

## VISION PROJECT

### The Re-ordering of St Laurence's Church, Ludlow

#### Report on the June 2014 Consultation Survey

##### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this consultation survey was to enable Electoral Roll members of St Laurence's Church to express their views on the proposals for the re-ordering of the interior of the church that had been approved by the PCC.

This current consultation focussed specifically on those members of our congregations who have registered their interest in the affairs of the church by enrolling on the parish Electoral Roll.

In addition to the Electoral Roll members of St Laurence's, the following groups were also invited to complete the survey: Electoral Roll who worship at St John's Church; Clergy (stipendiary and retired); members of the Vision Project Consultative Group; and staff (not on the Electoral Roll).

##### 2. Response rate

The response rate was as follows:

Group	Number of returns	%
St Laurence's Electoral Roll	123 / 160	77
St John's Electoral Roll	12 / 52	23
Clergy	13 / 14	93
Consultative Group	10 / 26	38
Staff (not on ER)	2 / 2	100
Overall	154 / 254	54

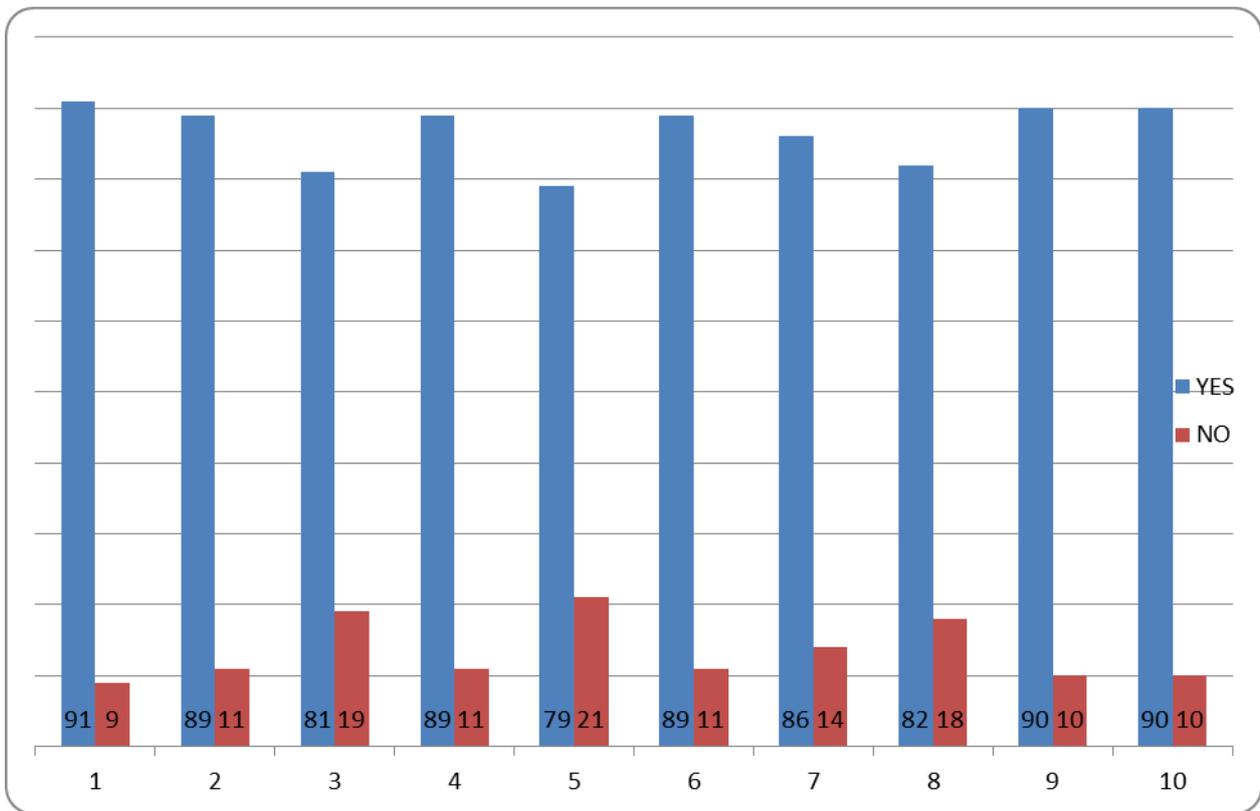
##### 3. Methodology & results

Participants were invited to score the project proposals overall and each of the elements on an eleven point scale ranging from +100 to -100, indicating the degree of support or opposition they felt.

The meaning of the score was as follows: +100 - I embrace; +80 - I enthuse; +60 - I back; +40 - I prefer; +20 - I allow; 0 - I am undecided; -20 - I question; -40 - I disapprove; -60 - I reject; -80 - I protest; -100 - I block.

The table below indicates the proportion of Electoral Roll members of St Laurence's Church who responded who were positive in their support for the overall proposals, this being defined as a score of +40 or more.

St Laurence's ER members	Positive response	Abstention	No response
160	112 (90% St L ER)	9 (6% St L ER)	37 (23% St L ER)



**3.1 Enthusiasts, Supporters, Hesitators & Protesters:** Responses are then categorised into four groups under the headings of Enthusiasts, Supporters, Hesitators and Protesters. In relation to the scores, these groups are defined as follows:

Enthusiasts: +100, +80

Supporters: +60, +40

Hesitators: +20, 0, -20

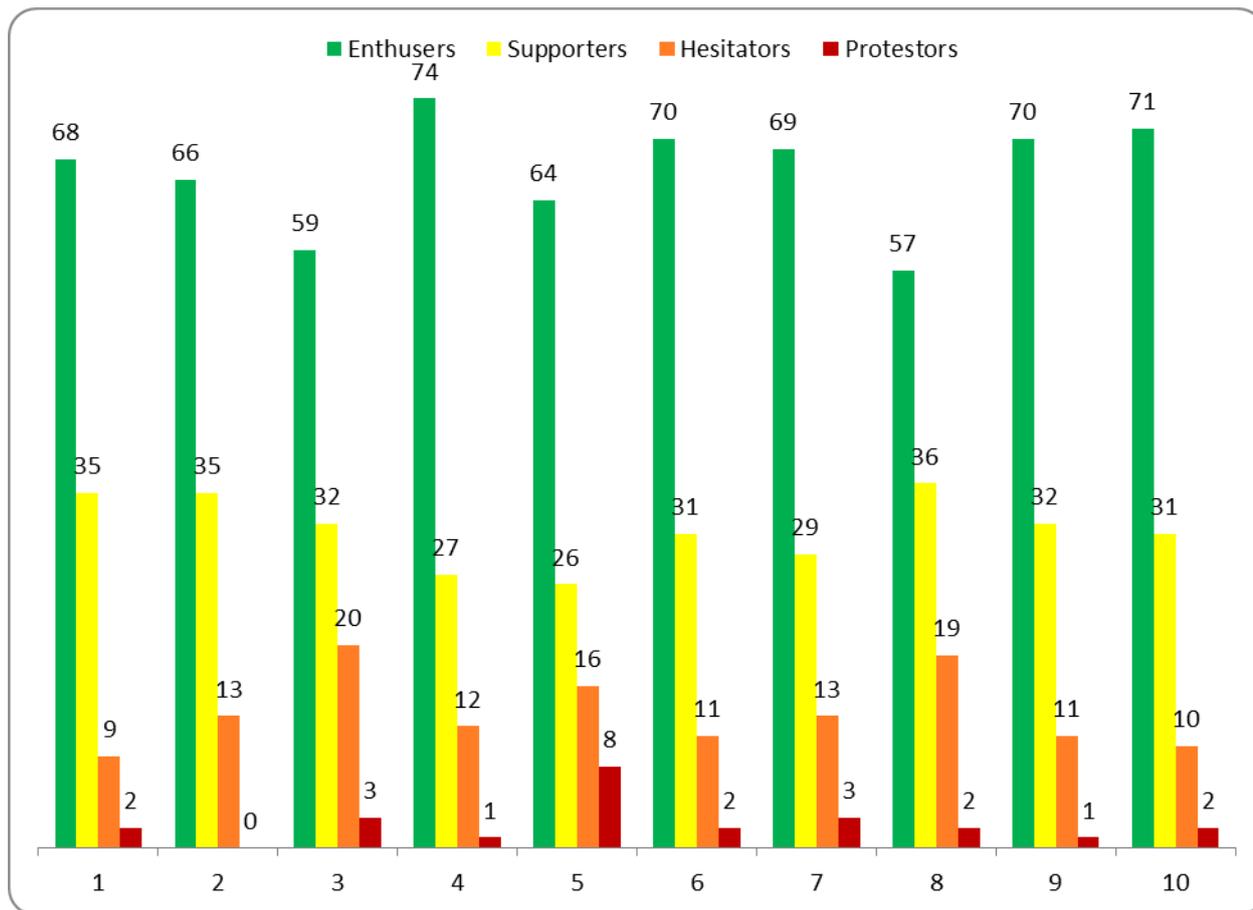
Protesters: -40, -60, -80, -100

This categorisation was carried out in relation to each of the individual components of re-ordering (Questions 1 – 9 as defined below) in addition to the proposals overall (Question 10).

Q1	Shop in south west corner
Q2	Kitchen and toilets in north transept
Q3	Revised nave dais, nave altar, nave altar rail, nave lectern
Q4	Nave stone floor
Q5	Nave seating
Q6	Children's area in north west corner
Q7	Parvis room access and new use
Q8	South transept
Q9	Churchyard: improved lighting, seating and pathways
Q10	Overall proposals

**3.2 Degree of support for the proposals:** The results obtained are shown below for the St Laurence's members of the Electoral Roll, adopting the following colour coding:

Enthusiasts (Green); Supporters (Yellow); Hesitators (Orange); Protesters (Red)



The results show very strong support for the proposals overall, over 90%, as well as strong support for even the most potentially controversial of the individual elements, namely those of the revised nave dais (3) and nave seating (5).

#### 4. Summary of comments from the respondents

In addition to providing numerical scores, respondents were invited to offers comments, both with regard to the proposals overall, as well as in relation to each of the elements individually. The following is an executive summary of these comments, drawn not only from the St Laurence's Electoral Roll members, but from respondents from the other groups as well.

**4.1 Introduction:** The comments entered in the space provided below the numerical scales in the Vision Project Third Consultation survey form have been subject to detailed analysis and scrutiny. Together they constitute twelve pages of written observations. What follows is an executive summary of the detail contained in those observations.

The comments are important because they 'add flesh' to what people were thinking when they ticked the boxes of the scales from +100 to -100 for each of the questions. The general picture is one of tremendous support for what is proposed; the comments largely matched the statistical analysis in terms of trends. However, the picture does vary over the individual questions and these variations are important to help us

to understand how people feel about certain aspects of the Vision project. It is not only the main themes to emerge for *every question* that are important, whether positive or negative in tone, but also what people feel strongly about and how those feelings might influence their reactions to the decisions that are made about the future of the Vision project, and ultimately St Laurence's.

**4.2 An overview of the comments:** What was most striking in analysing these comments was just how enthusiastic people were about the *proposals overall*; one respondent reacted 'with surprise and delight'. From a total of 35 written comments, just two had anything remotely negative to say. It was almost as though the majority on reading the overall plan would love a magic wand to be waved and St Laurence's to be transformed overnight. It was only when people had to think about the specific proposals that some doubts began to creep in.

It was undoubtedly the *revised nave dais* and *nave seating* that produced the most contentious responses, several of which are diametrically opposite to each other with some responses extremely supportive and others (albeit a minority) apparently unable to countenance what is proposed. Several of these responses suggest that some members of the Electoral Roll had not properly understood certain aspects of the proposal (for example that the current revised nave and dais are only *experimental*, or that the proposed altar and lectern have not yet been designed) but there was nevertheless minority opposition to some of the proposals. A substantial majority was in favour of the removal of pews and many liked the chairs, with some comments questioning the colour. (Respondents should be reassured that provision will be made for those who wish to kneel.)

This same dichotomy of views, again with only a minority in opposition, could be found in comments on the proposals for the *Parvis Room*. In general, respondents loved the idea of the *stone floor in the nave*, the proposals for the *Children's area, shop, kitchen and toilets* and the *churtyard*, with only a very few questioning what was being proposed. The use of the term *South Transept* was questioned by one respondent (even though the North Transept was formerly called St Margaret's chapel) and there were several comments pleading that this area should continue to be used as a quiet space.

None of the negative comments should obscure the fact that a substantial majority are in favour of the proposals and that the comments mirror in large degree the statistical findings from the survey. There was considerable unanimity in what was written by many respondents and observations were made on how the proposals might be improved, and these will be considered carefully. Others reflected on the background history of the church, adding that many current suggestions had been put forward several years ago but then not followed up. These observations suggest that we need wherever possible to stay true to the vision of what is proposed and however difficult at times, pursue the finally agreed objectives to the end.

**4.3 Conclusion:** In analysing the comments made on the Vision Third Consultation Survey one was overwhelmed by the thought and consideration that had gone into making many of the responses. They may not all agree with one another but of one thing there is no doubt, the people of St Laurence's love their church and are deeply involved with what should happen to it in the future in terms of worship, welcoming all comers, alternative uses, financial viability and restoration of the fabric. It is this powerful sense of belonging and ownership of the issues that gives such encouragement and hope for the future. A great debt of gratitude is owed to all those who took the trouble to think and to write so carefully on this consultation document.

All of the responses will receive careful consideration and we hope that in presenting these findings more discussions will be held amongst electoral roll members themselves on just how impossible it would be to please everyone! It is very good to know that so many respondents were delighted at the proposals as presented and praised the 'brilliantly written report'. Indeed, it should be remembered that the negative comments on all of the proposals were in a definite minority. Nevertheless, it is also good to know that these views are held as the Vision team negotiates its way forward. The most encouraging responses were those where people commented that they would regret the loss of something that they had valued in the past, but recognised the need to look forward if St Laurence's is to have a viable and sustainable future as a great parish church where 'all are welcome'.

## **5 Recommendation & actions arising**

**5.1 Recommendation:** From both the numerical scores and from the comments received, there is clear, strong evidence that the PCC's proposals for the reordering of the interior of St Laurence's Church are overwhelmingly endorsed by the St Laurence's members of the Electoral Roll. Moreover, the proposals are equally supported by the clergy and by members of the Consultative Committee, in particular those who are major users of the church and its facilities.

It is therefore the recommendation of the Vision Executive to the PCC that the proposals as currently approved should go forward without amendment.

**5.2 Actions arising:** However, it needs to be noted that a number of Electoral Roll members either abstained from expressing an opinion, protested, or did not vote. Furthermore, there were a number of individuals (from both the St Laurence's and St John's worshipping communities) who wrote letters to one or other member of the Vision Executive expressing particular concerns. Hence there are a number of actions to be taken, namely:

- Letters will be sent by the Vision Executive, responding to those individuals expressing particular concerns
- Pastoral visits will be made to protesters and abstainers

## **6. Moving forward**

In order to take matters forward, the following actions will be put in hand:

- i) This summary document will be published in September to the Electoral Roll
- ii) The Project Team is currently working on the strategic framework for the Project which will be made public in the coming months and publicised via an exhibition and newsletter
- iii) At the same time the strategic framework will go forward in December to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, statutory bodies such as the Church Buildings Council and English Heritage, as well as third party advisory bodies such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Victorian Society

Ewart Carson, Jane Robinson and Shaun Ward  
(on behalf of the Vision Executive Committee)

September 2014