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**Department of Theology  
and Religion**

# **Option Appraisal and Analysis of Consultation Findings in relation to the proposed re-organisation of churches in the Redcar area**

## **Commissioned by Middlesbrough Diocese**

**Undertaken by**

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**June 2011**

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## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

### **The Basic Issue to be addressed:**

What is the most effective way of managing the following situation? By 2016/7 there is likely to be only one priest available to cover the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area, which currently has a Mass attendance of approximately 1000, served by 4 priests in 7 church buildings.

### **The Starting Point: Undertake a Consultation with Parishioners and consider their views:**

A re-organisation working party met in late 2010 to plan the consultative process and analyse factual data collected from local sources that had a bearing on any potential re-organisation. Five options emerged from these discussions:

1. Do nothing
2. Retain two of the existing churches with enhanced facilities
3. Build a new church and retain one of the existing churches as a chapel of ease
4. Build a new church and a new satellite church
5. Build a single new church

These options were to be put to as many of the 1000 Mass-goers as possible to give them an opportunity to offer their views and opinions on them. The information gained would assist the Bishop in his decision-making.

### **The Extent of the Consultation Process:**

- An open meeting attended by over 230 parishioners at which over 50 additional written comments were received from attendees.
- Consultation after each of the eleven Masses which take place in the Redcar, Marske, Saltburn area each weekend to explain the options, listen to parishioners comments and answer specific questions. In total approximately 600 parishioners attended.
- Additional meetings with the four parish priests, three head teachers of Catholic schools and a group of students from Sacred Heart RC High School.
- Extra written submissions were made by a number of parishioners.

All of this material has been assimilated into the following report but the key issues raised can be summarised as follows :-

### **Workload for a Single Priest : -**

There was considerable concern raised about the ability of a single priest to serve the needs of a parish of 1000 people. It was felt that the pressures of such a large parish would need to be shared by both a deacon and the increased role and engagement of the laity. The priest should not be over-burdened with additional Diocesan responsibilities.

### **Justification for a New Church : -**

A significant number of parishioners questioned the option to build a new church on the grounds of cost, sustainability and numbers. Any final decision must be clear that provision is being made on a sustainable basis for a realistic number of Catholics in the area.

### **Role of the Laity : -**

There was general recognition that the proposed changes would require the wider involvement of the laity whatever building option was chosen. Further urgent consideration needed to be given to the training, preparation and development of the laity.

### **Access and Transport : -**

The issue of access and transport was raised at every consultation meeting. This was seen as a particular problem for the elderly and those without access to a car and the limited provision of public transport was seen as a significant factor which could affect church attendance in the future.

### **Loss of Smaller Community Parishes : -**

Parishioners are concerned about their ability to relate to a larger parish which they see as being less personal. This was particularly expressed in the Marske, Saltburn and Brotton areas. Whilst they could see the justification for a new church for Redcar, they felt no affinity towards it and would be reluctant to travel there, making alternative arrangements further south in the diocese.

### **Strength of Educational and Church Links : -**

A strong case was made to maintain and enhance the link between the three Catholic schools and a local church. St Bede's School has a close connection to St Bede's church and a similar link was seen to be desirable for Sacred Heart and St Benedict's.

### **Needs of Young People : -**

Many people were concerned that parishes were not doing enough to encourage and involve young people and that the absence of space and facilities for young people to come together was a major problem. This reflects the general observation that many of the existing churches lack any modern facilities for pastoral activities.

### **Planning the Process of Change:-**

A clear message emerged during the consultation that a comprehensive 5 – 10 year plan detailing when and how changes would occur would be of benefit to parishioners. It would enable them to have closure on old arrangements and develop commitment to the new.

### **Recommendations Emerging in Relation to Options Put Forward**

**The option of doing nothing** had a limited amount of support during the consultation. However maintaining and continuing to use 7 churches when it is known that only one priest will be available in 5/6 years time makes little sense. Doing nothing would create uncertainty for parishioners and undermine the development of the Catholic community in the area. It is recommended that this option be discarded.

**The option of retaining two existing churches** is only viable if Mass attendance falls significantly or the Bishop is able to find another priest to serve Saltburn and Brotton (as the position is summarised in the recommendations to the main report). Even so, it would do little to reinvigorate Catholicism in the area and makes no provision for youth development and social activities which are so evidently lacking. It is recommended that this option be discarded.

**The option of building a new church and retaining one of the existing churches as a satellite or chapel of ease** has considerable merit, although the credibility of the new church in terms of capacity and sustainability would have to be clear to parishioners. The Corporation Road site was seen to be the most appropriate to parishioners for a new building that could accommodate extensive facilities. There is a strong case for retaining St. Bede's in the satellite role because of its existing school links and to address the problems of accessing a new church in Redcar from Marske and surrounding areas. It is recommended that this option is given serious consideration.

**The option of building two new churches** was seen to be extravagant and unnecessary and was not seriously considered at any point in the consultation process. This option was discarded at a very early stage.

**The option of building a single new church** in central Redcar that would become a new focus for the Catholic community and provide the youth and community space provision which is urgently needed is possible. However, the probable reluctance of parishioners living outside of Redcar to support the new church makes this option problematic.

**An additional option of extending existing churches** was raised at two churches during the consultation. However, ongoing assessment and professional consultation continues to indicate that none of the existing church sites are appropriate for such redevelopment. Church extensions are therefore not seen as practical or viable options.

## **Introduction**

In 2010 Bishop Draine highlighted the fact that in the next 5-6 years there is likely to be only one priest to cover the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area, which currently has a Mass attendance of approximately 1000. This presented the need for a substantial change in the way in which parishioners in this area are served by its clergy.

In January 2011 a pastoral letter from the Bishop was read out at all Masses in the parishes of Sacred Heart, St William, St Alban, St Bede, Marske and Our Lady of Lourdes Saltburn. In that letter the Bishop spelled out more specifically the challenges facing the Catholic community in this area:

“It has to be recognised that the age-profile of priests in our diocese is rising quickly and the numbers are falling even more quickly.....I would expect that in the next six years there will be only one priest to serve in this area. We should also bear in mind that whatever is decided it will have ramifications beyond the boundaries of the aforementioned parishes. For the moment, though, my thoughts are to exclude Saltburn from any re-organisation but I would appreciate your views on that.

Whatever we do we need to be guided by the following principles: Pastoral and sacramental care needs of the of the Catholic and Mass-going population of the area are met. Apostolic work and evangelisation in the area is better encouraged and enabled, so that the mission of the Church is realised. The vision behind the changes should provide for the next twenty to twenty five years.”

Acknowledging the complexity and sensitivity of the task Bishop Draine invited a team from the Centre for Catholic Studies at the University of Durham, which has significant experience in empirical analysis of the Church in the context of Catholic tradition and theology, to carry out a consultative study which would assist him in discerning a constructive way forward. This study would be structured around a series of basic options identified through the collation of a substantial amount of practical information available locally and collated John Gillis, a retired Town Planner and parishioner of St Albans (see appendices for this information). Discussion of these options would provide a structure within which the parish consultation could effectively take place.

Once consultation with as many parish members as possible had taken place the team would prepare an analysis and recommendations for the Bishop's consideration. A final proposal would then be made by him to the members of all those parishes concerned. The following report details the outcomes of the consultative process and offers recommendations to the Bishop for a way forward to meet the needs of parishioners in the next five to ten years.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors of the report would like to record their thanks to the priests, parishioners, teachers and students in the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn areas for their hospitality, welcome and courtesy. Their participation in the consultation has ensured that the Bishop has a strong set of opinions and views upon which to base his decision-making.

# Section 1: Explaining the Process

## The Re-organisation Working Party

A re-organisation working party was brought together by Jim Whiston (Diocesan Financial Secretary). It was made up of John Gillis (Retired Town Planner and local parishioner), Professor Paul D Murray (Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University), Dr Kath Smith and Jim Darlington (associate researchers, Durham University) and met in late 2010 to plan the consultation process and analyse the factual data collected from local sources that had a bearing on any planned re-organisation. (This data is attached to this report in a series of appendices)

## Pre-Consultation Analysis

Five options to be put to parishioners emerged from discussions and analysis as follows:

### 1. Do nothing

With only one priest available it would not be possible to have Mass to fulfil the Sunday/Holyday obligation in each church. A rota would need to be established, which would lead to confusion and prove unsatisfactory for both priest and parishioners. Weekday Mass would have to be celebrated in only one of the churches. Each of the churches would need to be maintained and heated, which would be expensive in relation to the frequency of use.

This option would not encourage the development of a single Catholic community in the area, which is important to provide the basis for the on-going role of the clergy and laity in providing a focus for evangelisation and mission.

### 2. Retain two of the existing churches

Would be easier to manage than the above option but Mass frequency would be limited on Sundays / Holydays and Mass only in one church on weekdays. None of the existing churches is large enough to accommodate the likely Mass attendance. Both churches would need to be maintained and heated. The other churches would be closed and given over to other uses. This option would also fail to provide the desired unified focus for the Catholic community.

### 3. Build a new church and retain one of the existing churches as a chapel of ease

A new church could be built in a location accessible to the majority of people, providing a focus for the Catholic community [a building housing a church and meeting hall large enough to accommodate the likely total Mass attendance and social gatherings] and raising the visible profile of Catholicism in the area. While one of the existing churches would be retained the frequency of Mass and other services would be limited. The other existing churches would be closed and given over to other uses. Both churches would need to be maintained and heated, but the design of the new church would adopt the most efficient and cost effective measures thus keeping its costs to a minimum.

### 4. Build a new church and a new satellite church

As option 3 but with lower maintenance and heating costs for the satellite church. However

capital costs [land acquisition, construction, etc] would be higher. All the existing churches would be closed and given over to other uses.

#### **5. Build a single new church**

Would provide all the advantages of option 4 but with future maintenance and heating costs reduced further, together with a stronger focus for the Catholic community and a more visible presence in the area.

#### **Developing the Consultation Process**

On the basis of the information collected and the options outlined a two stage face-to-face consultation process was planned. In the first instance an open meeting would be held at which parishioners could be informed of the issues facing the Diocese and the work done to date to identify a way forward. This would be supported by meetings with Parish Priests, Head Teachers and students in Catholic schools. Following from this Kath Smith and Jim Darlington would attend every one of the eleven Masses in the area to give a brief presentation of the issues and options then listen to views and comments from parishioners and answer questions where practicable. Sections 2 and 3 detail the outcome of these consultations. One of the key facts to highlight to contributors was that the Bishop had not taken any decisions ahead of the consultation and that every contribution would be considered carefully.

## Section 2: Phase 1 Consultation

### Meeting with Parish Priests

The Re-organisation Working Party met with the four parish priests currently caring for the parishes concerned; Father Dermot Nunan (Sacred Heart and St William), Canon John Lumley (St Augustine), Mgr Gerard Dasey (St Bede and St Alban) and Mgr Ricardo Morgan (Our Lady of Lourdes and St Anthony of Padua). The five options and the reasoning behind their choice was explained and, as a result of the discussion there was agreement that:

- There was a need to plan on the basis of one priest.
- There needed to be a clear long-term strategy
- Progress would need to take place in stages with the first stage being the closure of St Albans in summer 2010.
- There were particular concerns over the future of Saltburn and its impact on the requirements for Redcar and over the future of Sacred Heart Church given its historic ties.

### Open Meeting – Sacred Heart RC Secondary School 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011

The formal consultative process began with an open meeting at Sacred Heart RC Secondary School on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011. This meeting was attended by **over 230 parishioners** and was chaired by Mgr. Dasey in his role as Vicar General. Jim Whiston, John Gillis and Paul D Murray laid out the reasons why the consultation was necessary and Kath Smith explained the way in which it would happen. Jim Darlington acted as note-taker. An exhibition providing details of the five options was available for people to see. A comments board was provided for written comments on the night and a question and answer session was held.

Over 50 written comments were received from attendees and 11 questions were asked/comments made. The tone of the meeting was very supportive and the questions and comments related mainly to practical issues such as transport arrangements and the consultation process. Further analysis of the written comments showed strong understanding of the need for change and also of the development of a single church in Redcar. A fuller analysis of the contributor's comments is made later in this report.

### Meeting with Head Teachers of Sacred Heart, St Bede's and St Benedict's Schools

On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011 Kath Smith and Jim Darlington met with the **Headteachers of the three catholic schools** in the area to find out how the options would impact on the children and young people attending. Sacred Heart Secondary and St Benedict's Primary occupy a shared site near to Corporation Road, one of the sites shortlisted for a new church. There is not currently a church sufficiently close to the school site for the pupils to visit and use. In contrast, St Bede's Primary is in close proximity to St Bede's church and uses the church regularly for a variety of purposes. If one of options 3-5 were chosen St Bede's would lose its access to a church, whilst Sacred Heart and St Benedict's would gain access.

The five options and the reasoning behind their choice was explained and, as a result of the discussion it was noted that:

6. Having access to a church is of critical importance to the process of evangelisation with children, young people and their families
7. Pupils and staff at Sacred Heart and St Benedict's would gain substantially by having a new church built on the Corporation Road site and would be wholeheartedly in favour of the move.
8. Pupils and staff at St Bede's would lose substantially by having St Bede's Church closed.

Two strong issues arose from this discussion:

Development of the Corporation Road site offered a huge opportunity to the two Redcar schools to build up the relationship between church and school and develop new strategies for the involvement of young people in all aspects of church life.

The reorganisation posed a huge threat to the school/church relationship in Marske. and teachers and school governors would strongly defend the continuance of St Bede's Church in some form.

The problem facing St Bede's was discussed further and it was noted that there is a specific geographical issue of concern. St Bede's School has a natural affinity with families in the Saltburn area, rather than with those in Redcar. and it is felt that there would be more support for a linkage between parishioners in Marske and Saltburn. This would focus development of the Bishop's core principles on St Bede's Church and School, in line with similar development focused on a new church at Corporation Road and the two other schools. Such an approach would make it easier for parents and parishioners to get to a church within a reasonable distance, bearing in mind difficulties over public transport. It would also form a pattern in that every Catholic school in the area would have a direct attachment to a Catholic church.

It was agreed that the difficulties which would face St Bede's School would be noted in the report and that the Board of Governors would submit a fuller briefing on the issues as part of the consultation process. This briefing has been received and its contents will be discussed later in the report.

### **Meeting with Students of Sacred Heart**

On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011 Kath Smith and Jim Darlington met with **a group of nine students** from Sacred Heart School. The young people had a very clear view on the proposals for the reorganisation of parishes. They strongly supported the option of a new large modern church close to their school. It needed to be large enough to accommodate greater numbers, warm, inviting, more informal in design and multi-functional. An ability to meet socially was essential. The current churches are seen as too formal for young people. Only 5 young people from Year 11 attend Mass on a regular basis and the church has to do more to meet their concerns. The Diocesan Youth Mission Team focuses largely on younger children. One new church would help bring people together and create sufficient critical Mass to get things moving.

They seek a modern design like Middlesbrough Cathedral. Local churches are too boring, gothic, formal and cold. They need to be more comfortable, welcoming and less like museums. A design competition would be a good idea. A hall for meetings, dances etc is essential. Most do not like Mass in the school as it has very little atmosphere. There is a strong music tradition in the school including a choir which they like. However the quality of music and singing in local churches is poor in their view.

A new Youth Centre would be widely welcomed and used. It would draw more young people to church. There is concern that parishes are organised by the same older people with very little opportunity for young people to get involved. There are limited attempts to engage them or involve them in the music/liturgy.

Generally there is strong support for a new church next to the school. Students felt that wherever you located a new church it would be inconvenient for some people. A dedicated youth worker for the new combined parish was suggested.

## Section 3: Phase 2 Consultation within Parishes

### Précis of Meetings with Individual Parishes

Between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 20<sup>th</sup> March Kath and Jim attended the eleven Masses which take place in the Redcar, Marske, Saltburn area each weekend in order to explain the options, listen to parishioners' comments and answer specific questions as far as they were able. An individual letter had been sent to parishioners explaining the process and the timetable and inviting them to attend (1100 letters sent). A similar letter had been sent through the school mailing system to all families of children attending the three Catholic schools (1,400 letters sent). Church bulletins also carried the information and an article appeared in *The Voice*. **All the meetings were well attended. In total approximately 600 parishioners attended out of a total mass-going number of 1000. This was largely in addition to the 200+ attending the initial open meeting.**

The meetings took place after Mass, either in the church itself or in a church hall if it was available and lasted between forty minutes and one hour. On some occasions the parish priest was present. A short basic presentation was given at every Mass, outlining the Bishop's core principles and the options available. A portable display was used to provide additional information.

At the end of each meeting parishioners were encouraged to send in written submissions and contact details were provided for postal and email submissions. Sixteen emails were received and six letters, some of them lengthy and all with relevant views and questions. In addition a formal submission was received from the Governors of St Bede's School and a further submission was received by hand from Father Nunan at Sacred Heart during the consultation there.

All in all a substantial amount of comment and questioning took place. The following pages outline the main issues raised by each church community.

#### St William's Dormanstown

The meeting was held in the church hall after Mass. The discussion which followed covered a wide range of issues and concerns. The feedback from parishioners focused on the following issues:

1. Opinions were divided regarding the merits of building a new church to serve all the parishioners of Redcar and Marske. Clarification was sought regarding the scope of the reorganisation and whether or not it included Saltburn.
2. There was some concern that options had been closed down and that the focus was on choosing a site for one new larger church. There was concern at the potential loss of historic churches and parishes and clearly some felt that the option of one priest serving more than one church should be explored [Reference made to St Andrews in Eston as an example].
3. Questions were asked about how the process of reorganisation would be realised

over 5/6 years and the likelihood of parishes being closed and sites sold earlier to pay for the new church. The issue of access especially for the elderly and those without cars was raised though some thought this could be managed through parish organisation and support.

4. The future of the Church with fewer and fewer priests to provide sacramental support, the possibility of attracting priests from Eastern Europe, how many priests there were in training, and why some areas appeared to have more priests [e.g. Beverley] were questions around a common theme raised during the discussion.
5. Most agreed that one priest serving a very large parish of 1000 practising Catholics would be stretched and it would be essential that he did not have additional diocesan duties.
6. There were differing views regarding the impact of building one new large church. Some felt it would lead to a drop in Mass attendance and practice whilst others thought it would be a catalyst to help revive the Church and encourage greater interchange and action amongst Catholics in the area. All agreed that the views of younger members of the Church should be fully considered.
7. Finally there was a request for parishes to see a copy of the report presented to the Bishop and that he should have regard to the views of parishioners in making his decision.

### **Sacred Heart, Redcar**

The meeting was held in the church and at the end of the formal presentation Father Nunan talked to parishioners and stated that it was possible to have the church extended to facilitate the demands of the Bishop's vision. He gave Kath and Jim a paper outlining the way in which this could happen and explained to parishioners that extension/alteration to the church would accommodate the required change. The feedback from the two Masses focused on the following issues:

1. Sacred Heart is the mother church of the Redcar area, large and in good condition. Any proposed closure would cause upset. The parking here was the easiest of all the churches and the church itself and local parking could accommodate more people, even to the extent of making a new church unnecessary.
2. There is concern over spending a large amount of money on a new church during a time of cut-back and recession.
3. There is concern that a decision to close churches and build a new one had already been taken and a site bought.
4. The size/number of Mass goers for a proposed new church was rigorously questioned, particularly in relation to Saltburn/Brotton.
5. The economics of paying for the sustainability of a new church is questioned, particularly in relation to the level of debt that would result if a new church was built.
6. Some parishioners noted that church-goers will have to change their views on the structure of parishes in the future, in line with the shortage of priests
7. Some parishioners are concerned about the views of younger parishioners and felt

that a new modern church and hall with facilities for young people to meet is required. They are concerned about the lack of opportunities for young people to come together at this parish.

## **St Bede's Marske**

The basic presentation was given from the lectern at the end of Mass and the meetings took place in the church hall. The feedback from the two Masses focused on the following issues:

1. It was clear that parishioners understand the need for a single church to serve the Redcar area and are broadly supportive of that proposal. However, as residents of Marske, the relevance of this arrangement to their sacramental and pastoral needs is more problematic.
2. Parishioners expressed a much closer bond with the church building and community in Saltburn and explained that, in the past, their church had acted as a chapel of ease for the combined areas of Saltburn and Marske. No similar traditional link existed with the Redcar area.
3. A case for the retention of St Bede's as a chapel of ease to serve the local area was put forward and is seen to be highly logical by those attending. The existing church hall, which is well-used by a range of groups is seen to be an additional asset.
4. A particular argument for retaining St Bede's was put forward in relation to the needs of St Bede's School. The links with Saltburn extend to the catchment area for St Bede's School and to the sacramental preparation for children in the wider area. It is seen to be critically important for the children to have access to St Bede's Church to ensure that each child becomes familiar with church buildings and practices/attitudes within it. A full submission on this subject is being prepared by the Governors of St Bede's School and will be ready before the end of the consultation process.
5. Transportation to a church in Redcar was a major concern to those attending the meeting. Public transport is poor and some older people with cars would still not wish to be driving a distance in the dark or poor weather. More generally it was noted that the needs of older members of the parish need to be fully considered. For example, how will a single priest based in Redcar manage the visiting of the sick in Marske while undertaking his other duties?
6. At a practical level it should be noted that the ashes of deceased parishioners are located in the church gardens and a process to have these appropriately dealt with would have to be agreed should a closure take place. (This may also be an issue in other churches).
7. More generally parishioners are very concerned about the workload of a single priest. The number of funerals alone was given as an example of this. It is felt that a great deal of thought would need to be put into the planning of the pastoral care of such a large area. It was suggested that the Parish Priest should be appointed at

an early stage, whilst the changes were taking place, rather than once they had occurred. It was also felt that this individual would need to be able to focus on the needs of the parish, rather than having substantial additional diocesan responsibilities.

8. The role of the laity is seen to be critical in the change process (for either a single or two church model). More lay members would need to be trained at a number of levels and more Deacons ordained to maintain liturgical and sacramental practices. Other support systems would be essential to maintain and enhance pastoral work and social activities.

### **St Augustine's**

The meeting took place in the church and Canon Lumley acted as 'runner' to enable a microphone to be used in the body of the church during the question and answer stage. There was a general sense that parishioners did not want to see their church close and a question about the possibility of extending the church to meet the needs laid out in the Bishop's letter. The following other issues were recorded:

1. The cost implication of building a new church during a time of recession. What certainty was there about being able to sell the sites of the old churches to raise sufficient money for the new one?
2. Rigorous questioning of the numbers on which the calculation for the new church had been made. How accurate was this and what was the plan for Saltburn and Brotton?
3. A fear that church attendance would decrease rather than increase because elderly parishioners would not make the journey to a central church in Redcar. This is linked into a concern that the needs of elderly parishioners would have to be carefully safeguarded if change occurred.
4. Was there not scope to bring in additional priests? Suggestions were for missionary priests or other priests in the diocese to be re-assigned.
5. Some comment that parishioners must face the facts, realise that 'we can't go on as we are' and deal with the situation. Faith challenges us to do this.
6. Some comments that the church is not a building but a gathering of people and these people must carry forward the Church's mission. A request for education and support to help people deal with change and grow from it.

### **St Alban's, Redcar**

The meeting took place in the church as there is no church hall. This church is closing in the summer of 2011 and some parishioners have already relocated to different churches in the area. The following issues were recorded:

1. The changes offered a unique opportunity to create a visible religious and social

community incorporating all of the Catholics in the area.

2. A questioning of the numbers on which the proposition for the new church had been made and a question about St Paulinus at Guisborough – how often was that new church full? Would a large new church be a white elephant?
3. A strong concern about the financial implications of building a new church in difficult economic times and the responsibility on parishioners to pay for the building and its upkeep and maintenance.
4. What support would be available to people who stop coming to church because of the new arrangements, e.g., a Catholic Welfare Officer?
5. Thoughts that a new church would encourage younger people but also a view that young people had abandoned the church and the community focus should be on those people who attend Mass. What was the age profile of the whole area, does that suggest a focus?
6. A new church would need teams of lay people to ensure it worked properly, particularly for lay ministries, the development of social activities and maintaining the facilities.
7. A specific question about what arrangements have been made to cater for existing parishioners moving into new churches – where should they go? (outside of the remit of the team)

### **Our Lady of Lourdes, Saltburn**

The meetings took place in the church as there is no church hall. The following issues were recorded:

1. The Saltburn area has no natural affiliation to the Redcar area and would feel remote from a central church located in Redcar. Access for the elderly is a major concern if local churches are closed. Many parishioners currently walk to church and attendances are likely to fall if local churches close.
2. The impersonal nature of a large church is a concern. Smaller churches are more personal and it is easier to get to know each other. Even in smaller churches the quality of welcome is not good enough so a larger one is even more difficult.
3. Concern over the funding and sustainability of a new church. Rather than parishioners travelling to a new central church it would be more sustainable for the priest to travel to local churches. Concern that one priest will not be able to manage the number of funerals and weddings for such a large area. The laity could be more involved in supporting and developing the life of their local church if effective Parish Councils were set up.
4. Recognition that there are problems maintaining a large number of local churches

many of which are not viable or sustainable. Has consideration been given to the use of technology such as feeding services to large screens in local churches. Query as to why some other churches have a single priest while the whole Redcar/Saltburn area is to be radically changed?

5. Concerned about the number of young people who do not attend Mass. Many parents are keen for their children to attend Catholic schools but they do not attend Mass in church. Need to look more deeply and objectively at this problem. If we look more honestly we can see that the Church is dying.
6. Any solutions are likely to be short-term given the continuing reduction in the number of priests and vocations. Without priests we do not have a Eucharistic community. The problem could be solved by accepting married and women priests or bringing more priests in from abroad. The Church needs to recognise the role that women could play as priests. Many are ready and willing.

### **St Anthony of Padua, Brotton**

The meeting took place in the church as there is no church hall. The following issues were recorded:

1. There is no need for a new church. Sacred Heart can accommodate 300 plus. There is no need for a larger church. Car parking is available on the seafront at Redcar and at present at the Bowl.
2. Transport is a key concern. Brotton is an extensive rural parish. Local people will not travel into Redcar to go to Mass.
3. Children go to Loftus for their primary education. There are strong historic links between Brotton and Loftus and if St Anthony's closed parishioners would go to Loftus.

### **Précis of Postal and Email Responses**

In addition to face-to-face consultation parishioners were able to provide written submissions if they chose to. Seventeen emails, 6 letters and two more specific submissions (from Sacred Heart via Father Nunan and the Governors of St Bede's Primary) were received. The issues raised in these submissions can be summarised as follows.

1. There are distinct benefits in having a school next to a church and any planning should take this fact into consideration.
2. A new church was seen to be unnecessary bearing in mind the decline in Mass attendance. A larger church was seen to be impersonal.
3. A new church would be an extravagance and difficult to sustain into the future.

4. Sacred Heart in Redcar should be kept and extended to fit into a re-organisation for both practical and emotional reasons.
5. There is a distinct geographical split between Redcar and Marske/Saltburn/Brotton which will deter people going to a church in Redcar. This would have a direct impact on the anticipated number of Mass-goers to a single church in Redcar in the future if that became the approved option.
6. Travelling from outlying areas into Redcar for Mass will be a major issue.
7. Concern for the workload of a single priest trying to minister to such a large number of parishioners. A 'super parish' would need a 'super priest', not one with a large number of ancillary duties as is the case now.
8. The wider problem is seen to be the future of the priesthood and the church in its present format.

## **Consultation Summary**

This concludes the explanation of the issues raised by participants during the consultation process. We are very grateful for the warm welcome we received in all parishes both from the parish priests and parishioners. Parishioners clearly have a strong attachment to their local church and parish.

Our meetings raised a wide range of issues, questions and concerns. Many parishioners recognised that things would have to change given the reduction in the number of priests available, whilst others were more reluctant to accept change, jealously guarded the status quo, or sought solutions that would minimise the impact on their parish or church.

While the participants at the open meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January were supportive of the idea of a new single church in Redcar subsequent meetings in local parishes have proved less conclusive and have raised several important issues that have implications for the way in which the Bishop, in consultation with his Council, may decide to take matters forward.

The key issues raised during our consultation can be summarised as follows :-

### **Alternative Options : -**

Whilst initial analysis suggested that the extension of existing churches in the Redcar area would be difficult for practical reasons [space, availability of car parking, planning constraints], a specific proposal to increase the internal capacity of Sacred Heart by extending the choir loft and building a community hall on adjoining land used for garages and garden space was presented by the Parish Priest, Fr. Nunan, and strongly supported by many parishioners at meetings after Mass. Whilst a similar specific proposition did not emerge from meetings with parishioners at St. Augustine's, the question of a possible extension onto adjoining land was raised.

### **Access and Transport : -**

The issue of access and transport to either a single new church or two existing retained

churches was raised at every consultation meeting. This was seen as a particular problem for the elderly and those without access to a car and the limited provision of public transport was seen as a significant factor which could affect church attendance in the future. This problem was felt most acutely by parishioners living in more remote rural areas around Saltburn and more particularly Brotton.

#### **Justification for a New Church : -**

A significant number of parishioners questioned the option of a new church on the grounds of cost and ongoing debt and in respect of the numbers. The justification for the option of a new church is partly made on the grounds that there are currently over 1000 [1048 in 2010] Catholics regularly attending Mass in the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area. With one priest saying a maximum of three Masses on Saturday night/Sunday, a church would be needed capable of accommodating 400-500 parishioners at any one service. Parishioners pointed out that if you excluded Saltburn and Brotton, which the Bishop in his letter had suggested he was inclined to do, the total numbers reduce to 847 in 2010 weakening the case for a new church. It was also suggested that in 5-6 year's time the number attending Mass would have fallen further. Any final decision must be clear that provision is being made for a realistic number of Catholics in the area.

#### **Strength of Social, Educational and Geographic Links : -**

We received strong representation from parishioners and parents at St. Bede's concerned about the future of their school and emphasising the importance of the current links between the local school and the church in Marske. They saw their links with Saltburn as stronger than their links with Redcar. Whilst they could see the justification for a new church for Redcar, they felt strongly that their church [St. Bede's] should be retained at least as a chapel of ease to maintain the important church/school link.

A similar case was made by parishioners in Brotton that their links to Loftus were much stronger than they were to Saltburn particularly as their children went to school in Loftus. If St Anthony's was to close most parishioners said they would go to Loftus rather than travel to Redcar to go to church.

#### **Loss of Smaller Community Parishes : -**

It is clear that most parishioners enjoy worshipping in their current smaller more intimate churches. Whilst many of them do not have adequate facilities [hall/meeting space] parishioners are concerned about their ability to relate to a larger parish which they see as being less personal. Some suggested that the loss of existing parish churches would lead to a fall in Mass attendance.

#### **Needs of Young People : -**

Mass attendance figures and our own observation show that the current age profile of parishioners is ageing with almost 50% of those attending Mass aged 60 or over. Whilst a few parishioners were somewhat dismissive of young people, arguing that there were or had been opportunities for them to be more involved and engaged, many more were concerned that the views and voice of younger parishioners should not be lost in this process. There was a concern that parishes were not doing enough to encourage and involve them and that the absence of space and facilities for young people to come together was a major problem. This concern needs to be viewed alongside the issues and

concerns raised by pupils at Sacred Heart High School.

**Workload for a Single Priest : -**

There was considerable concern raised about the ability of a single priest to serve the needs of a parish of 1000 people, particularly if, as was the case with most of the current priests in the area, they were expected to carry out additional diocesan duties. It was felt that the pressures of such a large parish would need to be shared by both a deacon and the increased role and engagement of the laity.

**Role of the Laity : -**

There was general recognition that the proposed changes would require the wider involvement of the laity whatever building option was chosen. Further urgent consideration needed to be given to the training, preparation and development of the laity.

A number of other broader issues, such as the church's position on married and women priests and the possibility of bringing priests into the diocese from Eastern Europe or Africa were raised but were clearly outside our remit. The following section provides an analysis of the major issues raised in relation to the three core principles laid out by the Bishop and the five initial options laid out by the Re-organisation Working Party.

## Section 4: Analysis and Appraisal of Options

### Overall Context

The purpose of this review is to give creative thought to the geography, structure and specific needs of local parish communities in Redcar, Marske and Saltburn. In analysing the various options and issues raised through our consultation it is important to set out the context for the Bishop's letter and the need for a substantial change in the way parishioners in the area are served by its clergy.

The number of Diocesan Priests including those retired from full-time parish work has fallen from 143 in 1980 to 87 in 2008, a decline of 39%. If we exclude the number of retired priests, the number of active priests in the Diocese in 2008 was 62. When the age structure of the clergy is taken into account, the number of active priests in the future is set to fall even more sharply. It is estimated based on the current age profile of priests and the number of seminarians in formation for the priesthood, that by 2029 the number of active priests in the Diocese will be 36, a decline of 42% from the present position. It is within this context that the Bishop sees the need to consider parish reorganisation and has suggested that in the next 6 years or so there is likely to be only one priest to serve the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area.

The recent Diocesan Strategy for Adult Formation and Evangelisation concluded :-

“The study of the demographic trends in the Diocese over the last thirty years shows significant decline in key areas of Catholic life so that today there are markedly fewer active priests and smaller ageing congregations. Given the changes over the last thirty years there is an urgent need to enter into dialogue to discern the role and relationship between the Priest and People. This is important in developing a proper understanding of co-responsibility in building evangelising parish communities capable of proclaiming the ‘Good News’ in our changing and challenging society...The demographics also point to the urgent need for evangelisation with young people and young families”.

(Bearing Much Fruit, 2010, p31)

Changes in population must also be taken into consideration. Figures from Redcar and Cleveland Council show that over the period 2003 – 2021 the total population of the area will decrease by 5%, the number of children (0 -15) will fall by 20% and the number of older people (retirement +) will increase by 21%.<sup>1</sup>

### Analysis of Options

The Reorganisation Working Party, following analysis of factual data, identified 5 options to be reviewed through the process of consultation. Some of the issues raised by parishioners require us to give further consideration to options previously discounted [i.e. extension of existing churches], others raise questions about specific options [e.g.

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<sup>1</sup> Population and Household Projections for Redcar and Cleveland 2003 - 2021, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit

justification for a new church and the strength of social and geographic links] and some raise broader concerns to whatever solution is preferred[e.g. access, role of the laity, and needs of young people].

The three core principles set out by the Bishop in his letter to parishes form the basis against which the viability of the various options is considered. These are :-

1. Ensuring that the sacramental care needs of Catholics in the area are met.
2. That apostolic and evangelisation in the area is better encouraged and enabled so that the mission of the church is realised.
3. That pastoral care for all parishioners, especially the sick and elderly, is protected and the needs of the poor and disadvantaged are met.

### **Option 1 Do Nothing**

This approach to the problems faced by the reduction in the number of priests and declining congregations has perhaps, until recently been the most common across the dioceses in England and did have a certain amount of support during the consultation. However the speed with which substantial changes need to be made in the local area [5-6 years] make doing nothing an unrealistic option. Some decisions need to be taken now as any change will take time to implement.

Maintaining and continuing to use seven churches when it is known that only one priest will be available in 5/6 years time makes little sense. Indeed a decision to close St Alban's has already been made as a first step. Doing nothing would create uncertainty for parishioners and undermine the development of the Catholic community in the area. The worshipping community would be divided and confused.

### **Option 2 Extend Existing Churches**

An initial assessment of each of the existing church sites concluded that none of them is appropriate for either extension or redevelopment. However in the course of our consultations options have been proposed which would involve internal alterations to Sacred Heart or St Augustine's to provide additional seating capacity by extending the choir loft together with building a hall for social gatherings within the curtilage of the church in the case of Sacred Heart, while St. Augustine's would involve additional land to the rear of the church. We have sought an informal view from the local planning authority in respect of these proposals.

In relation to Sacred Heart the local planners do not feel that there is sufficient land available to accommodate a new church hall and the necessary parking. The relationship with the adjoining residential properties is seen as tight making it difficult to develop the site without having an impact on these properties. Whilst the planning authority would have no comment on the internal alterations, there must be a concern that the extension of the choir loft requiring additional columns would restrict views of the altar from the rear of the church. The alterations may also raise issues in relation to emergency evacuation requiring further alterations to the rear of the church.

In regard to St Augustine's an extension would involve acquisition of land from the Council.

However the main concern of the local planning authority would be the routing of additional vehicular traffic along Warwick Road and the likely negative reaction of local residents in the area.

We believe it is unlikely that planning permission would be forthcoming for either of these proposals and neither proposal would fully meet the needs of current parishioners or provide adequate scope for apostolic development or evangelisation. For these reasons we do not see these church extensions as practical or viable options.

### **Option 3 Retain Two Existing Churches**

Whilst perhaps not ideal it is now common to find one priest serving more than one church/parish and parishioners referred to a number of examples in the Diocese where this is working well. Indeed within this area we already have two priests supporting two parishes. However the scale of the proposed reorganisation here presents other difficulties. The Bishop has indicated that he is likely to be able to provide only one priest for the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area currently covered by four priests and seven churches. This presents particular issues relating to the size of the area, the number of practising Catholics and the capacity of the priest. The size of the area raises particular difficulties in terms of accessibility. The number of practising Catholics [ over1000] creates problems in regard to the capacity of existing churches given the limitations on one priest in terms of saying Mass.

With over 1000 regular attendees [ plus more on special occasions] and a priest able to say a maximum of three Masses to fulfil the Sunday and Holiday obligations, a church building capable of seating 400-500 people at any one Mass is required. None of the existing churches is capable of holding this capacity.

If the Bishop is able to provide alternative provision for Saltburn and Brotton [reducing Mass attendance to 847 in 2010] or it is assumed that Mass attendance will decline significantly over the next 5/6 years then the option of retaining two existing churches becomes viable. This then presents an issue of which churches to retain bearing in mind the size of the churches, the availability of a church hall/meeting space and the strength of existing social and geographic linkages. Assuming that the Bishop is able to deal with Saltburn and Brotton separately or Mass attendance declines significantly, one option would be to retain Sacred Heart as the largest of the existing churches [although not easily accessible] and St Bede's in order to retain the strong connection between the school and the parish.

However assuming that church attendance will decline psychologically suggests that the church is in retreat in Redcar. Furthermore the absence of any form of church hall/meeting space is a major constraint on the ability of the Catholic community to carry out its pastoral obligations not least to its younger members. Given that the Bishop's stated priorities include the need for evangelisation and mission, whilst this option may meet the need of some parishioners, it is in our view a less attractive solution.

## **Option 4 Building a Single New Church**

A new church could be built in a location accessible to the majority of people which would be large enough to accommodate the likely Mass attendance and make provision for a meeting hall/space for social gatherings. A new church could provide a new focus for the Catholic community and raise the visible profile of Catholicism in the area. Whilst it would be possible to build an attractive new church to modern sustainable standards reducing maintenance and heating costs, the estimated cost would be £2.5m. We understand that the costs could be largely met over time by the sale of existing land and property in the area substantially reducing any future debt.

We visited the new church in Guisborough [St Paulinus] and were impressed by its design and flexibility. Whilst for parishioners in Guisborough it was a badly needed replacement, it is clear that they have responded very positively to their new church and hall and informed us that Mass attendance had increased significantly since it was opened. We were shown around with considerable pride and its flexibility [e.g. increasing the capacity for Mass attendance by opening up the church hall] was demonstrated.

However finding a suitable location for the much larger area of Redcar is not straight forward. Public transport provision especially on a Sunday is poor and compared to the current situation with easy access to a local church, the move to one large church would be both less convenient and a major change for most parishioners. Whilst 17 possible sites in Redcar were investigated and three were shortlisted, no one site can satisfy everyone's requirements.

In our view consideration would need to be given to alternative ways of ensuring elderly parishioners and those without access to a car could readily get to the new church whether this is via the provision of a parish bus or organised support from the laity. Parishioners in more remote rural areas around Brotton are likely to attend Mass in Loftus if St Anthony's is closed whilst those currently attending Mass in Saltburn and Marske wish to see a local church retained and their school/parish links maintained. There is a good case for retaining one of the churches in this area as a satellite church or chapel of ease.

Building a new larger church/hall is an expensive solution which we understand can be supported over time through the sale of existing land and properties. It is the only solution which would ensure that the current number of practising Catholics would be able to attend Mass once only one priest is available. It could provide a new focus for the Catholic community and it would certainly provide them with a hall and meeting rooms for youth development and social activities which is a serious existing constraint. However access for many parishioners would be more difficult and would need to be addressed. A further consideration is the impact of closure on the more outlying areas of Marske and Saltburn. The negative effects on Mass goes in these areas would in our view justify the retention of St. Bede's or Our Lady of Lourdes as a satellite church or chapel of ease.

If the number of practising Catholics does decline significantly over the next 10 years, the building of a new larger church and hall could be seen as extravagant and a waste of money. Conversely it could help to revitalise Catholicism in the area. It would certainly provide better facilities for pastoral activity. Given future uncertainty a flexible, adaptable

design should be preferred.

#### **Option 5 Building a new church and a new satellite church**

Whilst a second new satellite church to serve the more outlying parts of the area [Saltburn and Marske] would potentially reduce maintenance and heating costs in comparison with retaining one of the existing churches, it is very difficult to justify the additional capital cost especially as both St. Bede's and Our Lady of Lourdes are in a good state of repair.

#### **Option 6 Build a new church and retain one of the existing churches as a chapel of ease**

There is in our view a good case for retaining either St. Bede's or Our Lady of Lourdes as either a satellite church or a chapel of ease on the grounds of accessibility and the strong links between St. Bede's School and church. Clearly the frequency of Mass and other services would be more limited than at present with only one priest available.

## Section 5: Recommendations

**As a basic starting point it is recommended that the outcome of the consultation is fed back to parishioners and a clear and comprehensive 5-10 year transition/development plan is put in place which includes adequate and creative lay involvement, building on the final decisions taken by the Bishop.**

The proposed change to the provision of only one priest to serve the Redcar, Marske and Saltburn area does have very significant consequences for parishioners currently worshipping in seven churches with the support of four priests. Change of this nature can only be introduced gradually over a number of years and parishioners will need time to adjust and many will not welcome the loss of their local church. Having considered the options available in the context of other statistical data and the views expressed during the consultation process, it is necessary in our view to establish a clear long-term strategy.

We have considered a wide range of options but conclude that there are only three which are viable :-

1. Retain two existing churches.
2. Build a new church/hall.
3. Build a new church/hall and retain an existing church as a satellite or chapel of ease.

**The option of doing nothing** is irresponsible and it is recommended that this option be discarded.

**The option of extending an existing church** is too heavily dependent on gaining planning permission and still leaves other local constraints associated with Sacred Heart and St. Augustine's.

**The option of retaining two existing churches** [and on balance, were this option to be chosen, we would recommend retaining Sacred Heart and St. Bede's] is only viable if Mass attendance continues to fall significantly or the Bishop is able to find another priest to serve Saltburn and Brotton. This option will however do nothing to reinvigorate Catholicism in the area and makes no provision for youth development and social activities which are so evidently lacking. It is recommended that this option be discarded.

**The option of building a single new church** that would become a new focus for the Catholic community and provide the urgently needed youth and community space provision is a possible way forward. Access will be a major problem with either option particularly for the elderly and those without access to a car and a means of supporting parishioners in attending Mass and other services will need to be seriously addressed. However, the probable reluctance of parishioners living outside of Redcar to support the new church makes this option problematic. It is recommended that this option be discarded.

**The option of building a new church and a new satellite church** was considered to have no obvious advantages and was discarded at an early stage.

**The option of building a new church and retaining one of the existing churches as a chapel of ease** has considerable merit, although the credibility of the new church in terms of capacity and sustainability would have to be clear to parishioners. In our view there is a good case for retaining either St. Bede's [with its strong school links] or Our Lady of Lourdes as a satellite church or chapel of ease given the problems of accessing a new church in Redcar from these areas. It is recommended that this option is given serious consideration.

### **Where to build a new church?**

From an assessment of potential sites and in view of the very clear preference emerging from those who expressed a view on the location of a new church, we believe the former Adult Education site on Corporation Rd is the best site in terms of access and its proximity to Sacred Heart High School and St. Benedict's Primary School.

We were struck by the clear views received from younger Catholics we interviewed at Sacred Heart and the concerns raised by many parents during our parish consultations. All were concerned by the poor level of provision and support for younger Catholics in the area and nearly all of them favoured the provision of a new modern church close to existing schools, with facilities for young people to meet and socialise.

### **How to support one priest?**

Reducing the level of provision from four priests to one will place a heavy burden on that priest. We agree with those who told us that with just one priest for the area he should not have additional extensive diocesan duties. Ideally he should have the support of a deacon and we recommend that as part of the long-term strategy steps are taken early on to produce a clear development plan to bring parishioners together [e.g. by twinning parish groups] and prepare them for the increased role they will have to play through training, preparation and development.

### **Ensure clear communication with parishioners as change occurs**

We sensed from the response of a number of parishioners at our meetings a desire for a clear decision on the way forward and a readiness and willingness to make the changes work for the good of the whole Catholic community. However, people were uncertain about the process of change and would benefit by having the final decisions and emerging plans explained to them.

Whatever decision is taken many parishioners will be concerned for the future. Given the range and diversity of views we received throughout our consultation it is clear that not everyone will be satisfied by the outcome. However all are looking for clear leadership and direction and to see a strong clear case for whichever option is finally chosen.

## Appendix 1: Current Profile of Parishioners and Churches in Redcar & Saltburn

(information from Diocesan sources)

### Catholic Population of Redcar/Saltburn area

Estimated number of Catholics living in local area	5,000
Number of mass-going Catholics recorded in 2010 census	1,048
Number of children attending Catholic schools in local area	1,409

### Churches Involved in the Reorganisation Process

Name	Address	Mass times		
Our Lady of Lourdes*	Milton Street Saltburn	Saturday 6.00	Sunday 11.00	
Sacred Heart	7 Lobster Road Redcar	Saturday 6.30	Sunday 10.30	
St Alban**	3 Yew tree Ave Redcar		Sunday 11.00	
St Anthony of Padua*	High Street Brotton		Sunday 9.00	
St Augustine	10 Warwick Road Redcar	Saturday 6.30	Sunday 10.00	
St Bede	Southfield Road Marske		Sunday 9.30	Sunday 6.00
St William	South Ave Dormanstown		Sunday 8.30	
*included as part of the overall re-organisation discussion but with the Bishop's caveat that this area could be considered separately in any final decision (as per his letter to parishioners in January 2011).				
**already scheduled for closure in 2011				

**2010 Census Information  
(recorded weekend 6th/7th November 2010)**

Church	Age range of attendees				
	U16	16-40	40-60	Over 60	Total
Our Lady of Lourdes	17	17	38	81	153
Sacred Heart	31	30	57	103	221
St Albans*	10	10	18	45	83
St Anthony of Padua	8	2	10	28	48
St Augustine	39	24	51	95	209
St Bede	62	39	72	88	261
St William	14	14	12	33	73
<b>Totals</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>1048</b>

**Postcodes for Mass Attendance**

Postcode	Our Lady of Lourdes	Sacred Heart	St Alban	St Anthony	St Augustine	St Bede	St William	Total
TS4	0		1			4		5
TS5	1							1
TS6	0	1						1
TS7		1						1
TS8		1						1
TS9								0
TS10	9	207	77	1	209	74	70	647
TS11	27	9	5			166	3	210
TS12	113	1				12		126
TS13		1		41		2		44
TS14	2			6				8
TS15								0
TS16								0
TS17	1					2		3
TS18								0
TS19								0
TS20						1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1048</b>

## Catholic Schools in local area

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Average Number on Roll</b>
Sacred Heart Comprehensive	Redcar	747 (age range 11 - 16)
St Bede Primary, Marske	Marske	198 plus 26 place nursery
St Benedict Primary	Redcar	360 plus 78 part-time nursery

## **Appendix 2: Assessment of potential for physical development of existing churches in Redcar area**

### **Introduction**

Due to reductions in the number of available clergy over the next 5 years or so consideration is being given to the rationalisation of church buildings and facilities in the Redcar/ Marske area and the development of sacramental and pastoral activities on fewer sites. The option of building new facilities on a different site is also being considered.

As a first step an assessment has been carried out to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing churches, parish halls and other facilities. This process has involved informal discussions with the local authority regarding possible planning applications for development of the sites as well as finding out if planned developments of adjacent areas may impact on the Diocese's potential plans. The following information has emerged.

**Sacred Heart church** site is restricted in size with mainly high density residential development in very close proximity. Most of the area comprises older terraced housing but with some modern infill. Proposed residential development at Coatham is likely to be abandoned and the population of the area will be static or declining in the future.

The church building was erected in 1914, is stone-faced and appears to be structurally sound. There is a large brick-built presbytery alongside. A very small car park to the rear can accommodate about 6 cars. Most of the adjacent streets are restricted to "resident only" parking by permit. A car park at the leisure centre on Majuba Road provides additional parking space.

Two bus routes [22 and 781] operate along Coatham Road on Sundays.

Demolition of the existing church and presbytery would allow for the redevelopment of a new building but car parking space would be very limited. Overspill car parking at the Coatham Leisure Centre would be subject to the potential redevelopment of that site – the Council is currently proposing to construct alternative leisure facilities elsewhere.

While the use of the site would be similar there may be opposition from local residents due to the greater intensity of usage resulting in increased noise and disturbance to occupiers of nearby dwellings and traffic congestion on Lobster Road.

Although it is the nearest of the current locations to the town centre it is not within the town centre nor is it central to the main residential areas.

**St William's church** site is larger than Sacred Heart and a similar redevelopment could accommodate some car parking, but the greater intensity of use would result in significant on-street parking.

The church was built in 1939 of brick construction, together with a presbytery alongside.

Both appear to be structurally sound. There is also a hall but this is a pre-fabricated structure and thus likely to have a more limited life-span. On-site car parking is very limited – only about 4 spaces.

The density of the surrounding residential development is lower than at Sacred Heart but there could still be objections from nearby residents due to increased traffic noise, disturbance and congestion.

There are two bus routes within generally acceptable walking distance [22 and 748].

While serving a significant residential area the site is peripheral in relation to the main centres of population. Population levels in the immediate area will be static.

**St Alban's church** site is central to the main housing areas of west Redcar and is surrounded by modern development, including three care homes. Development is essentially 1960's to the present day, with significant housing development in the last few years and continuing, including re-development of some of the 1960's housing stock. The local population is increasing.

The church is the newest in the area [built in 1972] but suffers from defects and water ingress through the flat roof. There is a presbytery which has been made structurally sound but is unoccupied. There is car parking on-site for about 30+ cars and on-street parking is unrestricted. The decision has already been made to close the church in 2011.

The site offers early potential for redevelopment as the church is to be demolished in any event. Demolition of the presbytery also would provide a site large enough to accommodate the necessary building together with some car parking. However the extent of the likely increased on-street parking could lead to problems in the area, which has a high car ownership with resulting on-street parking by residents and visitors.

The former St Alban's School site opposite is being redeveloped as a "care village", the first stage of which has been completed.

There are three bus routes nearby, the closest being that with the highest Sunday frequency [63] some 200 metres away. The other services [781 and 748] pass some 500 and 700 metres respectively from the site.

**St Augustine's church** site is central to the main housing areas of east Redcar and closer to Marske / Saltburn than the other Redcar sites. The church was built in 1937 and appears to be structurally sound, together with an adjoining presbytery.

There is no on-site car parking and street parking leads to significant problems of disturbance and traffic congestion. Previously the church was able to use car parking facilities at the adjacent secondary school but this has been re-built and such facility is no longer available. There is good access to two bus routes [22 and 789].

The surrounding area is primarily residential, dating from the 1930's to the 1990's. Some further housing development is scheduled off Redcar Lane but otherwise the local population is likely to remain stable.

The site could accommodate the required new building and some car parking. Land to the rear could be purchased in order to extend the site area. However, the existing situation results in traffic congestion and disturbance to local residents and the greater intensity of traffic along the residential streets would be unacceptable in this location.

**St Bede's, Marske** site is also restricted and is occupied by a church, built in 1936-7, a meeting hall and a presbytery together with a small car park capable of accommodating about 10 vehicles.

On-street parking is limited and there have been problems of traffic congestion and disturbance to local residents. Public car parking is available some 250 metres away. Sunday bus service 789 passes close to the site while others [22 and 748] pass some 500 metres away.

The area is primarily residential dating mainly from the 1930's in the immediate locality with more recent development further away. Significant residential development is being considered south of Marske and thus the population could increase but this is not likely in the near future.

The site is too small to accommodate the proposed building and adequate car parking. The intensification of car parking demand would result in serious problems in the immediate area.

## **Appendix 3: Availability of Sites for Possible Replacement Church Buildings in the Redcar/Marske area.**

### **Introduction**

Alongside the assessment of existing church properties an exercise has been carried out to identify the feasibility of rationalising sacramental and pastoral services through the closure of existing churches and the creation of new church facilities in some form. The decision to close St Alban's Church at Yew Tree Avenue / Low Farm Drive has already been made and will be implemented in 2011.

A new development could comprise a single building accommodating a combined church and meeting hall together with residential accommodation for 2-3 people, plus car parking. While needing to be located conveniently for the majority of the population of the area, vehicular access from at least a local distributor road would be preferable rather than a residential street in order to reduce possible disturbance to local residents

Detailed requirements have not yet been established but the church/meeting hall may have a seating capacity of 400 with a car parking requirement of up to 150 vehicles. Due to the infrequent and off-peak nature of the car parking demand it would be hoped that a significant proportion of the total could be accommodated off-site.

### **ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE SITES**

#### **1: Mersey Road – land opposite Sacred Heart and St Benedict's schools.**

This is part of the vacant site formerly occupied by Sacred Heart and St Dominic's schools and was subject to a land exchange arrangement with the Borough Council to facilitate the building of the new schools.

It has the advantage of proximity to the two schools and fronts on to a local distributor road. The site area is more than that required for the church development, including car parking. Furthermore, arrangements may be possible with the schools to use their car parking for overspill, thus reducing the number of places required on site. The site is some 400 metres from bus stops at Troutbeck Road/Mersey Road [service 63 which operates on a 30 minute frequency on Sunday].

There may be objections from Sport England as the site was intended to replace the playing fields lost by the development of the new schools. However, our requirement is for only a small part of the total site. Nevertheless there is increasing local pressure for the opening up of the site for open space and playing fields.

While part of the total site has been suggested for residential development, the suggested site does not front on to Mersey Road and lies to the rear of the existing housing along the southern section of the site. Thus vehicular access would be through the existing housing area which has fairly narrow roads and is already subject to some disturbance and congestion, especially at school opening and closing times. In addition this part of the site would be more remote from Sacred Heart and St Benedict's Schools.

While not ruled out in planning policy terms it was considered that a site fronting Mersey Road might be difficult to achieve in the light of the pressure to provide the promised open space /playing fields.

The site is owned by the local authority.

## **2: Adult Education Centre, Corporation Road.**

Currently occupied by buildings [previously a school and later part of the College of Further Education, both of which have been relocated] it is intended to clear the site. It has been suggested for housing.

It lies alongside the playing fields of Sacred Heart School and direct links between the School and a church would be available. While vehicular access would be from Corporation Road – a local distributor road – it should be possible to use the school car parking for overspill, subject to agreement by the school. No bus services operate along Corporation Road on Sundays and so the nearest bus stops would be at Mersey Road/Troutbeck Road [services 63 and 748] and Coatham Road [services 22 and 781] some 800 and 500 metres away respectively.

Not all of the site would be required for our development, including car parking, and so some housing would still be possible. The western part of the site would be more appropriate for our development in order to provide ease of access between school and church.

Our development would be acceptable in policy terms to the local planning authority.

The site is in public ownership.

## **3: Haweswater Road**

This land abuts the site of the two schools although a separate access would be required and the school car parking would be less accessible for overspill.

The site area is more than that required for the proposed church development, including car parking. Housing and open space have been suggested for the site but objections to built development were received.

In addition the use of Haweswater Road for access may raise some problems of disturbance due to on-street parking. The site is some 400 metres from bus stops at Troutbeck Road/Mersey Road [service 63, 30 minute frequency].

While not ruled out in policy terms development here would be likely to run into significant opposition from local residents.

The site is owned by the local authority.

## **4: Mersey Road – formerly part of Newcomen School**

A frontage site on a local distributor road and adjacent to bus routes [services 63 and 748]. The site area is more than that adequate for the proposed church development, including

car parking. It would be within 400 metres of Sacred Heart and St Benedict's Schools.

Housing has been suggested for this site but only part of it would be required for the church development, including car parking, so some housing would still be possible.

Our development would be acceptable here in policy terms.

The site is owned by the local authority.

**5: Mersey Road/Roseberry Road – site of St Hilda's C of E church**

It is understood that replacement of the present St Hilda's church is being considered, together with some housing, on the existing site.

It may be possible to reach agreement for the RC church to be accommodated here – perhaps even a single building for joint use. However, no discussions about this have taken place.

The site is served from local distributor roads and adjacent to bus routes [services 63 and 748, 30 minute and 60 minute frequencies respectively].

The site is large enough to accommodate both church buildings and the ancillary accommodation, including car parking – particularly if joint usage could be established. A joint development should significantly reduce costs to both parties. Overspill car parking could be available at the Roseberry Square Shopping Centre, if necessary.

There would be no policy objections to development on this site.

The site is owned by the Church of England [and the local authority?].

**6: Roseberry Road – former petrol filling station site**

Access from a local distributor road and close to bus routes [services 63 and 748]. It is small but may be able to accommodate the proposed development, except car parking, if a high plot ratio is acceptable.

It may be possible to utilise the public parking at the Roseberry Square Shopping Centre.

Development economics of the site might be affected by the need to remove the old fuel tanks and associated land contamination.

While there may be no policy objections to this site it is considered to be too small and reliance on the Roseberry Square car parking unacceptable. In addition there is a remaining lease on the site which the Council is unwilling to accept surrender until further contamination remedial measures have been undertaken.

**7: Low Farm Drive – land adjacent to Wheatacres Residential Care Home**

Currently open space but with no formal usage and fronting on to a local distributor road.

The site would be large enough to accommodate the proposed development, including car

parking. Bus stops located at Roseberry shops and West Dyke Road some 500 metres away [services 63 and 748].

However, the land is regarded as protected open space and hence our development would conflict with planning policy.

The future of Wheatacres is unknown and may become available for redevelopment.

The site is owned by the local authority.

#### **8: Kirkleatham Lane [west side]**

The frontage land between Staintondale Road and Kirkleatham Business Park [including the site at the entrance to the Business Park] is largely undeveloped apart from accesses to the Community Woodland and Animal Sanctuary.

A site could be identified to accommodate the whole of the proposed development, including car parking, with access from a main road.

There are bus stops along Kirkleatham Lane [service 781, 60 minute frequency, and at the West Dyke Road junction [service 63, 30 minute frequency].

The land is designated as Community Woodland and Industry. Hence our development would conflict with planning policy.

The site is owned by the local authority.

#### **9: Kirkleatham Street - Former Stead Hospital**

The site is large and could easily accommodate the proposed development, including car parking. However development economics would be affected by need for site clearance and possible land contamination issues.

While Kirkleatham Street is not a local distributor road it has been used by the hospital and a hotel for access. There is some on-street parking available. Bus stops are located along Coatham Road, about 250 metres away.

The site is located in a Conservation Area and thus design of any development would need to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Area.

No conflict with planning policy.

The site is owned by the NHS.

#### **10: West Dyke Road – site of former Kwik Save supermarket**

The site has been cleared and could accommodate the proposed development, including some car parking. It is centrally located close to all bus routes and overspill parking could be accommodated in the town centre public car parks. As peak usage for the church parking would be on Sundays this should not conflict with normal town centre trade needs. The site is also located about 250 metres from Redcar railway station [60 minute Sunday service frequency from Saltburn to Middlesbrough, via Marske].

Although planning permission has been granted for use as a car park, presumably the site is ultimately intended to return to town centre retail/commercial use and hence the purchase price may be high.

The site is within the defined town centre, but our development would probably be acceptable in principle.

Private ownership.

**11: West Dyke Road – land adjacent to the new hospital**

The site is currently open space located south of the new hospital up to the footpath fronting the houses on the north side of Micklow Close.

It is more than adequate in size to accommodate the proposed church development, including car parking. West Dyke Road is a local distributor road and bus route [service 63, 30 minute Sunday frequency].

The site is not shown as Protected Open Space but Council officers thought that there might be conditions on the permission for the hospital requiring this site to remain as open space. This is being investigated by the officers, who will report back to me.

The land is owned by the local authority.

**12: West Dyke Road – land opposite the new hospital**

On the east side of West Dyke Road the site is much more than adequate in size to accommodate the proposed church development, including car parking. It fronts on to a local distributor road and bus route [service 63, 30 minute Sunday frequency].

However, it is designated as Protected Open Space and thus our development would conflict with planning policy.

The land is owned by the local authority.

**13: Redcar Lane – site of former St David's Nursing Home**

A cleared site large enough to accommodate the proposed building and car parking, probably with land to spare. It is in a central location close to the bus station for all bus routes and to town centre parking facilities. Vehicular access is possible from Lord Street, a local distributor road.

The design of the building would need to have regard to the setting of the nearby listed building [St Peter's church – Grade II].

The site is not within the defined town centre. Some discussions have been held in relation to housing development but there are no current proposals for the site.

There would be no policy objections to our development here.

The site is owned by BUPA.

**14: Redcar Lane – land south of Goodwood Road**

This is part of a site with planning permission for housing, and a planning application for a revised layout is currently being considered. Only part of the site would be required to accommodate the proposed church development, including car parking.

There is vehicular access from a spur from the roundabout on the main road and the site is close to bus routes [services 22 and 748, each operating on a 60 minute frequency].

The land is owned by Persimmon and Council officers are of the view that the land is unlikely to be available to any other party.

**15: Redcar Road, Marske – between Blackburn Grove and Ryehills Farm**

A vacant site in nominal agricultural use. It has a frontage to a main road with bus routes [services 22 and 748, each with a 60 minute frequency].

The whole site would not be required to accommodate the proposed development, including car parking. However, the siting of the vehicular access from Redcar Road would need careful consideration in order to provide adequate sight-lines and the electricity power line across site would need to be diverted.

There would be no policy objection to our development here. However, previous consideration for housing development has been abortive due to ownership problems. It is understood that the land is in the hands of executors and the various parties are unable to reach agreement on development and disposal.

**15: Land south of Marske**

I understand that consideration is being given to significant housing development south of Marske – beyond the traditional development limit of the railway line.

Dependent upon the exact location determined for such development a site close to Longbeck Road or High Street might be available. Either would benefit from closeness to rail and bus routes [Longbeck Station and bus service 22 for the former and Marske Station and service 748 for the latter].

However, the date of this development may be beyond the time frame desired for the new church. Moreover, the site would be peripheral to the existing and future centre of population of the study area.

The land is in various private ownerships.

## Appendix 4: Sunday Bus Services

(National advice is that a reasonable distance to walk to/from a bus stop is 400 metres).

Sunday bus services in the Redcar – Marske - Saltburn area are limited due to low levels of patronage. The existing level of service is maintained by subsidy from the Local Authority. With the current pressures on local authority finances it may be that subsidies will be reduced, with corresponding reductions in service provision and/or frequency.

The most frequent is service **63** operating from Redcar bus station every 30 minutes to Middlesbrough via West Dyke Road, Troutbeck Road, Mersey Road, Lakes shops, Roseberry Road and West Dyke Road again in Redcar and then onwards via Eston, Normanby and Marton.

Service **22** operates from New Marske every 60 minutes to Middlesbrough via central Marske, Ings Farm, Redcar Lane, Redcar East, Redcar bus station, Coatham Road and Dormanstown in Redcar and then via Grangetown.

Service **748** operates from Lingdale every 60 minutes to Middlesbrough via Saltburn, central Marske, Coast Road, Redcar East, Redcar bus station, West Dyke Road, Troutbeck Road, Mersey Road, Lakes shops, Roseberry Road, Dormanstown, Grangetown, Eston and South Bank.

Service **781** operates from Redcar bus station every 60 minutes to Guisborough via Coatham Road, Kirkleatham Lane and Kirkleatham village and onwards via Yearby and Dunsdale.

Service **789** operates from Easington every 60 minutes to Redcar via Saltburn, Marske [including the Marske Estate and thus near St Bede's church], The Ings, Redcar Lane and on to Redcar bus station.

Of the existing services greater weight may be given to service **63** due to its greater frequency but, conversely, services **22**, **748** and **789** provide a greater spread of destinations within the study area.

### SUNDAY BUS SERVICES TO THE EXISTING CHURCH SITES

**Sacred Heart**, Lobster Road, Redcar.

Nearest Sunday bus routes [services **22** and **781**] are along Coatham Road with the nearest bus stops some 250 metres from church].

**St William's**, South Avenue, Dormanstown.

Nearest Sunday bus routes [services **22**, **748** and **781**] are along The Broadway, South Avenue and Kirkleatham Lane respectively. Nearest bus stops are some 100 metres from the church [service **748**], 250 metres [services **22**] and 750 metres [service **781**].

**St Augustine's**, Warwick Road, Ings Farm, Redcar

Nearest Sunday bus route [service **22**] is along Warwick Road with bus stops close to the

church. Service **789** operates along Redcar Lane, some 250 metres away.

**St Alban's**, Yew Tree Avenue, Lakes Estate, Redcar.

Nearest Sunday bus routes [services **63**, **748** and **781**] are along West Dyke Road [service **63**], Kirkleatham Lane [service **781**] and at Lakes shops [services **63** and **748**]. Nearest bus stops are some 200 metres [service **63**], 500 metres [service **781**] and 700 metres [services **63** and **748**].

**St Bede's**, Southfield Road, Marske.

Nearest Sunday bus route [service **789**] passes within 100 metres of the church while other routes [services **22** and **748**] pass through the centre of Marske some 500 metres from church.