs of all our users.
- We need to clarify the location of the organ console.
- We may want to consider providing a storage space for the pianos.

Requirement 2 - The East End

Ensuring the **east end of the church** remains a focus for worship.

- 'Alterations to the dais are supported as this is of no architectural or historic interest. It will be important to retain the hierarchy of space that the 'sanctuary' currently enjoys, and we strongly suggest that the existing furniture, including the liturgical furniture here, remains.'
- Retaining the East End as a focus is strongly supported.
- Retaining the existing fixed furniture in the "Chancel" - including pulpit, reading-desk, choir pews and communion table and rail - is strongly supported, with a small number arguing for alterations (ranging from complete clearance of all furniture to the introduction of moveable choir pews).
- A new Dais is strongly supported.
- In designing the new Dais, consideration should be given to the height, size and shape so to fit our various current needs and better enable the visibility of those using it.
- It will be important that this East End continues to work well aesthetically within the whole redesigned space.
- We need to ensure the Choir can be better heard by the congregation. (The feedback suggests that the current acoustics are very good in the Chancel but that the Choir cannot be always heard very well by the congregation from the Nave).
- It would still be good to consider how we might possibly increase the Choir capacity within the retained Choir pews.
- The suggestion was made that we might incorporate into the Church a permanent baptismal pool.

Requirement 3 - Choir Facilities

Options for accommodating a **larger choir** together with providing adequate space for the choir to gather before/after worship, and for the storage of gowns, music, etc.

- 'It will be important to retain the hierarchy of space that the 'sanctuary' currently enjoys, and we strongly suggest that the existing furniture, including the liturgical furniture here, remains.'
- There was support for forming one large room by combining the current Choir Vestry and Ministers' Vestry - incorporating a toilet - and for creating a new Ministers' Vestry within an extension in the North East Corner. However, on balance there was a stronger view - including from a number of Choir members

themselves - that the extent of the feasibility report proposals were disproportionate to the need and priority of this given the Choir's relatively minimal use of their Vestry and other available options to maximise the existing space.

- We should avoid having a toilet opening directly into the Choir Vestry.
- Careful thought should be given to the design of Choir Vestry furniture to enable other groups to use the vestry whilst also keeping Choir property secure.
- Careful thought should be given to when the Choir Vestry would be made available for other users.
- If the extension work to the vestries is not carried out then it would be appreciated if the vestries and toilet could be fully refurbished, with consideration given to blocking up the connecting door between the two vestries and redesigning the Choir Vestry storage.

Requirement 4 - Sight Lines, Inputs and Sockets

Ensuring, **sight lines are improved** for viewing worship bands, drama pieces and other activities, including external events that take place 'centre stage' and that there are sufficient **inputs and sockets** for electric, sound and data with open communication channels to a sound desk, where appropriate.

- There was very strong support for video monitors to be fixed on the existing columns to enable those in the transepts to see what is happening.
- There was very strong support for the provision of an improved audio-visual systems, including - wherever helpful - video monitors.
- There was very strongly supported for an improved Dais.
- There was minimal support for, and much objection to, the reduction or removal of the two main pillars that divide the transepts.
- The detailed design of the Dais needs careful thought - including it's height, size, shape, construction and extendability, plus the number and position of built-in audio-visual inputs and sockets.
- It needs to be noted that the current Dais is interchangeable with the Hall staging, and not a standard height, so the need, desirability and possibility of that ongoing interchangeability should be considered.
- It needs to be noted that the current Dais is built over the original Chancel steps and was specifically designed to enable the original design to be retained beneath it without damage. The idea being that it could then be removed in future if ever desired. This was, at the time, a Conservation requirement.

- We should consider whether to incorporate into the Dais a removable hand rail to assist people climbing the steps.
- We might consider the possibility of incorporating into the Dais a baptismal pool.

Requirement 5 - Communion Rail

Enabling larger congregations more easily to occasionally receive **communion at a rail**.

- ‘The design of the new communion rail should be agreed.’
- There were very mixed views regarding the larger removable communion rail built into the new Dais. Some like this very much, but a good number of others query its value or necessity, and express concern about the practicality of set-up and storage.

Requirement 6 - Disabled Access

Reviewing the means of providing **disabled access** throughout the premises.

- ‘Details of the disabled access (especially the new doors) will need to be provided and agreed.’
- There was strong agreement that disabled access is important.
- Many supported the retained lift access to the Dais.
- Some pointed out that the provision of flexible chairs would enable wheelchair users to sit anywhere they liked.
- Consideration should be given to whether the look of the current lift-access to the Dais could be improved, or even whether a ramp would be more practical.
- Consideration might be given to the provision of improved access to the Choir vestry.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of improved external exits to meet current fire safety standards.
- It would be good to improve the access through the main front entrance for those with impaired mobility, to include the provision of hand rails, and a better ramp access which does not require wheel chair users to have help in opening the door.
- It will be important that any additional points of entry and/or exit to the building on the southern elevation (from Wesley's, for example) are suitable for those with disabilities.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of lift access to all upper floor rooms.
- It is essential to ensure we have good disabled toilet facilities.

Requirement 7 - Comfortable and Flexible Seating

Creating greater comfort and maximum flexibility in the **seating for a minimum of 350 people** in the main body of the church (more if possible).

- 'The creation of a flexible space is a common objective, but it is clear that this is a real need at High Street Methodist Church. As I mentioned at the meeting the church may need to emphasise within its supporting information, how the existing fixed seating prevents these uses, and why there is a need for wholesale pew removal.'
- Assuming a proven need for pew removal, replacement chairs should be a quality wood design – definitely NOT the chair design currently used at the front of church... We should also look to avoid upholstery, as this can be problematic in terms of spillage etc, and if in an inappropriate colour will take the emphasis away from the architectural interest of the building itself.' Note: The Conservation Officer has provided further detailed advice on chair design, which is set out within Section 3.
- 'An acoustic report may also be required as the loss of the pews will have an impact on the existing acoustics.'
- In principle, a wide spectrum of people agreed with creating maximum flexibility and greater comfort by the removal of pews and the introduction of stackable chairs. This view was shared by a majority of those who expressed an opinion on this point, and this holds true for individuals, fellowships and teams. Even so, many also recognised this to be a highly sensitive issue, and it is very clear that some very strongly want to retain the current pews for the sake of heritage, aesthetics, orderliness, capacity, storage of books, and hand-holds for standing.
- A number are concerned by the reduction in seating capacity suggested in the feasibility study, and many felt the feasibility study to be unhelpfully unclear and imprecise on this matter. It would be helpful to properly confirm and clarify both the current actual seating capacity, as well as the possible maximum seating capacity with chairs.
- Consideration should be given to improving fire exits to give greater safety and improved capacity.
- Chair design is clearly very important, along with default set-up and personnel to move them.
- A mixture of chair design may be helpful, some with arms, for example.
- We should ask an expert to consider the impact of any potential changes on acoustics, fully reflect the acoustic needs of all users
- Careful consideration needs to be given to what we might do with the books and leaflets currently in the pews.

- Separate storage for stacked chairs is clearly required, ideally immediately off the Church itself.
- The feasibility study mentions a standing capacity of 700, it would be helpful to check this against the fire regulations.
- The location of the organ console needs confirming.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of a separate storage space for the pianos, which currently take up part of the north transept.
- Careful consideration must be given to the location of the audio/visual/lighting desks, the book cupboards, the Godly Play cupboards, and the camera rostrum.

Requirement 8 - Sound System

Improving the current **sound system**, such that it will be excellent for speech, musicians, singing, audio replay, etc., and can be managed efficiently and effectively from a sound desk that is appropriately positioned.

- ‘Details of the sound and AV system will need to be agreed in due course.’
- The installation of a new sound system is very strongly supported.
- It would be helpful to have an acoustics expert prepare a report on the impact of any proposals to ensure we are meeting the acoustic needs (both amplified and non-amplified) of all the different users of our Church.
- The detailed design of a new sound system is dependent upon any changes made to the space, and the specification is therefore dependent upon the wider design of the Church.
- Full consideration must be given to such aspects as the position of Audio/Visual/Lighting desk(s), ease of set-up, socket positions, whether we will move to using an electronic drum-kit, and future-proofing.
- Careful consideration must be given to the location of the sound desk and any input sockets.
- The system needs good provision for those with hearing aids.
- It would be helpful for the Choir to have an ambient microphone plugged into the new sound system so that they can be properly heard by the congregation.
- It would be helpful for the system to be designed to ensure that the Choir can properly hear the preacher in the Choir stalls.

Requirement 9 - Flooring

Improving **the flooring** in the church such that it will enhance the comfort of worshippers and not impact, negatively, on the acoustics of the building.

- 'We should also look to avoid carpet as this can domesticate the interior, and will cover the parquet floor which is of some interest.'
- 'An acoustic report may also be required as the loss of the pews will have an impact on the existing acoustics.'
- The retention of the current wooden floor finish was very strongly supported.
- For many different reasons a wide spectrum of people were strongly not in favour of carpeting the wooden floor.
- The floor will need mending, sanding and varnishing.
- We need to seek expert advice regarding the effect upon acoustics of any redesign, to fully reflect the acoustic needs of all users.

Requirement 10 - Video Screen and Projector

Replacing the current **video screen and projector** with a more effective and unobtrusive system, including the potential for erecting preacher's and/or worship leader's monitor(s).

- 'Details of the sound and AV system will need to be agreed in due course.'
- There was strong support for a new projection system.
- The full design of a new video system (including video monitors where helpful) is to be specified after the plans for the space are agreed. The design and installation work should be carried out by a company with relevant expertise.
- The design will need to include consideration of such matters as:
 - enabling good communication between operators and band/preachers etc;
 - providing maximal coverage;
 - remote-control;
 - recordability;
 - the right balance between ease of use and professional output; and
 - being unobtrusive when not in use.
- The positioning and retractability of the projection screen are important factors.

- Consideration should be given to ensure that the images and words we project can wherever possible be seen by those with visual impairments.

Requirement 11 - Visibility from the Transepts

Improving **visibility in the transepts**.

- ‘There may be areas where compromise would be difficult, and I would consider the reduction of the pillars within the transepts to be a case in point. This seems to be rather intrusive and provides little gain, and the objective, I would argue, could be gained via other means, such as digital displays or a better management of activities affected by this loss of vision.’
- Strong support was given to improving visibility in the transepts by fixing video monitors to the columns.
- There was minimal support for the reduction or removal of the two main pillars that divide the transepts, and many people were expressly against this suggestion.

Requirement 12 - Recording

Having the facility to **record services and project live action** onto a screen, e.g. drama pieces, bands, speakers, etc., through the use of discrete recording and projection equipment.

- It was strongly agreed that the new and improved audio-visual system should provide this capability.
- The capacity to record video as well as sound was strongly supported.
- Consideration should be given to which other rooms could helpfully have a video and sound feed. For example, these might include the LX and upper rooms to enable youth and other groups to know when a service is ending.

Requirement 13 - Lighting

Installing unobtrusive **lighting and associated equipment** that improves visibility and enables the ambience and atmosphere of the church to be easily and quickly transformed.

- ‘Redecoration, lighting and heating of the principle worship space will need careful and considered thought if we are to achieve a high standard for this interior, which it deserves.’
- The design of new lighting and associated equipment is to be specified after the plans for the space are agreed.

- It would be sensible for the lighting controls be put in the same place as the audio-visual desk.
- It would be helpful for drama and other activities if (unobtrusive) lighting bars could be added.
- It is important that the lighting specification is designed to meet the various needs to which the space is used.
- The ideal lighting will be unobtrusive, energy efficient, customisable, controllable and capable of creating a range of different and appropriate atmospheres, moods and ambience in an instant.
- The Church should retain its ability to be used in natural daylight, and consideration be given to issues of access for the visually impaired.

Requirement 14 - Storage Solutions (Church)

Finding appropriate **storage solutions** to help de-clutter the church e.g. pianos, band equipment, staging, children's play equipment, assorted furniture, seating, etc.

Note: There is considerable overlap between this Requirement and Requirement 21, which deals with Storage Solutions beyond the Church.

- '...there needs to be a storage plan as part of your proposal, and this should be based on the actual needs of the users. Many churches have made such alterations only to find that storage was not fully considered and thus associated problems occur.'
- **Extensions & New Buildings:** 'These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.'
- Whilst the feedback strongly confirmed the need for improved storage, it was generally felt that the feasibility study had failed to provide the ideal solutions, and would not actually provide the large increase in storage capacity that had been indicated.
- A storage allocation and management plan is required to make it clear what is to be stored where.
- A storage room will be required for the total number of Church chairs when stacked. Ideally, this should be directly off the Church.

- Consideration should be given to where to store or locate:
 - the two Church pianos which are currently stored in the north transept;
 - the Godly play cupboards, currently in the south transept;
 - the hymn and service books, currently in the pews and cupboards at the rear of the Church.
- We should seek the advice of a Fire Officer/Building Inspector regarding fire exits.
- Our storage space requires careful management to ensure that nowhere becomes a “dumping ground”.
- The current flower room provision is ideal for their purposes.
- Storage will be required for musical instruments and audio-visual equipment.

Requirement 15 - Kitchen Access

Finding solutions to the issues raised by having **poor access to the kitchen** from the church e.g. preparing/washing communion elements, meals served in Church and Wesleys.

- ‘Perhaps it would be preferred to install a well-designed tea point within the worship space than to give an additional access point from the transept to the kitchen.’
- ‘The loss of the existing store adjacent to the kitchen is acceptable in principle.’
- There is strong support for the Communion Stewards having direct access to a hygienic kitchen space directly off the Church for the preparation and cleaning of communion glasses etc.
- There were mixed responses to the moving of the existing Kitchen to enable direct access from both the Hall and the Church, mainly around issues of eating food in the Church and the cost of adapting an otherwise perfectly good kitchen.
- Consideration should be given to whether the existing fittings could be reused within a rearranged kitchen.
- Concern was expressed regarding the possibility of noise passing from the Hall to the Church via the Kitchen through the two corresponding serving hatches
- Consideration should be given to whether the Communion Stewards could be provided with a dedicated “sacristy” space elsewhere.
- Consideration should be given to whether direct access between the kitchen and the Church could be created without changing the position of the existing kitchen.

SECTION 2 - BRIEF FOR OTHER SPACES

Requirement 16 - Expanding Children's Church

KEY TO SUMMARY

Conservation Officer Advice -
Supported - More Detail Required - Not-Supported.

“Why this requirement is important” sections taken from the March 2016 “You Said ...” document.

Finding solutions to **Children's church growth** to enable the primary age children to divide into two age-groups with similar facilities.

Why this requirement is important

Children's Church: Our new format for primary-age children in the Hall has proved very popular, and we are seeing considerable growth in attendance. As numbers grow, we would like a second large space to enable us to divide into two age-groups and provide both with the new format.

Note: The feedback responses for this requirement largely overlap with those for Requirement 18 (Expanding Youth Work).

- ‘The alterations to the ancillary accommodation is somewhat less controversial than the works to the worship space.’
- **Extensions & New Buildings:** ‘These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.’
- There is very strong support for the replacement of the rear rooms, if possible with a two (or more?) storey building.
- There is strong support for building a link between the Church, the LX and the re-developed rear rooms, creating an integrated, flexible and purpose-built family friendly facility that is accessible directly through the church.
- There is minimal support for putting a second floor above Wesleys. Whilst this may well provide the additional Hall-size space required, there are strong concerns regarding cost, and fears that the natural light into the Church may be reduced.

- In designing a replacement for the rear rooms, consideration should be given to: entrance location, partitioning, and the need for a lift, storage and toilets.
- Given that we are a Listed Building within a Conservation Area, and that any redevelopment of the rear rooms would impact views of the Church's significant eastern elevation, concern was raised that a two storey replacement may not be permitted. The rear elevation of the Church is rather significant architecturally, and we will need to ensure that light is not blocked through the Church's East window. It may be possible to dig down, and the roof design may need careful thought about.
- Consideration should be given to whether the rear rooms could be redeveloped beyond their current footprint, perhaps to include the LX or to extend at first floor level over the Davenport House car park, or even to extend towards the boundary with Sainsbury's.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of having an entrance to the redeveloped facility directly from the rear car park.
- Hertfordshire County Council are our long-term mid-week users of the rear rooms and we will clearly need to liaise with them regarding any redevelopment works.
- Suggestions were made regarding the Hall staging. One that it be partitioned off to provide an additional room, another that it be removed to increase the capacity of the Hall.

Note: There is evidently some doubt about whether we will be permitted to replace our rear rooms with something much larger. If we cannot, then the redevelopment will still be worthwhile, but it will not create the additional space required by Children's Church on Sunday mornings. Clearly more detailed investigative and design work is required and it is possible we may be forced to revisit other options, such as the possibility of a second storey above Wesleys.

Requirement 17 - Internet Access

Providing **internet access** and installing **Audio-Visual facilities** in all ancillary spaces (including the Hall, Wesleys, and other meeting rooms) and fitting these out to enable any of them to be ideal for various activities, such as Alpha/Parenting/Marriage/Theology courses, business meetings, and children's and youth activities, including coffee-point facilities, where appropriate.

Why this requirement is important

- a. Children's Church: It will help if all our ancillary rooms had internet access as well as AV facilities (sound and projection).
- b. Youth Activities: It will help if all our ancillary rooms had internet access as well as AV facilities (sound and projection).
- c. Our Courses: The various courses we are already running (and those we are planning to develop in future) would be greatly enhanced if we had a choice of different sized, well-appointed and comfortable rooms, each with good quality technology (e.g. sound and vision) built-in.
- d. Our Courses: The provision of a coffee-point in each room would be ideal.

- **The provision of internet access and audio-visual facilities throughout our buildings is strongly supported, and this is already being developed.**

Requirement 18 - Expanding Youth Work

Providing additional space to meet the **potential growth of on-site youth/children's activities**, including consideration of redeveloping the rear rooms.

Why this requirement is important

- a. Children's Church: The Rear-Rooms are not ideal, and consideration should be given to providing improved purpose-built space for youth and children's activities.
- b. Youth Activities: We are continuing to see growing attendance at our youth activities. In the short-term the LX may be big enough for year 7 and above, but it seems likely more dedicated spaces will be needed on Sundays and for after-school activities.
- c. Youth Activities: Outside bookings continue to hinder the potential for using the Hall and Wesleys for mid-week youth activities.
- d. X:site: This quarterly ecumenical children's event has steadily grown in popularity. It now takes place in the Church because this is the only space that is large enough. The continuing growth of this significant event requires a larger flexible space with improved lighting, sound, projection and internet access.
- e. Additional future activities: To host youth concerts and youth worship events on the scale envisaged would require a large, comfortable, space with flexible seating and excellent lighting, sound, projection and internet access.
- f. Additional future activities: Outside bookings hinder opportunities to use the Hall for children and youth events. Internet access required.

Note: The feedback responses for this requirement largely overlap with those for Requirement 16 (Expanding Children's Church).

- 'The alterations to the ancillary accommodation is somewhat less controversial than the works to the worship space.'
- **Extensions & New Buildings:** 'These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.'

Note: During her time-limited site visit, the Conservation Officer was not able to give the development of the rear rooms specific consideration.

- There is very strong and enthusiastic support for the replacement of the rear rooms, if possible with a two (or more?) storey building.
- There is strong support for building a link between the Church, the LX and the re-developed rear rooms, creating an integrated, flexible and purpose-built family friendly facility that is accessible directly through the church.
- There is minimal support for putting a second floor above Wesleys. Whilst this may well provide the additional Hall-size space required, but there are strong concerns regarding cost and fears that the natural light into the Church may be reduced.
- In designing a replacement for the rear rooms, consideration should be given to: entrance location, partitioning, and the need for a lift, storage and toilets.
- Given that we are a Listed Building within a Conservation Area, and that any redevelopment of the rear rooms would impact views of the Church's significant eastern elevation, concern was raised that a two storey replacement may not be permitted. The rear elevation of the Church is rather significant architecturally, and we will need to ensure that light is not blocked through the Church's East window. It may be possible to dig down, and the roof design may need careful thought.
- Consideration should be given to whether the rear rooms could be redeveloped beyond their current footprint, perhaps to include the LX or to extend at first floor level over the Davenport House car park, or even to extend towards the boundary with Sainsbury's.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of having an entrance to the redeveloped facility directly from the rear car park.
- Hertfordshire County Council are long-term mid-week users of the rear rooms and we will clearly need to liaise with them regarding any redevelopment works.

- Suggestions were made regarding the Hall staging. One that it be partitioned off to provide an additional room, another that it be removed to increase the capacity of the Hall.

Requirement 19 - Using Wesleys in the Evening

Providing **improved lighting and décor in Wesleys** for a twilight/evening Youth café.

Why this requirement is important

Additional future activities: To host a twilight/evening Youth Café in Wesleys would require some adaption of lighting and décor to create an attractive ambience for this age-group.

Note: There is considerable overlap between the feedback responses for this requirement and those for Requirement 22 (Circulation Areas).

- 'We welcome the use of the car park for the extension to the Wesley Room, this is much preferred to building a further storey above which will have an increased impact on the historic fabric of the original building, including windows, and light levels within the church.'
- **Extensions & New Buildings:** 'These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.'
- **The refurbishment of Wesleys is strongly supported.**
- **There is also strong support for enlarging Wesleys.**
- The detailed design requires further work, and many suggested extending Wesleys up to the archway so that this can provide a direct entrance from the High Street.
- Consideration needs to be given to the impact of losing the current car-parking and the impact of this upon staff, volunteers and deliveries. If secure car-parking could be provided elsewhere then that would be ideal.
- Consideration should be given to the location of the bins.
- The Resource Centre should either remain where it is or have equivalent prominence and accessibility.

Requirement 20 - Children's Work Office

Providing a secure room for a **Children's Work Office**, including space for materials, resources, and safeguarding documentation.

Why this requirement is important

- a. Children/Youth: We need a secure room for administration, bringing onto site data currently being held in the Children's Church Coordinator's home.
- b. Children/Youth: As the work grows, an office base will be needed for a children's work coordinator.

- This Requirement has already been provided in the newly reconfigured Church Office.

Requirement 21 - Storage Solutions (beyond Church)

Providing improved and **additional storage spaces** for a variety of needs, including for Children's Church, Building Blocks etc.

Note: There is considerable overlap between this Requirement and Requirement 14, which deals with Storage Solutions relating to the Church.

- '...there needs to be a storage plan as part of your proposal, and this should be based on the actual needs of the users. Many churches have made such alterations only to find that storage was not fully considered and thus associated problems occur.'
- **Extensions & New Buildings**: 'These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.'
- **Whilst the feedback strongly confirmed the need for improved storage, it was generally felt that the feasibility study had failed to provide the ideal solutions, and would not provide the large increase in storage capacity that had been indicated.**
- **A storage allocation and management plan is required to make it clear what is to be stored where.**

- A storage room will be required for the total number of Church chairs when stacked. Ideally this should be directly off the Church.
- Ideally, both the Hall and the Church require direct access to large storage spaces.
- The void beneath the Hall stage is currently used for storage, which is not ideal, and alternative improved storage should be provided.
- Consideration should be given to any potential impact of proposals on the Players shed.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the boiler steps, the impact of any proposals on the current fire exits in the Hall, and the impact on the use of the Hall stage for drama.
- We should seek the advice of a Fire Officer/Building Inspector regarding fire exits.
- Our storage space requires careful management to ensure that nowhere becomes a “dumping ground”.
- Storage is required for the Prayer Team’s resources.

Requirement 22 - Circulation Areas

Providing **additional circulation spaces** better to enable large numbers of people to gather informally at the same time as the main church space is in use (e.g. during a second service on a Sunday morning when worshippers from the first service are still on site).

Why this requirement is important

Christmas Carnival: This event would be enhanced by greater flexibility in the church space and more circulation space for large numbers of people.

Note: There is some overlap between the feedback responses for this requirement and those for Requirement 19 (Using Wesley's in the Evening).

- ‘We welcome the use of the car park for the extension to the Wesley Room, this is much preferred to building a further storey above which will have an increased impact on the historic fabric of the original building, including windows, and light levels within the church.’
- Extensions & New Buildings: ‘These will need to be agreed. I do accept the view of the Local Planning Authority that the footprint of the original suite of buildings is lost somewhat and that the development of the site has been rather haphazard over the last century. A view from them about whether support would be forthcoming on any planning permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity, because this could

have a serious impact on your scheme, particularly as this additional space is largely dedicated to storage.’

- There is very strong support for an enlarged Wesleys and a number would support this becoming an enhanced community hub with direct access from High Street. Many feel that this would also be valuable for those attending other on-site activities (e.g. Building Blocks) as well as alleviating the current Sunday morning crush.
- Whilst some like the courtyard, there was much support for extending Wesleys all the way to the High Street archway, creating a new entrance directly onto the High Street (although this may create additional property management issues).
- There was widespread support for creating a new link between the Church, the LX and the redeveloped Rear Rooms. Many felt this would create not only additional circulation space but a greater sense of attachment and possibly a proper rear entrance area into our premises.
- Careful consideration should be given to a long-term business plan for any expanded Wesleys coffee shop, including the possible future need to employ a coffee shop manager.
- The creation of a courtyard received many positive comments, but also a number of negative remarks (not least regarding the inclusion of a water feature).
- Some consideration should be given to the possible impact (positive and negative) of changing the current quasi-public short-cut through our current car park, and the appropriateness (or not) of providing an alternative walk-through down the North side our building.
- Careful consideration should be given to the detailed design of any link between the LX, the Church and Rear-rooms. Perhaps we might be wise to contemplate redesigning related spaces, for example the Flower Room, to make the internal connection more complete and joined-up. Some, however, suggested that a cheaper covered walkway between the LX and the church may be preferable.
- Some suggested we might create more room in Wesleys by purchasing smaller chairs.
- A number felt that the wider access points created from the Nave of the Church through to Wesleys and the Hall would provide many new options for circulation and multi-room usage. Although concern was expressed regarding the detailed design of these access points in respect of acoustics, sound-proofing, and visual issues.
Note: There is more detail on this under Requirement 1.
- Some are concerned by the loss of car parking. Consideration should be given to the possibility securing reserved spaces in the rear car park for our staff and volunteers. We also need to consider parking provision for deliveries, and the location of bins.

- There was also some concern over the loss of direct access from the LX to the High Street.

Requirement 23 - Dedicated Prayer Space

Providing a **dedicated Prayer Space** within our suite of buildings that is permanently available.

Why this requirement is important

Enabling Prayer: Our ministry of prayer would be enhanced by the provision of a dedicated prayer space within our suite of buildings, permanently reserved and available for those who wish to pray no-matter what else is happening.

- On the face of it this requirement appeared to divide opinion between those who see the need for a separate, dedicated 24/7 prayer room and those who believe this is not necessary since the whole church building should be seen as a permanent place of prayer.

Note: There appear to be four different types of “prayer space”: Firstly, our whole Church building (and not least our main worship sanctuary) is clearly a prayer space (or “house of prayer”) for all; secondly, the Prayer Corner in the South transept is a prayer space where our weekly prayer meetings and communion services currently happen; thirdly, various parts of our complex of buildings provide ideal spaces within which two or three people might gather informally for prayer; and fourthly, many churches do have an additional small room wholly set apart as a prayer space which is away from the public eye. Such dedicated Prayer Rooms are a growing phenomenon and provide a space within which individuals may pray creatively using a variety of resources, displays and materials provided for them within the space. Such spaces enable churches to easily hold 24/7 prayer events, where individuals sign up for a series of hour slots within the prayer room. Many of those who are experienced in this form of prayer suggest that there is great significance in a prayer room being located at the heart of the town or community for which you are praying. We are currently exploring the possibility of using the former 267 Room as an ecumenical Prayer Room for a trial period.

- Many value the current “Prayer Corner” currently in the South transept of the Church, although this would not appear to meet the particular needs of this requirement. Nevertheless, consideration needs to be given to whether this would remain within the South transept of a re-ordered Church, or whether a similar space should be provided elsewhere within the Church.

Requirement 24 - Breakout Areas

Providing **areas of comfortable seating** throughout the premises.

- There is in-principle support for the provision of scattered comfortable seating areas to enable not only informal prayer but informal and “breakout” conversations for many different purposes. Some, however, do not see this as a priority or even necessary.
- Consideration should be given as to which are (and are not) the suitable places to put comfortable seating. Note: The division on this point is keenest regarding the Nave of the Church, with some adamant that this is the most appropriate space and others that it is the least appropriate space.
- Careful thought should be given to whether comfortable/informal seating could be provided in the Foyer.

Requirement 25 - Advertisement and Promotion

Providing appropriate **means for advertising and promoting our services, courses and activities** to those who use or walk past our buildings.

Why this requirement is important

- a. Building Blocks: Providing opportunities to advertise and promote our services, courses and activities among those who come to Building Blocks.
- b. Wesleys: Provision of appropriate, attractive and sensitive ways to communicate to our customers about our worship, courses and other activities.
- c. World & Society: A better means of communicating to all-comers our outward-facing activities and initiatives, perhaps via rolling TV monitors around our building.
- d. World & Society: Consider providing ways to better launch and promote appeals in the foyer.

- The provision of screens promoting the church’s services and activities received strong support and has been already achieved in the Foyer.
- Some noted that screens are not the whole answer to this requirement, and needs to be combined with paper advertising, typed notices and knowledgeable receptionists. Consideration should be given to accessibility for those with visual impairments.

- Consideration should be given to whether the same technology currently used in the Foyer could be sensitively incorporated into Wesleys better to promote the church's services and activities to our customers.

SECTION 3 - ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

A - PRAYER

- We need to soak this development project in prayer, to ensure it is truly God's work.

B - MATTERS RAISED BY THE CONSERVATION OFFICER

Basic Principles of Conservation

'We have a statutory duty to 'preserve or enhance the architectural or historic interest', or significance of our listed building. Any 'harm' caused to the architectural or historic interest of our buildings should be avoided or mitigated against, but where this is not possible justification should be provided to argue that the public benefits of the scheme will outweigh this harm. The more harm caused the greater the justification...whilst there is a presumption in favour of conservation there is also a strong recognition that without a continued use for mission our historic building stock will no longer survive, and thus we have to find a balance between the conservation of our buildings and the continuation of mission within them. This can be difficult, and it would be wrong to say that there are no limitations attached to listed buildings, but alteration and change is part of our legacy and thus it will be possible to find a solution, if we both accept there may be some degree of compromise.'

The Consents Process

'We consider the best approach would be to make the application for the whole scheme, clearly indicating the phases; and we would be happy to carry out informal consultation when ready... I have included a guidance note on listed buildings, the consent process and the information required for the submission of schemes for all projects (please note that examples of the Statement of Significance and Need can be found here: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/property/handbook/conservation>). Please note that the above guidance is given without prejudice and the applications will be subject to consultation with amenity societies, statutory bodies and the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. It is not always possible to foresee the issues they may raise, but the above advice is given having had considerable experience with them. We hope the above addresses the issues but there may be subsequent areas to be addressed as the applications proceeds.'

Statement of Significance

'We would strongly encourage the architects to complete the Statement of Significance without delay as this will ensure that those areas of high significance are identified, and any harm to these areas can be reduced to a minimum.'

Disabled Access Audit

‘It would also be useful to know if a Disabled Access Audit has been carried out...’

Quinquennial Inspection

‘It would be good to know ... if any issues are outstanding on the Quinquennial Inspection.’

Pew Removal

‘We have a guidance note with an accompanying check list which may help the church to articulate this within the Statement of Need: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1625797/removalpews.pdf>’ ... I also include the guidance note from Historic England on New Work in Historic Places of Worship: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/new-work-in-historic-places-of-worship/> which outlines the issues when we consider pew removal. In promoting minimal intervention I would recommend that only those pews that are required to be removed should be, and that this should be based on the actual needs of the users who will utilise this space. Samples will need to be retained, and this could be possible within the transepts or along the walls within the aisle (although I note the limited space due to the wall heaters). Retaining samples within other areas of the church would be welcomed but we would always encourage their retention within their original context, in the worship space. These pews can be easily adapted, with wheels, given the lack of a rake and their design. However, I can see that the limited ‘nave’ width would make it difficult to retain a large number of pews if this space is to be sufficiently flexible to enhance the mission of the church. With the right level of justification it may be possible to argue for wholesale pew removal, but this has to be demonstrable within the supporting documentation.’

Chair Design

‘Our experience is that wooden chairs have the greatest sympathy with historic church environments, present the best value for money with long lifespans, and that a well-designed, ergonomic wooden chair can provide as much comfort as an upholstered design. Upholstered seats are not considered to be appropriate... Spending more on a good quality chair at the outset is likely to save money in the long-run and will provide a legacy for the church. Cheap chairs can quickly fail and upholstered chairs may need reupholstering at great expense within a decade. It is advisable to check how long the new seat will be under warranty for and/or how long the guarantee is. A cheap stackable metal-framed chair may only have a six-year guarantee and could need replacing five times in the life-time of a high quality wooden chair with a 30-year guarantee... The requirements for the new seating... will impact on the choice of replacement chair. For example, if the chairs will be moved frequently they are likely to incur higher levels of impact which will necessitate a chair of greater robustness, and lighter weight, for ease of movement. However if chairs will be moved infrequently, a more substantial chair, which perhaps does not stack as efficiently, may be sufficient... If wood, consider what type and what colour, and how the seat will contrast or complement the floor surface. Woods can also be stained. A darker stain might be more appropriate to some settings... Ensure that the chair will not damage [the floor surface]... Contact several manufacturers and trial a range of designs. Try to envisage how they will appear multiplied throughout the church, rather than in isolation.’

Storage Plan

‘...there needs to be a storage plan as part of your proposal, and this should be based on the actual needs of the users. Many churches have made such alterations only to find that storage was not fully considered and thus associated problems occur.’

Vision of altered space

‘The church will also need to articulate its vision for the space once the alterations have taken place, possibly through visualisations or artistic impressions. This is important as this will demonstrate the quality of the new interior and show that this is as equal to the existing and the character is conserved. It, coupled with the chair choice, will act as justification for the removal of fixed seating. The replacement chair choice can be fundamental to any decision. The chairs found in the ‘nave’ are not of sufficient quality to argue for the loss of the pews, instead the church should consider a type offered by these companies, which may seem to be expensive, but these are both robust and of high quality. I include some guidance on chairs at the foot of this email. The storage of these chairs will need very careful thought, and an area dedicated to this should be identified on the proposed plans.’

Recording the Existing Interior

‘There is a standard condition attached to all permissions that the existing interior will be recorded, a guidance note on how this is to be done can be found here:<http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/property/handbook/conservation> ‘

C - RATIONALE

- It is important for us to justify any work we do with a statement of need.
- Any changes to our buildings should be those with a clear mission purpose because we are stewards of God’s resources.
- We should clearly measure the benefits of any work against our church Vision and Strategy. Ultimately, we need to feel confident of what changes will result in the further extension of God’s kingdom?
- The rightness of a project will be seen most clearly in the growth of our faith.

D - COST

- The feedback contained many expressions of concern and not a little dis-ease concerning the estimated cost of the works set out in the architect's feasibility study.
- Many expressed the concern that we should not be spending money "on ourselves". One person was glad that Methodists are perceived by others positively as those who "*are wonderful because they spend all their money on the community rather than on their building.*" To what extent will this project be for the benefit of our wider community? How will this development of our resources truly help us to meet the genuine needs of others?
- The desire was strongly and widely expressed for us to justify any expenditure, perhaps with some form of cost-benefit analysis to ensure we are being wise stewards of God's resources.
- It was also recognised that as good stewards we should be investing in our premises in viable ways to ensure that they are always fit for purpose, not just for now but for future generations. To not face the cost of appropriate change is to facilitate the decline of our church.
- Please can future costings include everything (including fees, VAT, technology, etc)?
- A number of people wished to see any fund raising for our buildings linked to fund raising for other charitable concerns.
- Consideration should be given to any potential increases in running costs (including maintenance, heating, lighting, cleaning) that will flow from any development work.
- It would be good to ensure we have funds in place for each phase before we start work on it. We need a realistic finance and funding team.
- It would seem sensible to start finding out about possible levels of giving and funding.
- Note: During the last project our Church Council decided not to apply for a Lottery Grant. One person suggested that to do so may result in a better project. Another submission stated that they were very much against doing so.

E - PHASING AND PRIORITIES

- In our original Brief to the Architect we did not prioritise between our 25 requirements. The Architect's Feasibility Study is, therefore, more a preliminary suggestion than a fully developed proposal. Consideration should now be given to clarifying our priorities and considering possible "joined-up" options.
- Many wished to see a phased approach to any larger scheme, although some felt that it would be more cost effective to have the phases done consecutively, and ideally concurrently.
- Which phases should we pursue, and why?
- In which order should these phases proceed, and why?

F - TOILETS

- All our toilets need refurbishing.
- More female toilets are required.
- The toilet closest to Hall needs disabled access, nappy-changing facilities, and – ideally – adult and toddler size toilets.

G - ORGAN AND PIANOS

- The positioning of organ console and pianos needs clarifying.

H - RESOURCE CENTRE

- Should the Resources Centre remain where it is?

J - FOYER

- Can the Foyer be made more welcoming, stylish, with a higher quality finish?

K - CAR PARKING

- This is important for deliveries.
- This is important for volunteers.
- This is important for guests.
- Can we do a deal with St Alban's District Council?

L - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Can we have an environmental impact assessment of any scheme?

M - OUR SOCIAL WORK

- Do our plans reference the social work we do?

N - CHOICE OF ARCHITECT

- Jeremy Bell's presentation divided opinion.

P - CRY ROOM

- Can we have a room for parents to go with crying babies where they can also watch and listen to the worship?

Q - DEDICATED PRAYER

- Can we have prayer meetings dedicated to the project?

R - MEZZANINE

- Can we consider putting a mezzanine floor at the west end of the Nave? This could provide:
 - Additional capacity for our largest gatherings;
 - A possible “extended” Foyer area;
 - A possible unobtrusive position for the Audio-Visual-Lighting desks; and
 - (with the addition of folding glass doors) an additional “sound-proof” space below providing extra circulation space between Sunday morning services and perhaps a “Cry Room” for parents of very young children.

S - THE CHURCH CEILING

- This is a “blank canvas” which could provide architectural interest.

T - NIGHT SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

- There are homeless people sleeping rough in Harpenden. Can we consider providing a soup kitchen or a night shelter?

U - THIS CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Some concern was expressed about the subjective nature of this consultation process and how the Leadership Team and Church Council will come to a good decision.

V - THE ONGOING PROCESS

- In future presentations it would be good to show “before” and “after” plans side-by-side.
- We should “test the water” with the planners at an early stage.
- Regarding the development of specific rooms, such as Wesleys: *“Details need to be thought about and people appointed well in advance to create budgets and approve design for carpets, curtains, fittings, furniture, equipment etc.”*

W - ARE WE BEING RADICAL ENOUGH?

- One person has suggested we consider redeveloping the Hall to provide a larger purpose built worship space to enable informal and traditional services to happen concurrently in their own purpose-designed spaces.
- Another person suggested we consider moving Wesleys into the Hall.

X - YOUTH AND CHILDREN

- A number of people believed that youth and children’s work should be our number one priority.
- The main proven need for extra space is in our youth and children’s work.

Z - PEOPLE BEFORE BUILDINGS

- The Church is the people not the buildings.
- When asked to come up with prayer needs for our Church Prayer Day, only the Children's Church mentioned needing more space, whereas 20 church groups mentioned the need for more people.

AA - REAR SITE ACCESS POINTS

- Consideration should be given to widening the rear access points to the site as these are bottle-necks at peak times.

BB - PIGEONS

- In the designing of any new roof spaces, consideration should be given to minimising the nuisance of pigeons.

CC - COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

- One person suggested that we might "consider getting the views of people in Harpenden who are not church goers about what they believe the church could do more of or do better."