

The Big Vision

CHURCHES WORKSHOP

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 28TH 2019

Welcome and Agenda for Today

- ❖ Update on progress
- ❖ Summary of consultation feedback to date
- ❖ Outlining next steps
- ❖ Discussion on sharing of buildings
- ❖ Wrap up

The Project Team

❖ Terms of Reference

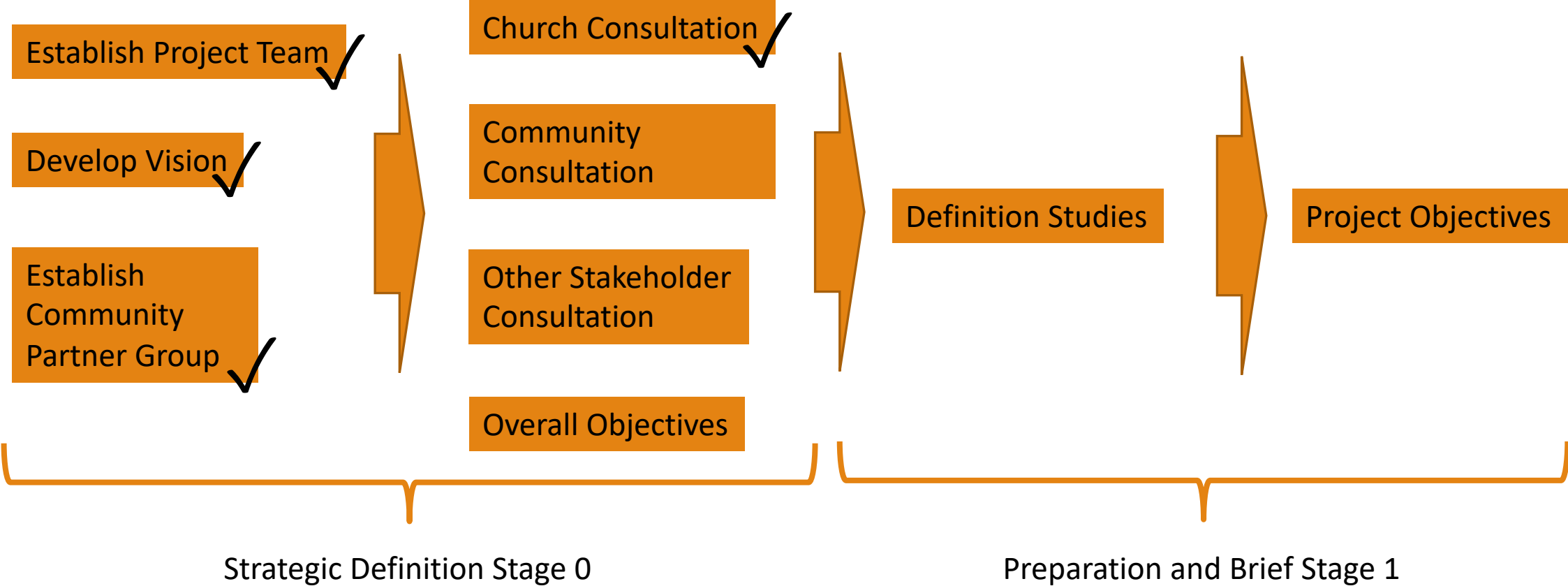
❖ Who's on it

Community Partner Group

❖ Terms of reference

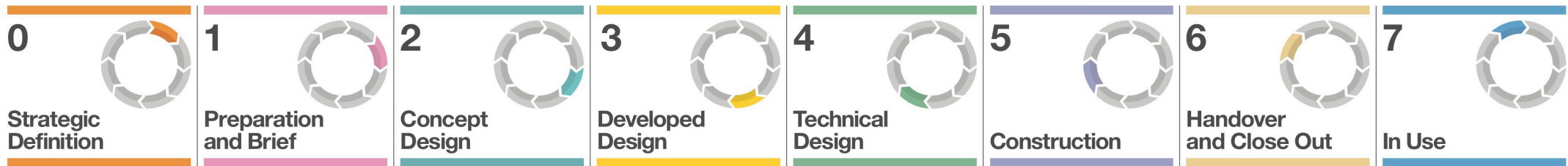
❖ Who's on it

Our top level plan



RIBA Process for managing a project

- ❖ Required by major grant making bodies
- ❖ Breaks the project into a set of standard stages –
 - ❖ Strategic Definition
 - ❖ Preparation and Brief
 - ❖ Concept Design
 - ❖ Developed Design
 - ❖ Technical Design
 - ❖ Construction
 - ❖ Handover and Close Out
 - ❖ In Use



Community and Market Square Consultation

- ❖ In August around 1,000 questionnaires were distributed in and around Kirkby Lonsdale asking for views about The Big Vision. The questionnaire was also available as a download from www.thebigvision.org.uk
- ❖ To date (20/9/19) 26 written questionnaires have been returned, with a further 5 returned online – total 31.
- ❖ We had a stand in the Market for three consecutive weeks in August

Next Steps on Consultation

- ❖ We plan to meet in the Autumn with:
 - ❖ Town council
 - ❖ Rugby Club
 - ❖ QES/ QE Studio
 - ❖ Diocese/ Methodist District
 - ❖ Chamber of Trade
 - ❖ Civic Society

Definition Studies

- ❖ We will select a **small** number of areas for detailed study based on information gathered from consultations, stakeholder inputs, and preliminary studies (where appropriate) for each of these:
 - ❖ Future usage of all our church buildings and halls/ meeting rooms
 - ❖ Consequent St Mary's building renovations and improvements
 - ❖ Future use of Rectory, Cottage and Vicarage
 - ❖ Future provision for clergy housing
 - ❖ Churchyard and future provision for burials
 - ❖ Glebe Field
 - ❖ Cockpit Hill

Definition Studies – Key factors

❖ Environment and sustainability

- ❖ Showing leadership – not just meeting statutory requirements
- ❖ At the forefront of our plans
- ❖ Expect it to require some difficult decisions

❖ Developing and exploiting our heritage

- ❖ Understanding our heritage
- ❖ Making the best of our heritage – visibly and commercially

View from the Clergy

Group Work

We have put up on the boards summaries of the church consultation responses which relate to how we use the church buildings.

One church consultation respondent said about sharing buildings:

“In view of the overprovision of churches and the under-utilisation of facilities this question (sharing of buildings) deserves serious consideration.”

Do you agree that there is overprovision of churches?

If so, how should the project address this?

If not, why?

Future of historic churches debated at V&A

'The vast majority are sitting empty or virtually empty'

Madeleine Davies

A SIGNIFICANT transfer of the country's 16,000 churches out of the hands of the Church of England to "the local community" was the most radical proposal on the table at a debate hosted by the Victoria and Albert Museum last week.

Convened to mark the 50th anniversary of the Churches Conservation Trust, the panel explored the question "Who should be responsible for the care of historic churches?"

The journalist Sir Simon Jenkins, author of *England's Thousand Best Churches*, met several objections to his insistence that "until we move the churches out of the hands of the Church of England and into the hands of the local community, nothing is going to happen."

"The vast majority are sitting either empty or virtually empty," he said. "This is outrageous, a misuse of a historical building." The question, he said, was: "What can the Church do for most English people if they don't want to come and pray?" They should be transferred to a local trust, charity, authority, or parish council.

Among those challenging the claims was a churchwarden in the

audience who said that it was the "absolute mantra" of the C of E that "every parish church belongs to everyone who lives in the parish". Most were in "pretty good heart".

A representative of Historic England warned: "You cannot possibly hope for rural communities which have been depopulated by 95 per cent since the Industrial Revolution to remain financially responsible for some of these extremely expensive buildings." The marketing of churches was "pathetically poor," he said. Donations could be as low as 5p per visitor.

The Revd Sally Hitchiner, an assistant curate at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, suggested that it might be necessary to "give up the dream" of a church in every place. "If you can't find 20 people in a tiny village to sustain their local church who are religious, I don't think you can find 20 people who would want to sustain it who are not religious, either."

She was in favour of rationalisation: "Where are the multiple churches which are in easy walking distance for people who want to go to them? Why do we need every single one of them to continue to be distinctly and strictly religious? . . . Our greatest hope is for them to genuinely serve their local communities."

Nick Berry, a director at OMI Architects, which works on church reordering and repurposing projects, highlighted the costs entailed in such

work, often funded either through large congregations of young professionals, or substantial grants.

"People do care about their churches and want to see them survive," he said. But "communities won't be able to take on this funding side of things. . . These buildings are far more expensive than anything else to look after. . . It's basically a national responsibility for that to happen."

Sir Simon criticised a "defeatist" attitude that saw church buildings as a "drag", arguing that within two miles of every English parish church there was probably a millionaire

who could be tapped. The problem was that the Church regarded it as a "defeat" if a church was not used for worship.

Ms Hitchiner concluded the debate by suggesting that "survival" was the wrong aim for the C of E. It must be "generous" and consider how best to serve the community. "Sometimes that may be through our religious practices; sometimes that may be releasing whole buildings to be able to serve the community in the way that seems best to them."

A recent government review of the funding of churches and cathedrals advised that they should be

prepared for reduced reliance on government funding, and called for a "cultural shift" under which communities contributed to their upkeep. Several pilot projects are under way (News, 6 April).

In 2015, the Church Buildings Review Group argued that, by European standards, the Church bore "an unusually heavy financial burden of maintaining part of the nation's built heritage". It envisaged "the imaginative and sensitive reordering of buildings" in which churches would continue to be places of worship but host other activities, too (News, 16 April 2015).

St Peter's, Belmont Village, near Bolton, Greater Manchester, is providing a postal service after the closure of the local post office. A travelling sub-postmaster visits once a week and offers a full range of services. The church also opens for coffee and full English breakfasts on a Friday morning



PHIL TAYLOR

Conclusions from the session
