

Summary of Public Consultation

Consultation Process

The survey was released on paper and online version (Survey Monkey) and ran between Saturday 8th February to Saturday 14th March 2020. Church members and visitors were invited to complete anonymously.

A Coffee, Cake and Consultation morning was held on Saturday 14th March, 10 – 12. Our local MP, Navendu Mishra, had agreed to attend but unfortunately, the COVID-19 restrictions meant that he was unable to do so.

Overall results

Total number of completed surveys (paper)*	70
Total number of completed surveys (online)	36
Total	106

Note: for brevity, the results of the consultation are abridged, but the full consultation results are available on request.

Q1 Improve the porch area

We want to improve the porch area by replacing the wooden interior panelling, doors and leaded windows with internal glass doors. This will give better visibility into the church, keep out draughts, and allow better access for people with wheelchairs or buggies, as well as open access for weddings and funerals.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
a) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	99 (94%)	3 (2%)	4 (4%)
b) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	91 (86%)	8 (8%)	7 (6%)

Please tell us more...

- The glass doors would give a “window” into the church and would be more welcoming. At present it feels rather dark. Better access would definitely be a bonus for weddings and funerals
- I suffer with anxiety so being able to see more when I come through the door would be much better for me personally. I have also brought people to the church in a wheelchair

and whilst the side door is accessible it's quite heavy and on a slope so I had to leave my lady unattended whilst I opened the door to push her through. I believe the change would make a difference in this instance. I can imagine trying to get a coffin into the church for funeral can be a little difficult too. I just think it would be a much better idea.

- I think visitors are more likely to come through the door into the church if they can see what to expect in advance.
- If it keeps out drafts I think that will help keep the church warmer for longer with less use of the heating system. Also being able to see straight into church through the glass walls will make it more appealing and welcoming. Ease of access for weddings and funerals and buggies and wheelchairs is a fantastic idea.
- I think this will improve the look of the church with better visibility and give better access for people.
- I have always thought that it is difficult to see into St. Matthew's from the outside. What a wonderful improvement it will be to see all the way down the church before you enter.
- The changes will improve the entrance focus and enable ALL people to access the church easily and positively. This is well overdue and creates a much more welcoming atmosphere. The view from outside will enhance the church and its facilities.
- I just think it will take away the beauty of the entrance
- Our group Socially Yours meet every week and use the social area of church. At the moment during colder days, a draught comes through the front doors and makes the group a bit chilly. It would also be great and more inviting to new people if the front doors were open.
- Will provide a more welcoming entrance, make the porch brighter, grander and better suited to community/contemporary usage
- Improvement could, in principle, improve areas for wheelchairs and coffins, if combined with relocation of the font. Whether the proposal really would improve access would depend much on how it would be implemented, eg, sufficient door width and ease of opening. There are also possible issues with damage associated with having a glass panelled door in a location with high footfall where people will manoeuvre wheelchairs and other objects through
- Spoiling the fabric of the building, making it look like a supermarket.

Q2 Move the font

We want to improve access inside church by moving **the baptism font** to one side so that it doesn't block access or cause a trip hazard.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
c) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	90 (86%)	4 (4%)	12 (11%)
d) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	80 (75%)	10 (10%)	16 (15%)

Please tell us more...

- Personally, it just doesn't seem right to do this.
- It does rather feel like a hurdle to be negotiated, especially when carrying boxes and bags in and out of the church.
- It's just in the way at the moment. Especially when I've attended events. It's kinda cumbersome where it is. Moving it to the side would be better
- The font and its symbolism will still be there, so I don't think it should cause offence to move it slightly.
- Yes. As a regular at St Matthews the font is very close to the entrance and does seem to cause an obstruction when people are leaving after a service.
- I think it depends where it is placed. At the moment being baptised directly under that window is something really quite special and I think we wouldn't want the feeling that the font was tucked 'out of the way'.
- The baptism font should remain a focal point of the church. The building should be a place of worship and representation of Christianity, first and foremost. Common sense needs to be applied in relation to Health and Safety.
- The font, whilst normally the front piece of a church, it is a hazard and restrictive entrance to the church. Particularly for FUNERALS where at the moment the north door has to be used. Again the spacious utility will be enhanced
- (1) at present, the font is an obstacle course for the disabled (2) it will ease access for those with children in buggies (3) it will open up the entrance area making it more attractive
- In line with other porch plans, will help create a more open, welcoming and safer entrance. When baptisms are taking place (and crowds gather around the font), there will be less of a fire exit hazard

Q3 Improve the toilet facilities

We want to **add a new toilet** and **improve** the current **facilities** so that it meets accessibility requirements. This will make it more inclusive and also reduce the need to queue.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
e) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	102 (97%)	0	4 (3%)
f) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	99 (94%)	1 (1%)	6 (5%)

Please tell us more...

- It depends if this would affect any other old features.
- Hoorah! Yes, please, I've been stood waiting a few times - this would be a big improvement.
- We have waited far too long for this improvement. We desperately need better toilet facilities. Bring it on.
- This is just a sensible thing to do to make the church accessible
- This will be a great improvement with an additional toilet as I have noticed after the service on a Sunday there is normally a queue.
- It will be so good to double the facilities. Half the waiting time. Hallelujah.
- This depends on the building work. I will have to visit to see the plans.
- Definitely! It's great that you have one toilet as I know some older churches don't but it's a pain to have to queue up on busy days, especially when you have small children with you.
- New and improved toilets would be most welcome. It would give people the confidence to spend more time within the church and engage in the activities.
- Very interested in what's going on
- At last! A potential 2nd toilet, considering our ageing congregation this will be a boost for visitors and our congregation and enabled/disabled access more easily and accommodating. A necessity!
- More toilets are a necessity to ensure many people of differing ages and abilities can spend time in the building without worry or a queue for the toilet

Q4 Improve the kitchen area

We want to **improve and extend the kitchen area** so that people will have more facilities available to them.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
g) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	95 (90%)	1 (1%)	10 (9%)
h) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	88 (83%)	4 (4%)	14 (13%)

Please tell us more...

- The hospitality offered is excellent and so welcoming - such an important part of the church's life. A more "user friendly" kitchen would make life much easier for the dedicated teams.
- The facilities have always appeared to have met the needs of the events we've attended
- St Matthew's does fabulous work but needs better facilities so it can serve the community more effectively
- This is all dependent on the development I have seen so many churches ruined by making a cafe/kitchen.
- The current kitchen area is adequate but not for large events. We can provide MORE and ORIGINAL events for the future. Progressive new areas for all groups and encourage other groups to utilise the space not available at present.
- (1) better kitchen facilities will offer more opportunities for working with our local community (2) it will make "Sunday lunch" meals much easier to prepare
- We use the kitchen facilities a lot, it can get crowded if lots want to brew up together
- An extended, improved kitchen area will allow for more possible uses of the space by a variety of groups in the community
- Offering welcome in the form of food and drink is a special feature of our church and this would help us to do this better. Other users of the building will find this an asset too.

Q5 Create a more flexible space for worship, groups and events

We want to **replace pews with chairs** to make the central area much easier to reconfigure for worship, toddler groups, school visits, fairs, open days and larger events (note that the choir stalls near the altar will remain).

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
i) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	85 (80%)	8 (8%)	13 (12%)
j) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	81 (76%)	15 (14%)	10 (10%)

Please tell us more...

- This would give so much more flexibility in the use of space - especially when the church is opening its doors for community events. The pews are fairly difficult to negotiate when the building is full, e.g. open days, especially for families with prams and wheelchair users
- One associates churches with PEWS -- a church is a church, therefore a place of worship -- if you want to turn it into a Social Club then by all means remove the pews --- then change your name from St Matthews Church to St Matthews Social Club. Whoever came up with the idea of removing the pews is a total and utter imbecile.
- Being disabled myself I'm not able to go to churches that still have pews cuz my wheelchair gets put at the end of a pew in the centre aisle and u feel like ur on show it's not nice
- Having a more flexible space would be great for different types of services, especially when you have kids. And the fairs and Open Day would be much better laid out if there was more flexibility.
- The pews have always been a restrictive area for progress. Replacing with chairs will create a more flexible/moveable area & be adaptable for short notice events/services. Remove the hazard of personnel accidents & contribute to a more enlightened environment.
- Flexibility in use of the nave will increase the range of activities possible. Other seating arrangements, rather than just forward facing, will encourage people-centred worship

Q6 Create a larger and more accessible space around the altar

We want to **enlarge the area around the altar** and **improve disabled access**. This will give extra space for, amongst other things, Sunday services, special events, school performances.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
k) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	93 (88%)	2 (2%)	11 (10%)
l) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	84 (80%)	6 (5%)	16 (15%)

Please tell us more...

- For a small gathering it can be more intimate to gather closer to the altar.
- It will be good to have permanent accessibility to the chancel and a larger area will improve circulation around the altar when necessary.
- I've no idea how this would be done and suspect it would mean big changes to the architecture of the building. I agree with the intention but I'd need to see drawings before I express an opinion.
- What a great idea! Struggle to get buggies and wheelchairs up the step and to get around the altar table on a Sunday
- A more flexible/accessible form of worship for ALL – particularly the disabled & infirm. A more inclusive structure & family like environment
- The extra space at the front of church will certainly improve access for communion
- My son goes to the school and they struggle for space whenever performing
- Improving disabled access will make it more inclusive and also a wider space will encourage larger community groups to desire to use the space for performance
- I believe this will improve visitor experience – providing better views of the building; sight-lines and field-of-hearing will be greatly improved – assisting those who have lesser vision or are hard of hearing
- We already have temporary ramps available for the altar area. Whether the proposal really improves accessibility will depend on the specific final design
- Disabled access to that part of the church is much needed

Q7 Improve storage and reduce clutter

We want to **improve the storage area** behind the organ so that we can remove some of the unsightly cupboards around the church, and also **reposition the central heating system** into this space.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
m) Do you think these improvements will improve access?	92 (87%)	3 (3%)	11 (10%)
n) Do you think these improvements will increase the quality of your visit?	92 (87%)	4 (4%)	10 (9%)

Please tell us more...

- It would be nice to "see" more of the church without being blocked by cupboards when you first come in. And it's a good idea to smarten the place up.
- I'm happy for us to make as best use of the church spaces as is possible. And I think this will help.
- If clearing out the cupboards to make more space this will be a good thing for the overall appearance of the church.
- What an improvement that will be. To remove the mix of unwanted cupboards that spoil the visual experience will be a real improvement. It will also be good to increase the much needed storage capacity.
- The church would look even more beautiful if things could be put away into better storage area.
- Definitely. The cupboards are unnecessary & an eyesore. The central heating system would be hidden & functional. Utilising the space better will remove many obstacles currently in the church & minimise accidents!
- This is certainly what is needed, it will be good to get rid of a lot of the clutter in church
- Removing storage and clutter from the rear of the nave to a separate storage area will improve the openness and visually integrity of the church interior
- Storage area behind the organ is not particularly accessible therefore not an ideal location for storing anything that will be frequently required.
- We'll look better, can look a bit like a junk shop at times