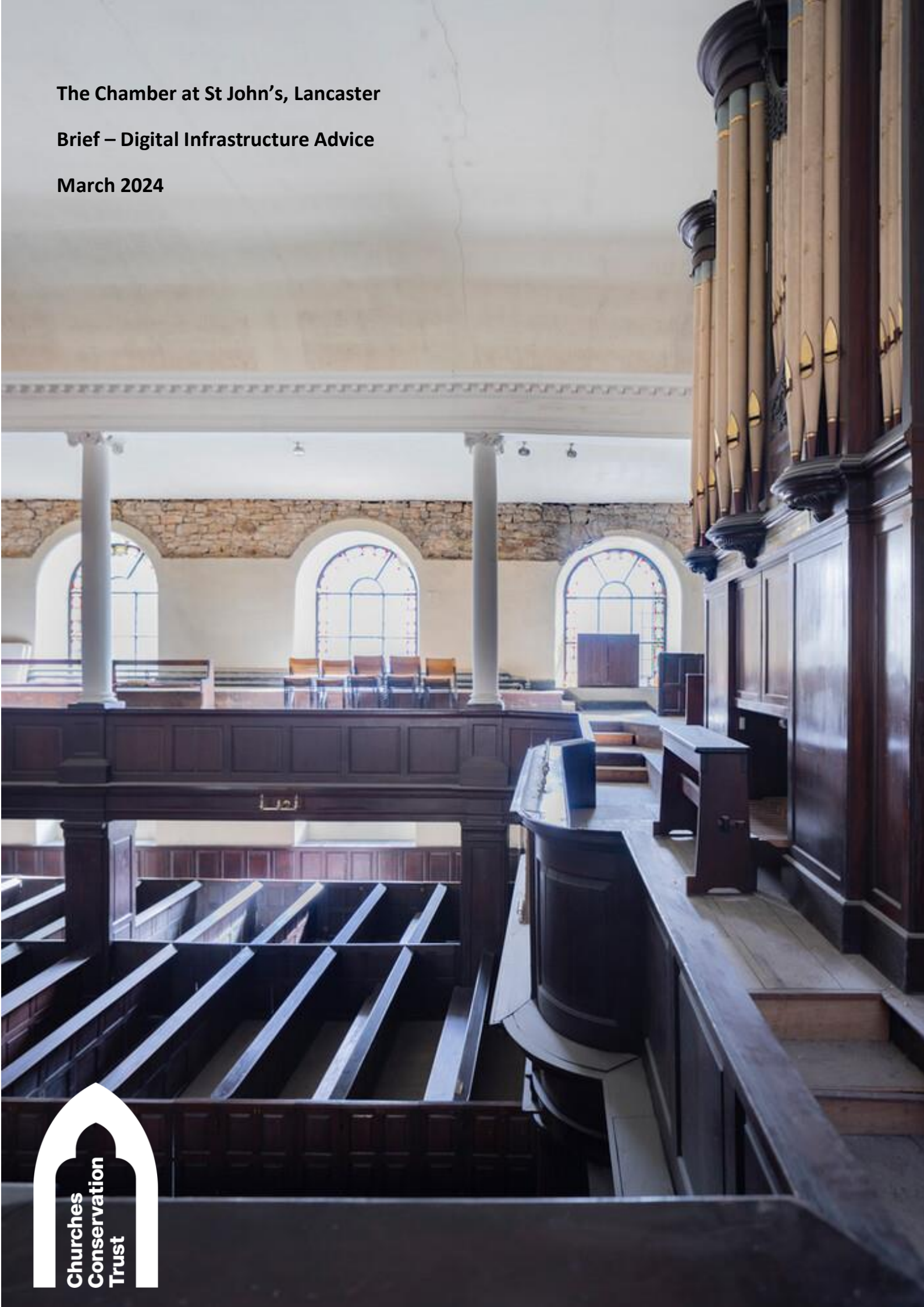


The Chamber at St John's, Lancaster

Brief – Digital Infrastructure Advice

March 2024





1. Introduction

- 1.1. Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) is seeking experienced and creative consultant/s to provide advice on digital infrastructure needs for *The Chamber at St John's* as part of our project development work. The project will see the Grade II* listed church repaired and adapted as a new space for co-working and enterprise, in partnership with Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce (LMCoC).
- 1.2. *The Chamber at St John's* is a Heritage Enterprise project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Architectural Heritage Fund, and generous legacies and donations to CCT. Its aim is to transform the closed and redundant St John's into a vibrant city-centre landmark for co-working and enterprise use.
- 1.3. When the capital works are complete, the repurposed church will be leased to the LMCoC and will provide a physical 'Chamber' for the organisation to build and grow a networked community of entrepreneurs to help Lancaster prosper. The project promises innovative architecture in a beautifully conserved historic setting, through sensitive adaptation of the former church's historic box pews to create co-working/hot desks and meeting spaces. A proposed new extension in the churchyard will create lettable offices, WCs and further meeting rooms for local businesses; a café and a revitalised churchyard garden will be open to members of the public.
- 1.4. Project development work is ongoing and a round 2 application will be made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Delivery Phase in May 2024. The project is being led by CCT in partnership with LMCoC, who will operate the co-work enterprise and occupy the building under lease following the capital works phase. Development work is supported by an experienced design team led by Mosedale Gillatt Architects with further support from business planning, interpretation and other consultants.

2. The Building

- 2.1. The Church of St John the Evangelist (St John's) is a redundant Georgian church located on the northern edge of Lancaster city centre. The address is North Road, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 1PA.
- 2.2. The church is Grade II* listed (List Entry Number 1289679). It lies within Lancaster Conservation Area and is in the Mill Race Regeneration Area, which is currently undergoing a programme of investment through the Lancaster High Street Heritage Action Zone. St John's was vested to CCT in 1983, after declining congregation numbers led to church closure in 1981. The churchyard is owned by the Diocese of Blackburn and managed by Lancaster City Council. The building has been vacant and unoccupied since 2015.
- 2.3. St John's was built in 1754-5 as a chapel-of-ease for Lancaster Priory by an unknown architect, possibly mason-architect Henry Sephton. A tower to the design of Thomas Harrison was added in 1784 following a bequest by Thomas Bowes. The church comprises five bays with a semi-

circular apse at the east end, constructed from ashlar sandstone with timber windows; these were originally plain, but some now have stained glass. The tower is in three stages, the second of which carries a Bell and Atkinson of Lancaster clock, and the third of which houses the bells.

- 2.4. Internally, the majority of the Georgian fabric of the building survives; box pews fill the nave, including a Corporation Pew for use by the town dignitaries. There are raked galleries to three sides of the nave with the organ, in its original 1780s mahogany casing by the renowned Lancaster cabinet makers Gillow's, at the west end. The interior woodwork displays craftsmanship to a high standard and is part of the significance of the building.
- 2.5. Victorian alterations include: the addition of a south porch and narthex screen; removal of the central pulpit and its replacement with an ironwork pulpit and reading desk; replacement of the original font; and reordering of the chancel including installation of stained glass. A two-storey vestry (south) and a side chapel (north) were created at the east end of the galleries in the 1930s, subdividing space in the nave and rendering the south-east door redundant.
- 2.6. The construction of St John's was funded in part by wealthy Lancastrians of the industrialist and mercantile classes responsible for Lancaster's growth and prosperity in the 18th century, in part through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- 2.7. An Assessment of Significance prepared by Brian Clark (2015) concluded that St John's is a highly significant church in terms of both external appearance and internal features. Recent specialist research into the historic interior joinery by Hugh Harrison and Jane Root (2022) has found the interior fittings to be of particular interest, including the box pews, Corporation pew, galleries, and mahogany organ casing and altar rail. Later additions and alterations to the building have, on the whole, been sympathetic to the style and materials of the original building and have some significance. The churchyard and setting of the building are also important, with recent work by Historic England's Architectural Investigation team (2022) placing the building in its wider historical context. A revised Assessment of Significance and Heritage Statement is being prepared by the design team and will accompany the planning, listed building consent and faculty applications.
- 2.8. The deteriorating condition of the building, however, presents a very clear threat to its significance. Its closure and lack of purpose means that people are not able to appreciate its history and beauty.
- 2.9. St John's is currently on the Historic England Heritage at Risk register as category A – 'immediate risk of further deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed'. Despite investment in the region of £250,000 over the last decade, its condition continues to decline with plaster falls, flood damage, loss of external monuments, water ingress in the roof and tower, and outbreaks of wet/dry rot - all identified in the last 12 months. In addition, the WC is no longer usable, further hindering use of the building.



- 2.10. A programme of urgent repairs at high level including roof, tower, parapets and rainwater goods will be carried out during summer 2024, thanks to generous grant support from Historic England, with the planned works also hosting a training programme for the HE Heritage Building Skills apprentices and trainees. This work will make the building watertight and protect the significant interior from further loss of fabric but does not address the full repair liability or pressing need for a new, sustainable use.

3. The Client

- 3.1. The client is Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), Vulcan Works, Room 41, 34-38 Guildhall Road, Northampton, NN1 1EW.
- 3.2. The key contacts are Elanor Johnson (Project Manager), ejohnson@thecct.org.uk, 07786 468979 and Amanda Brocklehurst, abrocklehurst@thecct.org.uk, 07553458738.
- 3.3. CCT is the national charity protecting and conserving historic churches in England. Our estate of over 350 listed church buildings ranges from undiscovered rural gems to grand urban masterpieces. We work with communities to enable them to care for their historic churches; share our specialist skills in maintenance, technical advice and fundraising; and promote the value of shared cultural heritage. We have an open-door policy at our churches, which nearly 2m people visit every year. We are supported by over 1,800 volunteers and worked with 3,500 young people through our schools' programme. In addition, we have developed commercial activity such as Champing (camping in churches), maintenance support, and consultancy services to support the work of the Trust.
- 3.4. CCT undertakes specialist conservation work to our churches. It also has a reputation for combining this with sensitive reuse projects that bring churches back to life at the heart of their communities. Our most recent regeneration project, Seventeen Nineteen in Sunderland, has won multiple awards including Museums and Heritage Awards Best Conservation Project 2022 and the Georgian Group Award for best Reuse of a Georgian Building. Award citations for the project highlight its sensitive design and the attention to detail of new interventions, as well as the excellent local community engagement throughout the project. We have a strong track record of delivering National Lottery Heritage-funded projects, including: All Soul's Bolton, Sound & Art at St Swithin's Worcester, the Old Black Lion in Northampton, and Built for Exchange in Sudbury.
- 3.5. This NLHF Heritage Enterprise project is being delivered by CCT in partnership with the Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce. LMCoC is a long-established membership body supporting the business community in North Lancashire with the principal aim of helping to make businesses more profitable by creating an environment where businesses can grow and prosper; acting as a voice for business; and offering support and training services to members.



4. The Project

- 4.1. The project has been co-designed through an innovative partnership between the Churches Conservation Trust and the Lancaster & Morecambe Chamber of Commerce. The CCT brings to the project its expertise in community-led regeneration, building conservation and public engagement. LMCoC brings a beneficial new purpose to St John's, as a co-working and enterprise space. Together, these two long-standing not-for-profit organisations will deliver a distinctive adaptive reuse project which is locally rooted, financially viable, and sustainable.
- 4.2. The *Chamber at St John's* project will see the church transformed from a closed and redundant building at risk to a vibrant landmark in historic Lancaster serving and supporting the business community of the city.
- 4.3. On completion of the project, The Chamber at St John's will be:
 - a distinctive place for co-working, promoting collaboration between entrepreneurs, businesses and students/trainees;
 - a pioneering physical 'Chamber' for people to access business support, mentoring and facilities to grow their enterprises;
 - and a venue for 100+ people with a café for members of the public to enjoy the austere beauty of this intact Georgian church;
 - a showcase for innovative design and conservation, where the challenge of adapting fixed historic interiors is overcome through ingenious adaptations to the box pews; and
 - an exemplar of sustainable design and energy efficiency for historic buildings.
- 4.4. In addition, the project will offer enhanced accessibility, a new public outdoor space in a revived churchyard garden, and thoughtful interpretation of St John's history. The Chamber will be multi-purpose: used predominantly by the business community of Lancaster during office hours, it will be open to the public for concerts, talks, community events and heritage open days in the evenings and at weekends.
- 4.5. When capital works are complete, LMCoC will lease the building from CCT as anchor tenant and operator, running *The Chamber at St John's* as a commercial enterprise. St John's will act as their base from which they will continue to deliver work around their strategic pillars of Connect, Support and Represent and as a fourth Place pillar, offering facilities and space for their members and the wider community.
- 4.6. The objectives of the enterprise include:
 - **Community** – create a physical space for the LMCoC members and wider business community and beneficiaries to come together to work, network and share. The creation of a community café will once again bring members of the public into the church to see the interior of St John's.
 - **Collaboration** – the project is a collaboration between CCT, LMCoC and other stakeholders and beneficiaries (see 2.6), working together to create a new Place for









LMCoC members and wider businesses to come together to foster new collaborative opportunities between local businesses and the wider community.

- **Coworking** – Shifts in working patterns and practices have changed the way we work. We are seeing LMCoC members consolidating their office space and looking for more flexible places to work and to bring together their teams. For more information see section 5.9.
- **Creativity** – St John’s would be an iconic heritage rich workplace in the heart of the city centre, to inspire creative thinking and problem solving for tenants and visitors.
- **Economic development** – supporting development of a thriving local economy that fosters investment for growth to support the opportunity to deliver against the economic potential of the city of Lancaster and the wider area.

4.7. A detailed Business Plan for this new operation has been developed by LMCoC based on current local infrastructure, geo-demographics, other similar businesses, national research into coworking trends, as well as surveying and asking Chamber members and wider businesses around their views on project design and possible use/uptake of the space. Opinions of potential users have been canvassed directly.

4.8. A Business Model Canvas has been created setting out an overview of the business model.

The Business Model Canvas

Key Partners  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -LMCoC and CCT -Lancaster City Council -Lancaster BID -Lancashire County Council -Lancaster University -University of Cumbria -Lancaster and Morecambe College -Mosedale Gillatt Architects -D & S Knowles Consulting Limited 	Key Activities  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Awareness raising of St John’s Church -Events -Build a community of coworkers 	Value Propositions  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Office or coworking in an amazing heritage building -A physical Chamber to meet likeminded businesses -A one stop shop for support, connecting and socialising -An amazing place to meet you clients or suppliers 	Customer Relationships  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Current Chamber members -Relationship management -Building a coworking community 	Customer Segments  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Current Chamber members -Potential Chamber members -Members of the community -Community groups -Start-ups -Students and university staff
Key Resources  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community Manager -Apprentice -Current Chamber Team & Directors -Chamber Brand and awareness -St John’s Church 		Channels  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Open days -Events by partners -Run Chamber events in St John’s -Social Media and current Chamber channels, newsletter etc. 		
Cost Structure  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Staffing costs -Marketing & web & social media -Heating and ventilation -IT - Insurance -Activity costs -Rent and rates -Refuse and recycling -CCTV and security -Cleaning - Hot drinks 			Revenue Streams  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Café rental -Office rental -Fixed desk coworking -Flexible coworking -Events rental -Café profit share? -Meeting rooms -Venue rental 	

4.9. The commercial opportunities from the building can be summarised as:

- Rental income and service charges from dedicated office spaces
 - Ground floor wheelchair accessible office for 3 workers (in south aisle)
 - Ground floor office for 3 workers (in chapel)
 - Upper floor open plan office for 4 workers
 - Additional offices in the modern extension for 3-4 workers each

- Rental income and service charges from dedicated café
 - Servery in lobby with 48 covers in ground floor
- Rental income for meeting rooms and boardroom
 - Upper floor open plan meeting room for 4-6 people
 - Boardroom in extension for 12-16 people
- Venue hire for events taking place in the space
 - Talks, concerts, AGMs, arts events, cultural and community events, predominantly using chancel and pews at front of nave
- Membership income from the coworking offer including:
 - 23 Dedicated desks in the gallery with storage
 - 18 aisle desks and 11 nave desks Hot desks in the aisles and the nave. Those in the aisles offer a higher degree of adjustability and comfort for members wishing to be at desk for a full day
 - 9 flexible working spaces in the chancel for desk-based tasks and meetings
 - These will not be dedicated desks so we would expect to have more coworking members and users than desks available (overbooking principle like a gym)

5. The Brief

- 5.1. CCT requires a consultant or team of consultants to work closely with LMCoC and CCT to provide advice and guidance on digital infrastructure and outputs necessary for the successful operation of *The Chamber at St John's*.
- 5.2. We are looking for a consultant/s who can propose creative and high-quality digital solutions to ensure that *The Chamber at St John's* meets the five overarching objectives of Community, Collaboration, Co-Working, Creativity and Economic Development. The proposals should contribute to achieving the income targets set in the Business Plan and support the LMCoC in management of the enterprise.
- 5.3. The scope of such solutions may include:
 - Hardware options and requirements
 - Software and connectivity options and requirements
 - Digital booking, facilities management, and payment systems and other systems/processes for using the hotdesking, meeting rooms and other facilities, digital systems to support management and access arrangements for members and visitors/café users
 - Development of website and/or app – this may include functionality around membership sign up/services, booking of desks/rooms, and interpretation content
 - Digital methods for building a community centred on the regenerated building
- 5.4. Work should build on the consultations and research carried out during our Business Planning process, including our research into local market, demand, potential audiences and community
- 5.5. At this stage we are seeking advice that will include information on costs for development, production and maintenance, ownership of digital assets, and benefits and risks of the solutions proposed, rather than production of any digital solutions. The output of this commission is a costed Digital Plan for *The Chamber at St John's*.



5.6. This Digital Plan will be integrated with the Business Plan, Marketing Strategy, Interpretation Plan and Activity Statement and form part of our application to the NLHF found Round Two funding to deliver the project. The Business Plan will be shared with the appointed consultant.

6. Deliverables

6.1. The consultant/s is expected to provide an interim report for review by CCT and LMCoC and a final version of the Digital Plan in line with the timetable set out.

6.2. The Digital Plan should include at minimum:

- Overview of how digital elements could contribute to successful operation of *The Chamber at St John's* by LMCoC and to the sustainability and viability of the project
- Detailed, costed proposals for digital infrastructure including but not limited to ideas set out in Section 5.3 above
- Advice on development, production, maintenance and ownership of the proposed digital assets
- Benefit and Risk analysis of the proposals

6.3. The above should be set out in a final report.

7. Fee

7.1. The maximum budget for the Digital Plan contract is £8,400 inclusive of VAT and any other consultant costs.

8. Timetable

Task	Date
Deadline for submissions	Thursday 21 st March
Appointment	Monday 25 th March
Inception Meeting	Week commencing 25 th March
Interim Review Meeting	Week commencing 22 nd April
Final Digital Plan Report	Friday 3 rd May

9. Submissions

9.1. Please submit a short proposal (no more than 4 A4 pages) detailing:

- Your total fee and a breakdown of day/hourly rates and any T&S or additional costs.
- A short outline of your approach to this brief.
- Project experience including case studies of at least two previous relevant commissions setting out nature of the project, relevance and client.
- Brief CV or biography of the individual(s) who will carry out the work.
- Assurance that you can carry out the work within the timetable set out in section 8.

9.2. This contract relates to the Development phase of the NLHF-funded project only; should further work be required in the Delivery phase it will be separately procured.



9.3. Submissions should be returned by **5pm on Thursday 21st March**, by email to Elanor Johnson, Regeneration Officer, ejohnson@theccct.org.uk. If you would like to visit the property in advance, please contact Elanor to arrange.

10. Appendices

Appendices will be provided by email – please contact ejohnson@theccct.org.uk

- Design Proposals by MGA Ltd
- LMCoC *The Chamber at St John's* Business Plan – this will be provided to the successful consultant/s at appointment