

Overview

Who is making this bid?

This proposal has been put forward by Northstowe Church Network, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), first registered in January 2024.

The Northstowe Church Network is a Local Ecumenical Partnership which brings together Christians from the Church of England, United Reformed Church, and the Baptist Union. The Northstowe Church Network has a Shared Ecumenical Commitment with local Methodist and Quakers and collaborates with other Churches Together denominations, including the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia, through Churches Together in Cambridgeshire. Their charitable purpose is to help Northstowe's Christians worship and live out their faith, and to develop an inclusive community centre for the benefit of all residents, regardless of background or belief.

The Northstowe Church Network CIO currently has one full time member of staff, with ten trained volunteers, 28 individual voting members and 500 local residents participating weekly across worshipping communities, toddler groups, youth work, schools engagement and with additional participation at civic events.

What is the bidder's association with Northstowe?

The proposal emphasises the network's long-standing presence in Northstowe, its collaborative approach, and its commitment to creating an inclusive, sustainable, and community-focused facility. The County Ecumenical Officer began working with developers and planners a decade ahead of occupation. The lead minister joined this initiative in 2014 and later joined Northstowe as an early resident in 2018 with other founding members being amongst Northstowe's first residents, when local Christians began meeting as Pathfinder Church. The initial Anglican Bishop's Mission Order for Northstowe, the Northstowe Church Network Baptist Church, and the Northstowe Church Network United Reformed Church were all created in Northstowe by residents. In 2024 these three organisations entered into partnership and registered as a single charitable body.

Will the bidder be working with others to bring forward their proposal?

The delivery model is reliant upon collaboration with specialist providers. Two key organisations are working with Northstowe Church Network: **Northstowe Muslims**, a CIO, founded by Northstowe residents to support the social and spiritual needs of Muslim families while working in partnership with schools, civic bodies and faith groups; a formal collaborating organisation and anchor tenant, they would occupy a dedicated Islamic prayer and education room, whilst working towards the development of their own facility in a later phase of Northstowe.

Northstowe Muslims comprise around 80 households. **Turtle Dove**, Cambridge, is a Community Interest Company (CIC) working with Northstowe Church Network with a view to delivering alternative educational provision and development work for young women aged 14-24. Other organisations identified as collaboration partners are **Romsey Mill** (charity working in Northstowe and elsewhere in South Cambridgeshire to support young people and families) and **Northstowe Youth Hive**. **Northstowe Scouts** and **RAF Air Cadets** (2524 Oakington Squadron),

The **Pathfinder Primary School, Plastic Free Northstowe and Longstanton, Bug Hunter Waters Park Run and Northstowe Arts**, who have all supplied letters of support for this proposal.

Through its activities the Northstowe Church Network serves more than 500 local residents who participate weekly across its worshipping communities, toddler groups, youth work and schools engagement, with additional participation at civic events, the majority being Northstowe residents and minority travelling from a wider catchment of up to seven miles. Northstowe Muslims primarily serve Muslim households living in Northstowe, with around 40 established households based in the town and a further 40+ from the same catchment of surrounding villages.

Evidence provided that the proposal meets community needs

The proposal describes the community-led needs analysis it has undertaken over the period 2018-2025, the results of which have informed the project. Taking an asset-based community development approach the organisation states that it has heard from hundreds of residents, from families across all four schools, Northstowe Muslims and other faith groups, uniformed organisations, SEND practitioners and youth workers, community organisers and wellbeing providers, Town Council officers and residents during a raft of community celebrations. This returned consistent responses with residents asking for places for quiet reflection and grief, small rooms that feel safe and non-institutional, café space with views of nature, dignified spaces for wedding, funerals and baptism in the town and appropriate spaces for Christian and Muslim residents. Reflective outdoor space, rooms for wellbeing, mentoring, youth work and alternative provision and accessible facilities aligning with Northstowe's walkable, low carbon vision.

The consultation programme included sustained listening since 2018 through the Deckchair Listening Project, schools work, and civic events feedback received from across the worshipping communities. In March 2025, local residents contributed early feedback on the proposals at the Community Pancake party. During June and July a public needs consultation was run in conjunction with ArchAngel Architects and Lo Marketing, commencing with a stall at the Northstowe Midsummer Festival. This yielded 59 in-depth conversations and 20 completed forms, plus post it note comments capturing input from residents. This continued through summer events and concluding at the Northstowe Running Festival, which generated over 80 additional short form responses, contributing to more than 200 detailed conversations in 2025.

What is proposed?

The proposal sets out the organisation's understanding of the Northstowe demographic - its younger age profile and socioeconomic indicators - and describes the vulnerability and isolation of some residents without established support networks in the new community. Faith, ritual, and pastoral needs are identified through County Council and Census data, alongside the local experience of existing Christian ministry and Muslim leaders and members. These insights, together with the wider spiritual, emotional and inclusion needs described by Northstowe residents have shaped what is proposed for the site.

The proposal seeks to deliver a permanent faith and community hub integrating reflective gardens, lakeside access and outdoor gather spaces with a purpose-built venue to support worship, youth activities, wellbeing programs, and shared community use. The hub will include

the “Chapel by the Lake” for Christian worship and an Islamic Prayer and Education Room. In addition to this would be provided flexible community spaces, a café, and exhibition space, and rooftop terrace. The building would have 685 m² of internal space, with 19% dedicated to worship-related use.

The proposal outlines the following offer:

- An organisational and pastoral hub for Christian worshipping communities, with some based in the ecumenically licensed chapel and offering others a support function with meetings continuing across Northstowe. (Northstowe is to be designated a full Church of England parish in 2026, conferring responsibilities for services such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals).
- Accessible and dignified spaces for prayer and worship, supporting Christian and Muslim residents who currently travel outside Northstowe or struggle to secure suitable local venues. The proposal will allow daily prayer, weekly worship, life events, and seasonal gatherings on one shared site.
- Community space available to locally based groups, supporting learning, well-being activity, arts, and civic gatherings at neighbourhood scale.
- Inclusive reflective gardens and landscape routes open to all.
- Café, exhibition space, and informal meetings areas, with links to lakeside activities.
- Support services for children and young people (e.g. Romsey Mill, Northstowe Youth Hive, Turtle Dove), to include alternative provision (education and training for those not catered for by mainstream services) and therapeutic support.
- Creation of a landmark civic space, helping to define the character of Northstowe.

The flexible community rooms will be made available for hire (when not in use by the faith groups bringing forward this bid) to other faith groups, community groups, and individuals, with a stated commitment to inclusivity. Availability varies by space, with smaller rooms often bookable even when other parts of the building are in use.

These lettings will contribute towards the running costs of the facility.

Shared spaces will generally be available for groups working collaboratively with the applicant, or independent external bookings at the following times:

Weekdays (Monday–Friday) from mid-morning through to early evening, typically from around 9am to 9.30pm, subject to room type and safeguarding requirements. These periods support the Centre’s core shared uses, including:

- Youth work and Alternative Provision partnerships
- Therapy, counselling, and pastoral support
- Community groups, classes, and meetings

Within this pattern, Thursday evenings are a regular worshipping time within the Network model (Compline – the evening prayer service). On these evenings, some spaces will be reserved for worship, while other rooms remain available for shared or bookable use, supported by the multi-floor layout and zoned access.

Saturdays from mid-morning to early evening, suitable for workshops, learning activities, cultural events, and locally based faith gatherings, with extended evening hours when practicable and hospitable to neighbours.

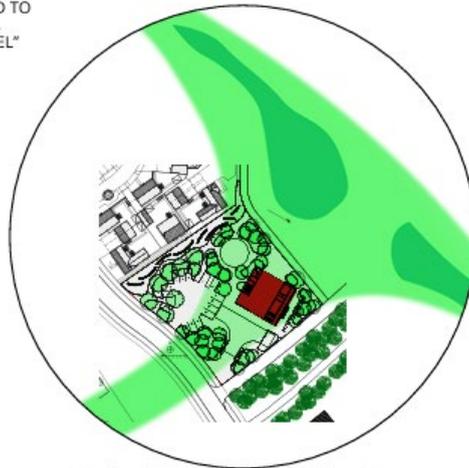
How would the land be developed?

Within the application, the proposal includes a site and location plan, concept designs, artist impressions, and floor plans for the building. The design of the “Lakeside Centre” has been developed with the support of Archangel Architects; Allen Pyke Associates (landscape architects); Millcam Ltd (construction and cost consultants); Stantec (civil engineers advising on drainage, active travel infrastructure and environmental integration); Lo Marketing (communications specialists, supporting branding, public engagement through the consultation and delivery phases) and the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants (providing strategic consultancy in financial modelling, risk management and governance).

Site/location plans/floor plans/artist impressions provided in the bid:

- [Site position](#)

THE LANDSCAPING FORMS PART OF THE CONNECTIVITY THROUGH NORTHSTOWE'S GREENSWAYS, WITH THE BUILDING ALIGNED TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE LAKE VIEWS, ANGLED WITH THE OPENING “GREEN FUNNEL”



- [Aerial plan](#)
- [Floor plans](#)
- [Artist's impression](#)
- [Artist's impression of the Story Circle](#)



The application indicates that there would be parking for 16 vehicles and over 50 bicycles in designated parking places. A Storytelling Circle forms part of the landscaping, overlooked by a locally commissioned artwork on the side of the building. Landscaped paths incorporate sculptural elements and create areas for quiet reflection open to all.

Ground Floor: This would provide café/exhibition space (hireable out of normal café hours) to host activities compatible with standard cafe set up and/or making use of area as exhibition space and/or also using external areas. In addition to this there would be two bookable meeting pods, seating 6 each and providing a table with sound proofing and Audio Visual useful for coworking, small meetings, Alternative Provision, and youthwork.

First Floor: This floor holds the Chapel (double height), used primarily for worship or private devotions alongside music performance and rehearsal usage. A Chapel Annex provides for small group use /community group (exercise, craft), as well as combined bookings with Chapel for music events, and use for Catholic Confession.

Second Floor: Chapel Mezzanine extending over part of the Chapel, for small group /community use (exercise, craft) and corporate away days. This floor also accommodates a Church Office providing an administrative base for Northstowe Church Network.

Third Floor: Accommodates a small meeting room to be used for therapeutic, pastoral, or alternative provision. Includes a hall to be used Commercial Hire; Community Group Hire, Muslim Friday Prayers; exercise classes; wakes/canopies after life event services (set up banquet style), church children and youth groups, other faith groups (e.g. Hindu) within the constraints of existing church/anchor tenant bookings. This floor also holds the Islamic Prayer and Education Room to be used for daily prayers, Islamic classes, pastoral meetings and for charity governance meetings.

A rooftop terrace provides additional external community space, offering views over the lake and providing further capacity for gatherings and seasonal events.

How will the proposed facilities be delivered? Design, construction, operation and funding

The applicant sets out the overall capital costs for delivery of the project, totalling **£5,600,355**.

The projected capital costs are broken down as follows:

Architects and professional fees (design, planning, project support) 12% of build cost: £509,355;

Landscape design, implementation, and professional fees (Allen Pyke Associates): £90,000;

Building and construction costs (Millcam Ltd estimate, including preliminaries and main contractor profit and overheads): £4,042,502 (a full breakdown of indicative costs has been provided by the applicant);

Contingency (5% of above): £202,125;

Furnishings, fittings, and equipment 5% of build cost: £212,231;

Fundraising support and £5,000 returnable rent deposit: £35,000;

VAT (assuming 50% build costs incur VAT): £509,121.

Total project cost (including contingencies and funding structure):
£5,600,355

VAT advice has been provided by Cambridge based company, VAT Advice Services. Final VAT treatment will be confirmed as part of the detailed design development and retained throughout the construction and operation to ensure compliance.

Northstowe Church Network sets out the funding it has secured towards the project costs:

Confirmed ecumenical partner funding of **£750,000** is pledged by the Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church (subject to land award) and **£60,000** from the Church of England Diocese of Ely Board of Finance is in place.

The application states that the project is designed to be operationally sustainable from 2029 through room hire, café income, events, and existing income streams. Beginning in 2029, projections are modelled over a five-year period, with the Lakeside Centre acting as the administrative and organisational hub for Northstowe Church Network, facilitating collaborative projects as well as Christian activities, and the wider community centre. The model includes employment of a centre manager tasked with developing new centre activities, and expenditure related to maintenance, utilities, cleaning, service charge and ongoing costs for furniture and equipment. An 80% relief on rates is assumed. Additional administrative capacity and budgeting for an expansion of chapel based missional activity and special events is included in the model.

Ongoing income from regular giving on the part of church members (an extension of the current income base) is assumed. Within the Local Ecumenical Partnership professional ministry costs would continue to be met through contributions from local giving. The current minister is employed by the Diocese of Ely. The Diocese of Ely subsidises the ministry costs raised locally, but year on year this is reducing as Northstowe Church Network increases its contribution to the Diocese of Ely and to its other denominational partners. The model predicts meeting the full costs of ministry within the plan period.

The business model contains a clear examination of the VAT position and of the potential impacts of inflation and market competition, to substantiate stability and resilience within the plan period.

**Northstowe Church Network (NCN)
Business Planning 2021-2033**

LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH OUTFLOWS

Lakeside Centre expenditure	
Centre Manager Staffing	<i>£38k gross + on costs £7k</i>
Utilities and £2,400 pa service charge	<i>Estimate; SCDC heads of agreement</i>
Maintenance and cleaners	<i>Part time contract or contractor</i>
Furniture and Equipment	-
Rates	<i>80% relief</i>
Sub-total	

Mission and Ministry - Additional Central Expenditure

Staffing (Admin)	<i>8 hours a week</i>
New Church communities	<i>New centre-based missional community</i>
Joint Community costs	<i>e.g. new centre-based festivals</i>
Sub-total	

SUMMARY LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH FLOW

Lakeside Centre revenue generating activities	
Cafe Hire Income	

LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH INFLOWS

LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH OUTFLOWS

Lakeside Centre expenditure	
Mission and Ministry - Additional Central Expenditure	

LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH OUTFLOWS

NET LAKESIDE CENTRE OPERATIONAL CASH FLOW

TABLE 6: LAKESIDE CENTRE PLANS: EXPENDITURE
All financial figures in £

THE FUTURE: OPERATIONAL				
2029	2030	2031	2032	2033

45,000	46,000	47,000	48,000	48,000
20,400	20,910	21,433	21,969	22,518
18,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000
600	600	600	600	600
2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
86,400	93,910	95,433	96,969	97,518

7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200
100	500	500	500	500
500	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
7,800	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100

LAKESIDE CENTRE PLANS: SUMMARY CASH FLOW

54,776	95,939	137,103	146,138	147,244
12,000	13,200	14,520	15,972	17,569
66,776	109,139	151,623	162,110	164,814

86,400	93,910	95,433	96,969	97,518
7,800	12,000	13,200	13,200	13,200
94,200	105,910	108,633	110,169	110,718

-27,424	3,229	42,990	51,941	54,096
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Environmental and Operational Considerations:

Pre-application advice from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service has been incorporated into the proposal. The proposal has been informed by contextual, movement and arrival analysis, including pedestrian and cycle routes, visual approaches from Stirling Road and the Greenway, and the relationship to adjacent residential parcels. Capacity assumptions have

been calculated and a transport, travel and parking strategy presented. Recognising parking constraints, the applicant intends to develop overflow parking arrangements to manage occasional larger events safely, building on established operational arrangements used for civic and seasonal gatherings.

Financial Track Record of the applicant

The turnover of Northstowe Church Network has not required formal audit to date. However, accounts are independently examined and finances for the last three financial years have been provided. At the end of last financial year there were unrestricted reserves of £56,461 and restricted reserves of £9,755 (equivalent to three month's running costs, in agreement with the organisation's Financial Controls Policy). The charity's Accounts and Trustees Annual Report for 2024 are held on the Charity Commissions's website (with other partners' financial accounts being similarly in the public domain, where there is a legal requirement).

Project governance

The project would be managed by the Northstowe Church Network CIO, with a Trustee Board providing oversight. It is Northstowe Church Network that would remain the accountable body and hold the lease from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The proposal describes a Bid Committee, Build Team, and Operational Management Committee to ensure balanced decision-making and community representation.

The Northstowe Church Network contends it has strong governance, safeguarding policies, and professional partnerships to ensure transparency and accountability.

Northstowe will be designated a Church of England parish in 2026; from this point anyone resident within the parish can vote on the election of two Church Wardens, who will serve as trustees of Northstowe Church Network, providing a route for democratic participation for Northstowe residents in the management of the facility if it were to be developed.