

# Summary of Parish Vision

Based on the Vision Document “ Shaping our Future”  
Advent 2018

A follow up to “A first formal proposal for the renewal and restructuring of our diocese”  
Advent 2017

signed by Bishop Alan SM and  
Steven Webb, Director of Development

# Where we have come from?

- Bishop Alan's Steward of the Gospel Initiative      Easter 2016
- Consultation period
  - Parish questionnaire, feedback, draft working plan and lots of meetings
- First formal document      Advent 2017
- Open meetings with parish      Jan 2018
- Feedback from parishes and response
- Vision Document – Shaping our Future      Advent 2018
- First parish open meetings to discuss      Now!

# A brief reminder from last year

## **Our Vision**

*“Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London”*

The Church working better and differently together to evangelise our diocese

**Our Objectives**      Maximise the opportunities for **evangelisation**

Maximise **sacramental provision**

Maximise the opportunities for putting faith into action through  
**charitable works**

**Our Strategy**      Renewal and Restructuring

**Implementation** – the steps needed to achieve those objectives

A 12-strand **Plan for Renewal**  
**Parish Partnerships**

# What is a Parish Partnership?

- The Bishop has now defined a set of 21 parish partnerships.
- Each partnership is a set of parishes who must work together to prepare a restructuring plan for themselves to meet the objectives of the vision document
- The next stage of implementation of the plan is being delegated to these partnerships.
- It is up to us – working with the other parishes in our parish partnership - to decide what happens as we move forward.
- So no longer is this being done to us by the Bishop with a little input from us .....
- ..... Now we are being asked to propose what will happen – within certain limits already set by the Bishop – subject to his final approval.

# RENEWAL (12 strands)

**1) Charity, Justice & Social Action**

**2) Christian life and worship**  
(Mass & lay-led worship)

**3) Education**  
(MATs, encouraging lay people to support the Catholic ethos of all our schools etc)

**4) Family**  
("Protect your families! See in them your greatest treasure" Pope Francis)

**5) Formation**  
(esp. of children but also Landings, RCIA)

**6) Integration**  
(of various traditions)

**7) Leaders**  
(the future of the church depends on us all)

**8) Material assets**  
(how best to use them across the Parish Partnership)

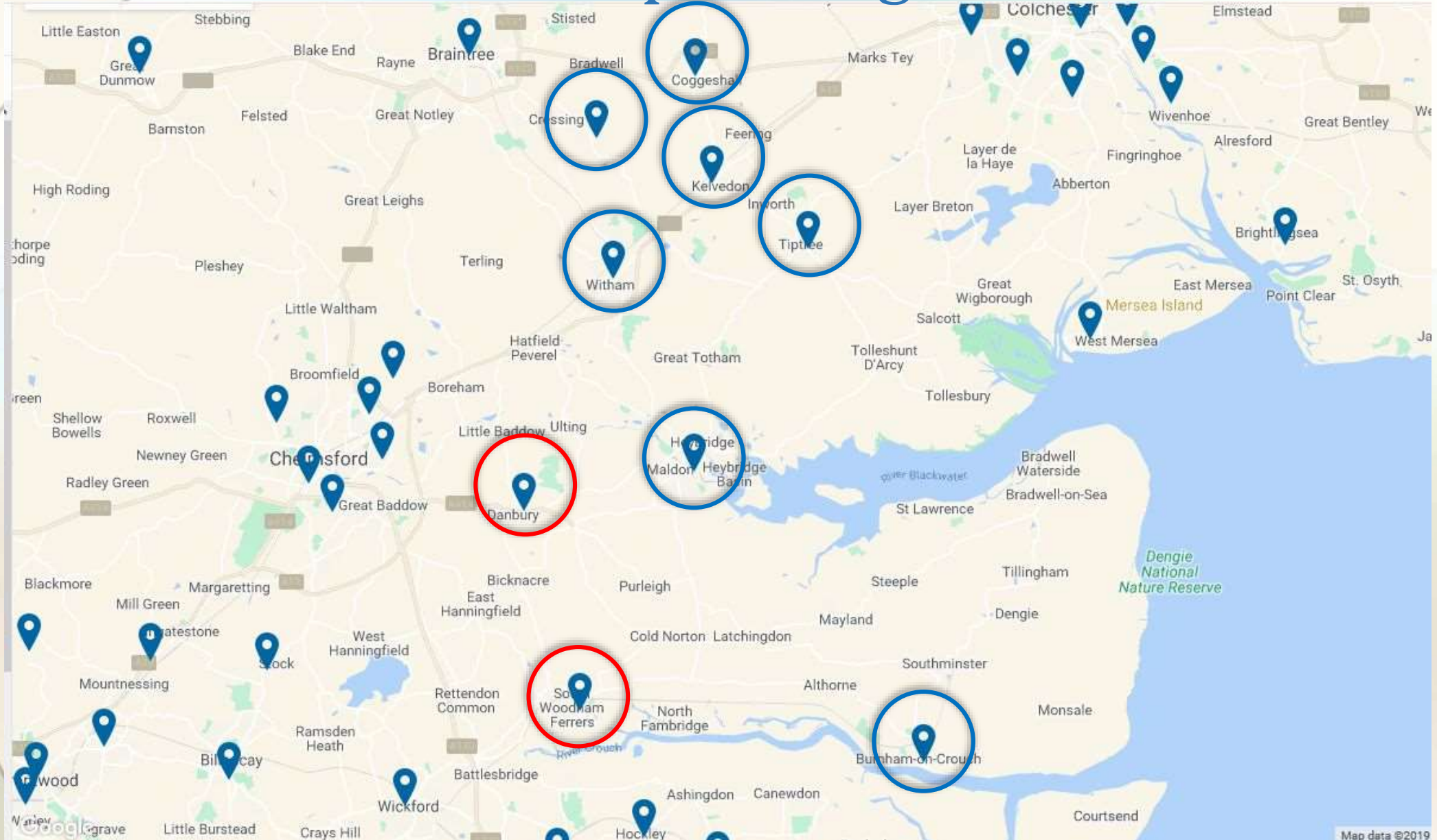
**9) Prayer and spirituality**  
(prayer is an art learned through constant practice)

**10) Priests and people**  
(bridging the gap)

**11) Vocations**  
(discipleship, discussion, discovery)

**12) Young people**  
(BCYS move to Abbotswick)

# Our Parish Partnership – Dengie & Blackwater



Catholic Parish of English Martyrs, Danbury with Holy Trinity, South Woodham Ferrers – Stewards of the Gospel

# Overview of our Parish Partnership

Dengie & Blackwater - a very well spread rural area

## Today

- 4 priests
- 12 Sunday Masses
- 9 Mass Centres
- 5 Parishes
- 2 Church Halls
- 5 presbyteries

## In future

- 2 priests (interim +1)
- How many Masses?
- How many Mass centres
- How many parishes?
- How can we best use the Halls?
- How many presbyteries will we need?

The maximum distance between Mass centres within our Parish Group is 25 miles. Google Maps says that it takes 45 minutes to drive it – 2 hours by bicycle or 7 and a half hours walking.

# So what limits have been set?

## And what flexibility do we really have?

- **Hard limits (What can't we change?)**
  - Scope of the parish group.
  - Number of priests in the final plan.
- **What we are being encouraged to consider as a minimum**
  - Merging parishes (on existing or different boundaries)
  - Collaboration and sharing between parishes – especially for the secular life of the Parish.
  - Better use of other resources (presbyteries, halls etc.) – including selling or letting underused property.
  - Maximizing sacramental provision with limited resources (Mass times and locations)
- **Possible (but only if we want it and can justify it to the Bishop himself)**
  - Closing existing Mass centres
  - Building new Mass centres (See example given by Steve Webb as Scenario 3)



# A few other considerations

- **Who owns Church property?**  
E.g. If we sell or let our presbytery in SWF in the future then who gets the benefit?
- **Canon Law**  
Some possible actions (such as closing a Mass centre) are governed by Canon Law and need the Bishop's active permission to ensure that specified criteria are met.
- **LEP – Holy Trinity**  
We are due some additional guidance on reorganization and potential impact on LEPs from the Diocesan team. However this is still not available yet.
- **Where to get more information**
  - Go to the report on the diocesan website, read it and also follow up on all the weblinks embedded within it. Listen to the Bishop's message from November – also on the website.

# Moving forward

- Publication of Vision Document                      Advent 2018
- Disseminating the Vision to the parishes                      Now
- Working within Parish Groups to prepare a plan                      2019
- Draft plans produced                      End 2019
- Submission of final plan to Bishop                      Easter 2020 (latest)
- Review and approve                      ??
- Implementation                      2020 onwards but ...

Note that if we lose a priest from the group from now onwards they are very unlikely to be replaced until we are down to 2!

# Ask yourselves - What can I do?

- We are all a part of this. Everyone has a part to play.
- There will be more formal meetings with myself, Pauline, Fr James and others.
- Anyone involved in running any Church organization or event should consider talking to their counterparts in our partner parishes – just to get to know them.
- We should consider inviting members of our partner parishes to our social events
- We need ideas. The Bishop urges us to be bold, to reach high and to be creative in our solutions. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas. If you have any constructive suggestions then let Pauline or I know (or Fr James after he returns)
- Consider attending Mass at one of our partner parish churches one week – especially if for any reason you cannot get to your usual Mass centre – and make sure you introduce yourselves to the Priest and others.
- If you meet anyone from a partner parish visiting us in English Martyrs or Holy Trinity then please make them feel welcome!

# And finally ...

- Nothing will happen to our Parish in the short term (2019) except the planning process.
- Implementation *may* happen slowly. The Bishop appears to be talking about not replacing priests when they move on rather than actively taking them away.
- Implementation *can* happen quickly as well – if we want it to. If we see real benefits in moving quickly in some planned areas then we will get support to do so.
- In the end, within certain limits we already know, the Bishop has put us back in control of our own destiny. So let us take the opportunity presented and make sure we continue to have a thriving parish in the years to come.

# Questions and Feedback

Pauline Spratt, Steward of the Gospel