

Summary of People's Comments about the Buildings

1. Upper Porch

People seem generally happy with the Upper Porch.

Many have commented that it should be a warm, welcoming space.

It now serves multiple purposes - some better than others.

As a space to come out of the weather before entering the chapel it is probably fine.

But as a space where Mum's with noisy children can withdraw till the end of the service or a place where parents of Brownies can wait in reasonable comfort, it is not very good.

Suggestions for improvement include:-

- Installation of insulation / heaters.
- Carpeting the floor.
- Redecoration
- Provision of seating for waiting parents.
- Improving the visibility into chapel with the doors into chapel and side panels fitted with clear glass.....possibly a window into chapel where the noticeboard currently is
- Installation of an audio relay from chapel.
- Someone asked "Is the large noticeboard in the right place ?" because people don't tend to linger in the porch.

2. Lower Porch

Probably the most criticised area of the building.

Many said that, like the Upper porch, it should be a warm welcoming space particularly since, for many people, this is their entry point and first view of our building.

It is too small to fulfil any of its functions well –

- it is too small to comfortably accommodate parents collecting children from Brownies or Rainbows.
- Mums using it to park their prams and buggies find it ridiculously small.
- People are wary of using it as a cloakroom because it is probably the least secure room in the whole building.
- The stone steps to the upper porch and the meter cupboard not only restrict the available space but they introduce further functions into what is a tiny area, all of which compete against each other.
- The steps are very steep, very narrow and very hard, as we all know.

Various suggestions for improvement have been made most of which involve enlarging the lower porch by removing the wall between the lower porch and the rear dais, where the chairs are kept. But since this solution impinges on the Sunday school and stage area, I think we should hear people's comments about those areas first.

3. Lower Hall / Sunday School and Stage

Many have commented that the multiple floor levels are a problem, not only for the disabled but also for the elderly and less mobile.

The Brownies, Rainbows and Toddler groups have all commented that a single level floor would be beneficial. But others have expressed they are against losing the facility of the stage.

Lots of people have commented adversely about the heating:-

Someone said "they blast rather than heat" Many said the heaters are too noisy and don't heat.

Lots of people commented that the stage area needs more natural light.

And some have commented that the décor in the Sunday school / stage is very 1950's and needs updating.

4. Den

People generally seem happy with the den.

Rainbows leader said they don't use it because it has a musty smell.

Toddlers also commented on the musty smell but said it was ok after a short airing.

Most said the heating is OKbut some others disagreed.

Toddlers and Rainbows requested more storage space for their equipment.

Others have suggested improving and updating the storage.

Another suggestion is to install a "dumb waiter" in the den and a hatch from the den into the kitchen – this would allow items to be lifted to and from the kitchen up to the Bible class.

5. Kitchen

Many people said it is too small but acknowledged it would be difficult to know how to extend it unless it is extended into the den.

Almost everyone commented that the kitchen lighting needs to be improved.

The Rainbows leader said the kitchen was well stocked and well organised - but oven was sometimes temperamental.

6. Toilets

Many commented on the ladies toilets being very cramped.

Rainbow's leader commented that another toilet and hand basin would be very beneficial.

She also asked for a soap dispenser because the girls are not able to reach the soap on the window ledge.

Some commented the toilets are nice and warm. Someone else said the toilets were cold and drafty.

7. Lounge and Library

There were very few comments about these rooms.

Generally people seem happy with them, as they are.

8. Bible Class / Coffee Room

One person said this is the nicest room in the building.

Several people commented adversely about the gas heaters: they are noisy, the air blown out makes people either too hot or too cold and someone commented the blown air irritates her eyes.

The folding doors are not used and should be removed and the track across the floor is a hazard.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Insulation of ceiling
- Removing the gas heaters and installation of hot water radiators, from the boiler in the den.
- Providing better access to kitchen facilities
- Several people said that better access from chapel would be desirable for the less mobile and disabled.
- Decoration needs refreshing
- Could toilets be provided on the upper level ?

9. Outside

Several people have suggested cleaning the stonework and re-pointing.

Another common theme was cutting down (or at least heavily pruning) the trees on the garden area.

Some have suggested building a new dry-stone wall at the boundary and someone else suggested hard - landscaping the garden area for easier maintenance.

Others have suggested investigating if we could buy the piece of land on the corner above where our garden ends to enlarge our garden or to facilitate development in the future.

People have commented that the side passage needs improving – needs to be less uneven and less slippery.

Some have commented that it would be beneficial for passers-by to be able to see into the building....it would decrease the sense of mystery and show we are not trying to hide away.

Almost everyone seems in favour of updating our signage and making it more striking and more contemporary.

There has been a request for an outside light at the front door.

Someone has appealed for a colour change - lose the blue and chose a more contemporary colour.

10. Chapel

Many people voiced their preference for the pews to be removed and replaced with chairs.

However there are also many people who wish to see the pews remain.

My sense is that we do not have a consensus at the present time.

We should also recognise that a decision to remove the pews cannot be taken in isolation.....it would catapult us into a full, root and branch, refurbishment of the chapel itself involving:-

- insulating the walls and ceiling to eradicate the condensation problems
- installation of an entirely different heating system
- provision of new seating, new carpeting , new sound system etc
- possibly raising the floor to same level as the Bible class
- possibly relocating the organ and /or baptistery

Needless to say this would be very expensive.

My own view is that we have already identified many other issues elsewhere in the building which are more pressing and which should be addressed before we undertake a major refurbishment of the chapel itself.

1200 Words