



# The Coventry Sacred Space Initiative

Throughout Coventry, the 'Sacred' can and does manifest in many and in different ways

## The Coventry Sacred Space Initiative



Two parts

- To honour and celebrate Coventry's 'arrivals hall' for communities in need of sanctuary and a new home.
- A space for creativity, hope and healing, where enterprise and industry is incubated and cultivated by all.



## The Coventry Sacred Space

Provides a specific area of Coventry where people as pilgrims can experience 'the sacred' by the stimulation of their senses and through them experiencing stillness, joy, and wonder.



In harmony with Nature



Within 5 years  
A Plastic Free Zone

## The Sacred Space can be extended



By establishing 'pathways' along roads such as Foleshill Road or along the Coventry canal.

By identifying 'Islands' such as the Memorial Park or Myton Hospital.

By developing a Coventry Sacred Space 'App'.

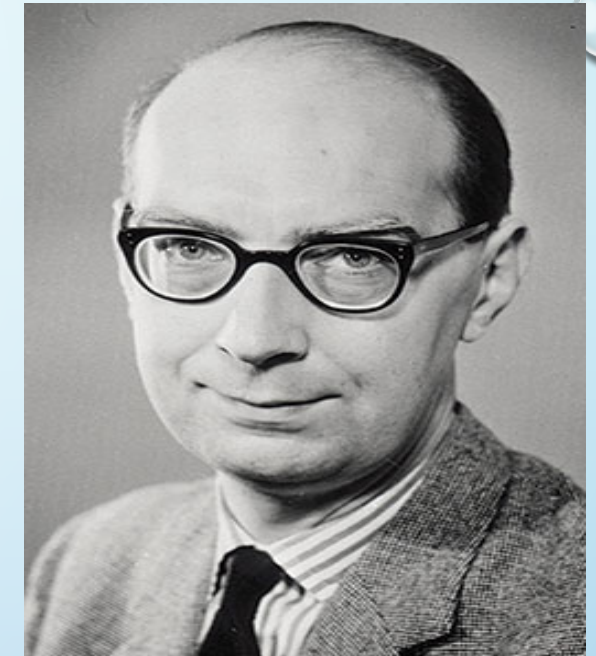
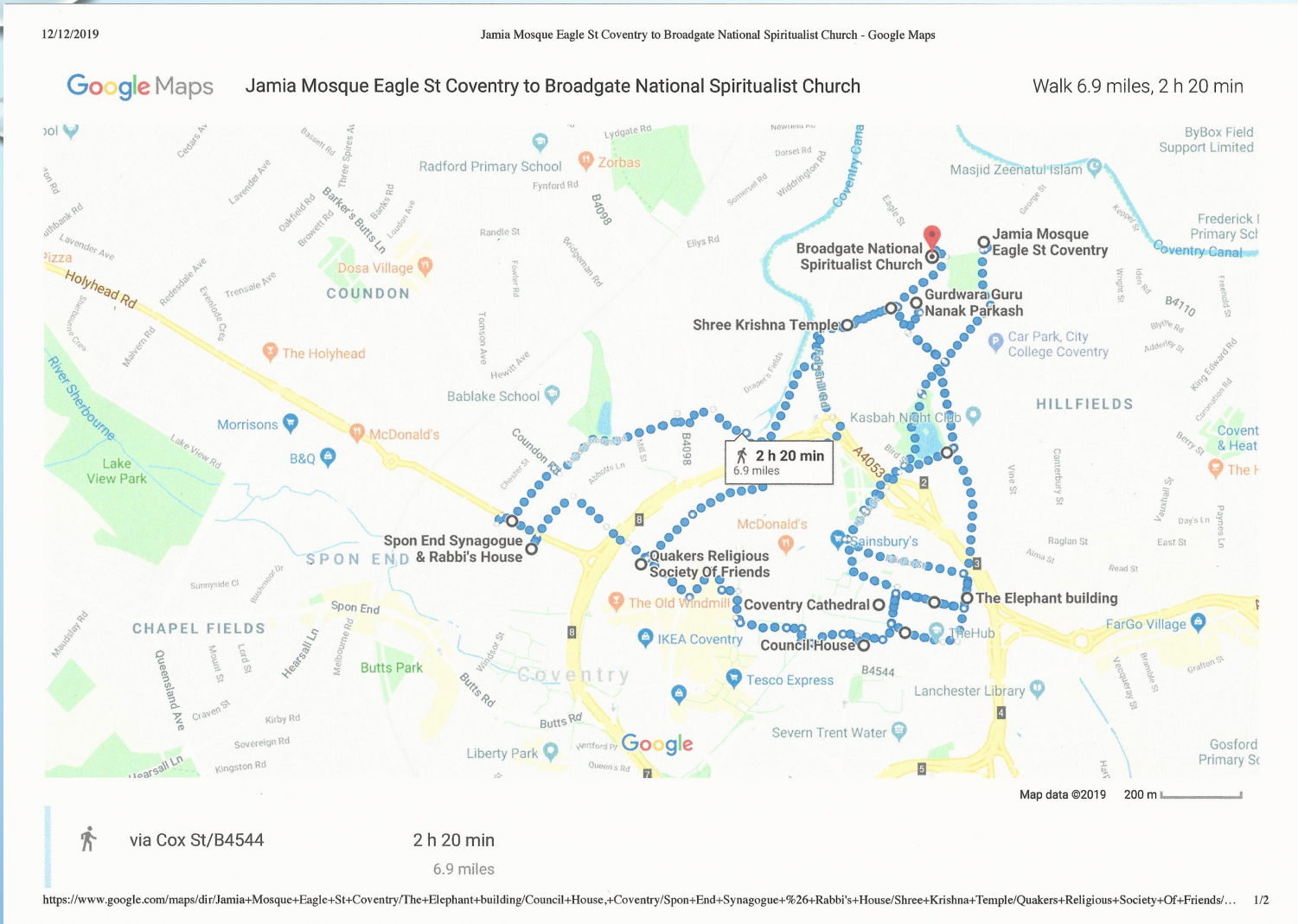
## What's makes the area special

The space –

- is historic e.g. the Swanswell Pond and Park – 12<sup>th</sup> century monastery.
- Is known to welcome communities in need of sanctuary or are vulnerable.
- is a nest for 12 places of worship, at least one, from different religions.
- is fondly remembered as ‘playgrounds’, ‘safe space’, ‘growing up’ area
- is a home for the least able and most vulnerable in society.
- is home to healing and health with the largest hospital in Coventry
- is rich with Coventry’s heritage e.g. Cathedral, Lady Godiva at the centre
- is renowned with characters e.g. Phillip Larkin roamed and talked of the area

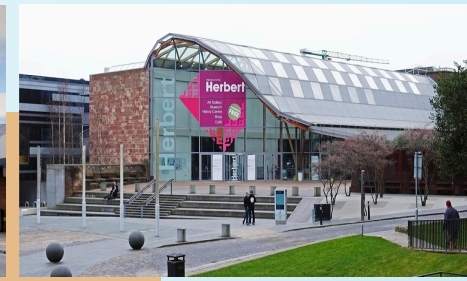


# The Coventry Sacred Space Area



## The Coventry Sacred Space Area Includes

- The 3 Spires of Coventry, (technically 2)
- Places of Worship from Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish and Pagan tradition
- Transport Museum, Lady Herbert's Garden, Volgograd Place, Swanswell Park
- Old Council House, Sidney Stringer Academy, The Coventry Elephant, The Canal Basin,
- Coventry College Herbert Art Gallery Eden Girls School Belgrade Theatre.
- Evening Telegraph, Coventry Building Society, The University of Coventry, Friends House,
- Central Library Square Refugee & Migrants Centre Lady Godiva and Peeping Tom
- Coventry NHS Hospital Trust. The Pool Meadow Coventry Baha'i & Zoroastrian community



## Tragically, the area also

- Highest level of deprivation in the West Midlands
- Low esteem, living standards, housing & amenities
- Low levels of educational achievement
- More people with poor physical and mental health
- High rates of crime and knife crime



## Challenges

## Opportunities

- Coventry's welcome Mat for centuries
- High levels of energy from people
- High level of hope
- Mostly young demographic
- Innovation and adaptation





**To change and make a real difference,  
we need to act together**

## Well-being, Health, Sports



PHOTO BY WILFREDO BENITEZ

### LABYRINTH

"THE MORE IN TOUCH I BECOME  
WITH THE BEAUTY OF EACH STEP,  
THE LESS AGITATED I FEEL ABOUT  
THE LENGTH OF THE TRAVEL."

~ REV. WILFREDO BENITEZ



MOON GATE OPTION A: PAINTED STEEL



MOON GATE OPTION B: STONE AND CONCRETE

A Gateway into the Sacred Space  
Perhaps this could be located near the  
Swanswell Park entrance from the Ring  
road into the Park.

A pathway of discovery  
that re-invigorates  
and heals individuals  
to recovery and well-  
being



A Mandala could be made of natural  
plants and foliage, and a hanging wall.

Making it change with season, dynamic  
with colour and easy to maintain.

Well-being, Health, Sports

To change and make a real difference, together we need to act,



Places of Worship and Community Centres

Create a register of places of worship & community assets, with their resources.

Identify needs of people, users and others



Support the assets to adapt and change to meet need & expectations.

Thereby improve health, promote cohesion, share good practise and celebrate the sacred,



Enterprise, Regeneration, Business

To change and make a real difference, together we need to act



**Plastic Free** - support charity and voluntary organisations to stop using items such as plastic plates, cups, spoon.... Nationally, many places of worship are actively exploring opportunities to become plastic free, attract the ‘plastic free’ social enterprise to the area.

**The Coventry Green Charter**



Swanswell Park and Pool, This historic pool has been here since the 12th century and was probably first created as a medieval monastic fishpond.

Largest pool of water near the City Centre, lets make a Coventry asset attracting tourist, students business.

Safety, Crime Prevention, Solidarity

To change and make a real difference, together we need to act,

Neighbourhood Watch for Places of Worship (New Model)

People from different religions learning, planning and delivering projects together.

Incubate and nurture a caring and protective relationship to reduce crime, promote a sense of pride and increase prosperity locally.

One Coventry – 60 years ago

Highlight stories of how the different faith communities historically supported each other financially and by offering labour/materials and joy.



Knowledge, Education, Training

To change and make a real difference, together we need to act



### Student and Tourist Pack

The goal is to offer students and others in Coventry the opportunity to explore Gurudwara, Masjid, Mandir and Churches in the City and gain a deeper understanding of these religions and how they are lived.

Faiths Encounter training programme. This would help ensure places of worship are resourced with set of people from their community are skilled and resourced to explain their religious beliefs and practice to new students and visitors from school visits.



Kinetic Sculpture – situated in a prominent location would be visually amazing, mind inspiring and an attraction for tourist.



## Culture, Arts, Movement

To change and make a real difference, together we need to act,



Art that contains movement perceivable by the viewer or that relies on motion for its effect—this is the definition of kinetic art.

While the definition explains the practical notion, it doesn't emphasise the hypnotic capabilities of the art-form.



A magnet that attracts students, people, communities, visitors together

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## Examples Methods to bind the Sacred Space together



The Cathedral has installed large round stones at the base of the steps. This could be developed into a string like feature linking one place of worship to another

A location where the sacred, spiritual and natural are discovered, enjoyed and preserved.



A pathway of discovery that re-energizes and heals individuals to recovery and well-being



## Annual Religious Square Mile Walk

### A Golden Rule Walk

At key points a Golden Rule could be displayed, thereby communicating the unity of different religions.



People, tourist are able to discover their local environment, share memories of the city & uncover the stories that other people had left behind.



# The Coventry Sacred Space Area -

Mosque Eagle St Coventry to Broadgate National Spiritualist Church - Google Maps

## Zones

Coventry Exchange Centre

You for ever – Hologram Experience

A Senseless Centre

The Coventry Climate Hub

Green Gym for the Body

Shared Sacred Space

Green Gym for the Mind

Coventry Sacred Mile

Delivering Change Together

Swanswell Family Fun



Walk 6.9 miles, 2 h 20 min

2 h 20 min  
6.9 miles



via Cox St/B4544

2 h 20 min

6.9 miles

## List of supporting organisations & bodies

- Coventry City Council
- Coventry Cathedral/Diocesan
- Together in Action
- Jamia Masjid
- Shree Krishna Temple/Mandir
- Guru Nanak Gurudwara
- Coventry Muslim Forum
- Coventry SACRE
- National Spiritualist Church
- Coventry Quakers

- Eden Girls School
- Vagdia and Holmes Architects
- Coventry Earth Spirit
- Black Environment Network
- West Midlands Police
- United Religions Initiative  
❖ (UK and Europe)
- Strengthening Faith  
Institutions
- Coventry Community Forum
- Coventry Multi-Faith Forum

- Voluntary Action Coventry
- Baha'i Community
- Zoroastrian Community
- University Hospitals Coventry  
and Warwickshire
- Coventry and Warwickshire  
Humanists
- Coventry Interfaith Group
- Coventry Unitarian Church

## Credible Sources of funding

- Lottery Sources (Heritage, Arts, Sports and Community)
- Community Organisations
- National Government Programmes e.g. (Home Office, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Health and Social Care)
- Agencies e.g. (Canals and Rivers Trust  
Landfill Environmental bodies e.g. (Veolia, FCC Community Action Fund)

- Coventry Council/University
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Local Business e.g. (Sainsbury, Halfords)
- Sports England
- Seven Trent Water

**Adopt** projects into your organisation's developments plans

**In kind:** your time - working groups, help with administration, making applications, business plans/budget & resources such as office space, equipment, host workshops

## Ten USP's - Coventry Sacred Space Initiative

1. is broad based and is community led from the grass roots
2. is beneficial for the whole of Coventry
3. is multifaceted e.g. sports, health, cohesion, art, culture, economic regeneration...
4. is current, e.g. climate change, environment & nature are at the core of change
5. is innovative and exciting
6. is a new 'sacred space' model, therefore for others to replicate
7. is flexible and can grow incrementally over time
8. is sustainable (does not require long term core funding)
9. is able to compliment existing development plans for the City
10. is owned and has the blessings of a diverse range of religious organisation

### Changing Society

- *More people teetotal*
- *Less consumption of meat*
- *Concerned about climate*
- *More time for self*
- *Living longer*
- *Tackle isolation and loneliness*

## Conclusion

The Coventry Sacred Space can act as a spring board for One Coventry and will be an enduring legacy for the City of Culture to consider, embrace and help realise.

Internationally the City of Coventry is known as the City for Peace and Reconciliation.

The Coventry Sacred Space can be an example of how it manifests and impacts in the lives of people who reside, visit, study and work in Coventry.



## Signs of Our Coventry's Success within 5 years

Coventry  
Sacred Space

- Brown signs leading up to the Coventry Sacred Space
- The area having a 'life' of its own
- Attractive for new start ups & small business, range of activity for all, it's a fun place to be.
- Coventry residents outside the area making a deliberate choice to visit the area and having pride in its existence – sense of belonging and ownership
- The area continuing to be a gateway for people in need of a sanctuary and a home
- Improved living conditions with low rate of crime, higher level of educational attainment, entrepreneurship and employment
- The City, the region visited by others, how the area (model) could/can be copied, to suit their needs
- After 5 years, new plans and ambition to manifest the sacred in oneself, between one and another, our communities, environment and nature

Thank you. Any questions?

*For further information, please contact*

*Deepak Naik, Together in Action [deepak.naik@ntlworld.com](mailto:deepak.naik@ntlworld.com) or*

*Mohammed Bashir, Coventry City Council –  
[Mohammed.Bashir@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Mohammed.Bashir@coventry.gov.uk)*

Next steps

Together we can



Together we can

## The Summit

Ensure local communities, leaders and activists of Places of Worship and other stakeholders in the area and Coventry are engaged meaningfully in the design, purpose and product of The Coventry Sacred Space Initiative.

Date: Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020  
Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm followed by lunch  
Venue: To be confirmed

**Together we can**



We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference.

Nelson Mandela

quotation

## Our Goal for 2020,

- to produce a Business Plan
- to establish the delivery vehicle or method to deliver successfully the Initiative

February – October 2020 (9 months)



Delivery Body  
(Governance Model)

Consult,  
Learn and  
Imagine

Create and  
Design

Craft and  
Install

Review &  
take  
remedial  
action

Launch the Coventry  
Sacred Space Initiative  
during interfaith week  
8 – 15  
November 2020

Content - what is it that we  
want to do

Field visits  
&  
Workshops

Application  
&  
Meeting

Test  
&  
Practice

Measure  
&  
Tailor

## Delivering the Business Plan & Legal/Delivery Body

### Tasks Groups

Group One: charged to assemble the Legal body.  
- how the body will function: accountability, transparency, effectively

Group Two: charged to explore how the impact of initiative could be marketed positively for the City and the region

Group Three: charged to design/create the initiatives marketing, publicity and communication strategy and select/acquire the necessary tools.

### Core Themes

1: Well-being, Health & Sport

2: Enterprise, Regeneration, Business

3: Culture, Arts & Movement.

4: Safety, Crime Prevention & Solidarity

5: Knowledge, Education & Training,

6: Plastic Free plus, ambition, within 5 years the area practising behaviour that is climate & nature friendly

7: Threading the Sacred Space together. E.g. projects and street furniture, features

### Projects

Motivated people (Formally or Informally), organized people will/can develop basic ideas into concrete projects.

e.g. Heritage of the 60's

e.g. Faiths Encounter

e.g. Welcome Pack

e.g. Audit Places of Worship

e.g. Religious Square Mile

e.g. Sacred Space Centre

e.g. Community Heros

## Shaping the Coventry Sacred Space Initiative

### Dates for 2020

Safety and Security Workshop –  
February

Youth & Student workshops –  
March & July

Coventry half-marathon - April 5

Mini- Summit – Wednesday - June 17

Questionnaire Survey - July

Swanswell Festival & Street Games -  
August

Launch November Monday 9 November

### Key areas of work

#### Sacred Lunch - Monthly Update

- a theme will be highlighted, discussed with co-chairs update.
- an overall update of progress will be provided.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 12 noon start
- will help ensure our work remains accountable and open, to new ideas and people.

#### Sacred Friends

A network of people who have some past or present connection to the area and or are interested the initiative.

#### Business

- establish relationships with the business sector. Secure interest and their participation.

## Decisions and Approval

We like the idea of the Coventry Sacred Space and do support the Initiative.

We like the way forward as proposed and will support in its delivery

We request and urge the Coventry Safety & Security Group to continue anchoring the Initiative

We give permission to Together in Action Trust to make applications for funding and secure other resources.

- others can also submit applications however they must inform TIA before making an application.

We give permission to develop a Whats App Group – Coventry Sacred Space Initiative.

We request and promise to each other - to promote the Initiative in our community/organization and whenever opportunities occur.

We will email a supporting email for the Coventry Sacred Space Initiative.

We will consider making a financial donation/grant.

# Together we can

Warwickshire SACRE  
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education



Dear Mr. Naik

Thank you for agreeing to 'front our multi-faith project' called the Sacred Space Initiative.

Working with the diverse faith groups within this area we look forward to rejuvenating and revitalizing relationships and this area of the city  
SACRE would like to offer its support as per its statutory remit –the spirit and the letter.

We feel it is an important project that will develop our young peoples' interaction, understanding and relationships with the wider community.  
The potential to create a safe welcoming and spiritual place for all of us is amazing.

**Manjit Kaur**  
Co-Chair of SACRE

**Rocky Grove**  
Co-Chair of SACRE

**Chris Mellers**  
Co-Chair of SACRE

Hi Deepak

Great to meet with you today to hear about the Sacred Spaces concept.

I am happy for Voluntary Action Coventry to support the approach and to get involved as/when appropriate. I can see a role for VAC in supporting volunteer involvement in the various stages you outlined as well as VAC's offices being incorporated in the area as a safe and welcoming space for all.

Best wishes

Sue Ogle  
Chief Executive  
**Voluntary Action Coventry**

Dear Deepak

Thank you for the work you are doing on the Sacred Space initiative. It brings back to life a really important part of our tradition in the city working closely across different faith groups, in a way which extends it into the present context. As you know, we are challenged for capacity here in the Cathedral, but I would like to offer whatever support we can as we share in seeing this go forward: it has real potential to contribute to our character as the UK's only City of Peace and Reconciliation, and to make it a safe, welcoming, and wholesome place for all.

Every blessing

Joh

**The Very Revd John Witcombe MA MPhil**  
**Dean of Coventry**