Sacred Spaces, Resilient Places

an Investigation by BCU Architecture and Design Students into

Six Places of Worship

as Centres for Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience

Summer 2026



Nishkam Centre



Bull Street Quakers



Clifton Road Mosque



Cotteridge Church



St Christopher's Church



Bahu Trust

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Footsteps

Faiths for a Low Carbon Future

BCF

BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL OF FAITHS

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Ma. Angella C. Del Mundo

Investigation Coordinator

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AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Report Aims

This report aims to share the ways in which places of worship are and can be centres for climate resilience and adaptation within their communities. Through six evidence-based case studies, this report documents inspiring examples of places of worship acting as key community figures in response to social, environmental, and climate challenges. The project examines how places of worship already support everyday life and how they can be adapted to better serve communities in the future

Climate Emergency

Global & national

Globally, the Earth is in crisis. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) (2026) reports that 2015 to 2025 have been the hottest eleven years on record; extreme weather events around the world continue to devastate communities. Average world temperature has risen between 1.1 and 1.2 °C due to greenhouse gases emitted by human activities (UN Environment Programme, 2022). Across Europe this summer, wildfires burn and people are experiencing a season of extreme heat (ESA, 2026). In the United Kingdom, we are witnessing a shift in baseline weather patterns. The Met Office writes that 2025 concluded as the warmest year on record since 1884 (Kendall et al., 2026), the sixth time this milestone has been breached in the twenty-first century. This summer has seen intense heatwaves, resulting in more than 2700 excess deaths (Met Office, 2026) and more than 60% of England in drought (BBC News, 2026). Meanwhile, in the most recent decade (2016-2025), winters have become 13% wetter than 1961-1990, elevating systemic flood risks (Kendall et al., 2026).

In Birmingham

Birmingham declared a climate emergency in 2019, acknowledging the “catastrophic social and ecological impacts” of global warming (Birmingham City Council, 2019, p.1). Friends of the Earth (2025) state that Birmingham ranks as the top local authority in England for the highest number of priority neighbourhoods requiring targeted heat adaptation. Simultaneously, Birmingham faces threats for increased precipitation that causes recurrent surface water and river flooding (West Midlands Combined Authority, 2026). The human toll of this crisis manifests most strongly in the most vulnerable groups, leading to questions of climate justice.

The Role of Faith & Places of Worship

Climate justice

Climate justice is an integral concept in many faith traditions- manifesting as themes such as stewardship of the Earth, caring for the vulnerable and the interconnectedness between humans and nature. In the context of the climate crisis, faith communities and the places of worship that serve them are uniquely positioned to mitigate climate impacts (Bock, 2023). Places of worship are organically embedded in their local neighbourhoods, often tightly networking with public partners; it is this quality that allows places of worship to adapt quickly to extreme weather events.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) (2026) writes that there are five key principles to embed in action to reduce carbon emissions in Birmingham and the wider region. Among these principles are “place-based transition”, “fair and just transition” and “prioritising local influence” (WMCA, 2026, p. 13). Accordingly, places of worship can be valuable partners in working towards social and ecological resilience, from pooling community resources to empowering local voices.

Advocacy and education

Part of the role of places of worship includes advocating for and educating the communities they serve. Acting as trusted hubs, places of worship are able to breach the cultural disconnect present in mainstream, top-down climate movements (Rouse, 2025). Instead, these institutions can link climate advocacy to intersectional injustices such as fuel poverty, health inequalities, and housing deprivation. By mobilising faith spaces to educate communities about the climate crisis in an accessible, relatable way, we can bring about meaningful change.

Mutual aid

Beyond spreading awareness, faith networks can naturally evolve into hubs for mutual aid. Mutual aid refers to collective action undertaken by individuals with shared values, interests and needs, usually a local endeavour within the boundary of a neighbourhood, town or city (Wu et al., 2025). Based on a process of collective care, processes of mutual aid often emphasise inclusivity and build connection, ultimately seeking to build resilience within communities themselves, often on a voluntary or grassroots basis (Wu et al., 2025). As crises unfold, places of worship act as vital support systems, addressing socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities in their communities. By leveraging physical and social assets, places of worship can provide core services such as food distribution, localised energy efficiency advice and Warm Welcome Spaces (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager, 2013). Through these mechanisms, faith communities transform environmental stewardship into local resilience.

Religious values

Places of worship have a distinct ability to frame climate change in terms of moral duty whilst working practically to counteract its effects (Salter and Wilkinson, 2022). In Islam, humans are “khalifahs” (sacred trustees) of the Earth whereby disruption to the climate system is viewed as a theological imbalance (Green Muslims, 2024). Similarly, Christian “creation care” positions environmental stewardship as a moral obligation (Hulbert et al., 2020). In the Sikh faith, reverence for nature is seen as a sacred manifestation of the Divine, and climate action is viewed as a type of “sewa” (selfless service) (Singh, 2021).

The Six ‘Sacred Spaces, Resilient Places’ Case Studies

In Birmingham, among more than 700 places of worship, we situate our six case studies, based in wards from Handsworth to Cotteridge. These case studies are:

1. **The Nishkam Centre**: a Sikh faith-inspired organisation on Soho Road that provides a range of services including household energy audits and energy efficiency advice.
2. **Bull Street Quaker Priory Meeting Rooms**: located in the city centre and serving the Central England Area Quakers, the Room provide a model for sustainable building management and ethical supply chains.
3. **Clifton Road Mosque**: also known as the Al-Abbas Islamic Centre, this Shia Muslim congregation in Balsall Heath remains deeply committed to community empowerment through the provision of housing and education.
4. **The Cotteridge Church**: situated in South Birmingham, this church holds silver Eco Church status and has systematically lowered its operational footprint.
5. **St Christopher’s Church**: an inner-city Church of England parish that is home to the Springfield project, a children’s centre, and acts as a Place of Warm Welcome during winter.
6. **Bahu Trust:** a Sufi Muslim organisation that leads on Islamic environmental advocacy, combining physical retrofit efforts with faith-rooted education.

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Case Studies – Student based

The development of these case studies began with students at Birmingham City University (BCU) as part of their design and research initiative Collaborative Laboratory (Co.LAB). This programme brings together under and post-graduate students from multiple built environment disciplines to realise a live project, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and collaborative working (Birmingham City University, n.d.). Footsteps recognises the importance of engaging young people in climate justice; this collaboration empowered students to step forward into leadership roles and explore for themselves what it means to create sacred, resilient places.

The brief invited students to step inside a wide range of faith spaces over a ten-week period, studying both the physical space and their wider context to document existing undertakings and propose hypothetical design solutions that would increase the faith spaces' capacity to support their communities. Activities included site visits, brainstorming workshops and guest speakers from West Midlands Combined Authority, Cambridge Mosque and VCS Emergencies Partnerships.

The six case studies included in this report were developed by 25 BCU Architecture and Design students in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment. The students worked in six groups with a master's student as leader. The students in each group did not know each other beforehand and an important aspect of the Co.LAB was students developing collaborative working skills as well as the experience of working with Footsteps and the places of worship as external 'clients'. Working with Co.LAB students in this way was also part of Footsteps' policy of working with younger people in ways that contributed to their development as well as creating outcomes of value to Footsteps.

This report explores the insights into adaptation and resilience activities at the six places of worship through the eyes of the visually orientated architecture and design students. This work was complimented by Footsteps simultaneously developing a Framework for Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience in Places of Worship using a variety of sources from the extensive work adaptation and resilience work done elsewhere. The intention was to test the framework against the six case studies and to put the work into a wider context. An essentially 'place-based' approach has been taken in the project – investigating and trying to understand each place of worship in its local socio-economic context. It explores how activities are shaped by faith values. The lens of 'mutual aid' is used to understand how places of worship are part of their local communities.

Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA)

A key resource used by students was the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA) mapping developed by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in conjunction with researchers at the University of Birmingham (Zhong et al., 2024). The CRVA map identifies concentration of climate risks, including socio-economic vulnerability and exposure, allowing WMCA to categorise areas facing compounding risks due to climate change (Zhong et al., 2024). The international charity Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) granted Birmingham A-list city status in 2023 for its "transparency and bold climate action", an achievement in part aided by CRVA outputs (University of Birmingham, 2023).

Climate change does not affect all people and places equally. Vulnerable people may have less ability to cope with hazards and are more likely to be more negatively affected by climate change. Appendix 2 contains a WMCA and University of Birmingham schematic showing how climate change might impact on people in the West Midlands.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

Conclusions drawn from Six Case Studies

Investigating the six Places of Worship (PoWs) as 'Sacred Spaces' addresses a gap in the understanding of how pivotal PoWs are in building local climate resilience, reflecting faith values that drive social and community purposes. It also identifies how the PoWs were not particularly aware of the specific steps needed to become 'centres for climate adaptation and resilience'. The potential was real, though, as the six PoWs had the capacity to become 'centres'.

Students used their creative and design skills to suggest adaptation measures.

From physical adaptation processes (such as rainwater recycling, renewable energy, HVAC) to educational resources (Bahu Trust Guides to Climate Change, energy audits, Balsall Heath Retrofit) and social value (The Springfield Project, older adults' day centre, food banks, Warm Welcome Spaces), the six case studies demonstrate the myriad ways that PoWs support their communities when they possess the adaptive capacity to do so.

All six PoWs featured have a strong history of interfaith dialogue, helping to promote community cohesion and fostering understanding between diverse groups. Despite the challenges of under underutilisation and closure that many places of worship face, these six case studies demonstrate that faith communities are an immediately available resource already working to build local resilience and able to be further leveraged to help deliver community support.

The key conclusions that can be drawn from the six case studies are:

Faith Values:

- Investigating the six Places of Worship (PoW's) as 'Sacred Spaces' highlighted how the use of buildings reflected each community's faith values. The design of buildings reflected the architectural traditions of each faith. The buildings were beacons for faiths in their local communities.
- The use to which buildings were used also reflected faith values. As well as for worship in the different faith traditions, faith buildings were used social and local community purposes reflecting the priorities for each faith.

Local focus & Community Assets

- The place-based approach taken highlighted how the PoWs were focused on their own local neighbourhoods and communities.
- Four of the PoWs investigated were in areas of high social and economic deprivation and demonstrated the role of PoWs in combating poverty and developing social cohesion.
- The Cotteridge Church was in a more affluent south Birmingham ward and Bull Street Quaker Meeting had a 'city centre' location with challenges and opportunities.
- All PoWs demonstrated a significant community presence and a tradition of aid practices
- The place-based approach taken highlighted how the PoWs were focused on their own local neighbourhoods and communities.

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid:

- BCU academics introduced the students to the concept of 'mutual aid' as the 'collective action undertaken by individuals with shared values, interests and needs - usually a local endeavour within the boundary of a neighbourhood, town or city'.

- The investigation illustrated how the PoWs designed and used spaces and resources to support communities and enable cooperation without relying on outside authorities to always step in when problems arise.

Demographics and Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessments (CRVA)

- 4 of the 6 PoWs investigated were in areas of the highest CRVA total risk score.
- Socio-economic vulnerability, air pollutant concentration, lack of green space and building form, height and density were repeatedly identified as high-risk areas.
- The CRVA analysis, combined with the mutual aid orientation of PoWs highlights the potential of PoWs and faith communities to help address economic inequality and build local community resilience.

Conclusions related to Footsteps Climate Adaptation and Resilience Framework

- Separate from the student investigation, Footsteps developed a holistic framework (see Appendix 1) for ways in which PoW's can:
    - build adaptive and resilience capacity
    - implement specific mainly physical adaptation measures, and finally
    - become climate resilient communities with the ability to cope with and recover from climate shocks.
- The framework was used as 'check list' for the adaption and resilience findings in the case studies. This demonstrated that the strengths of the PoWs lay with their adaptive capacity and adaptation measures implemented.
- No evidence was found that PoWs were particularly aware of the specific steps needed to become 'centres for climate adaptation and resilience'. The potential was real, though, as the six PoWs had the capacity to become 'centres'.
- Students used their creative and design skills to suggest adaptation and resilience steps each PoW could take addressing the specific threats the CRVA suggested.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Just six of the over 700 Places of Worship in Birmingham were investigated. They are examples of 'mature' PoWs with well-developed presences in their local communities. They are typical of other large Birmingham PoWs such as Green Lane Mosque, Muath Trust, Lozells Methodist Church and Shri Ram Mander that played key roles during the Covid pandemic. This investigation demonstrates that Places of Worship in Birmingham have a similar potential to step up to the challenge of the climate emergency.

The following recommendations offer a non-exhaustive, practical roadmap for supporting the 700+ PoWs in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands area to become pillars of regional climate resilience. Further considerations include the application of learning from this investigation to other PoWs, especially those with presence in critical areas.

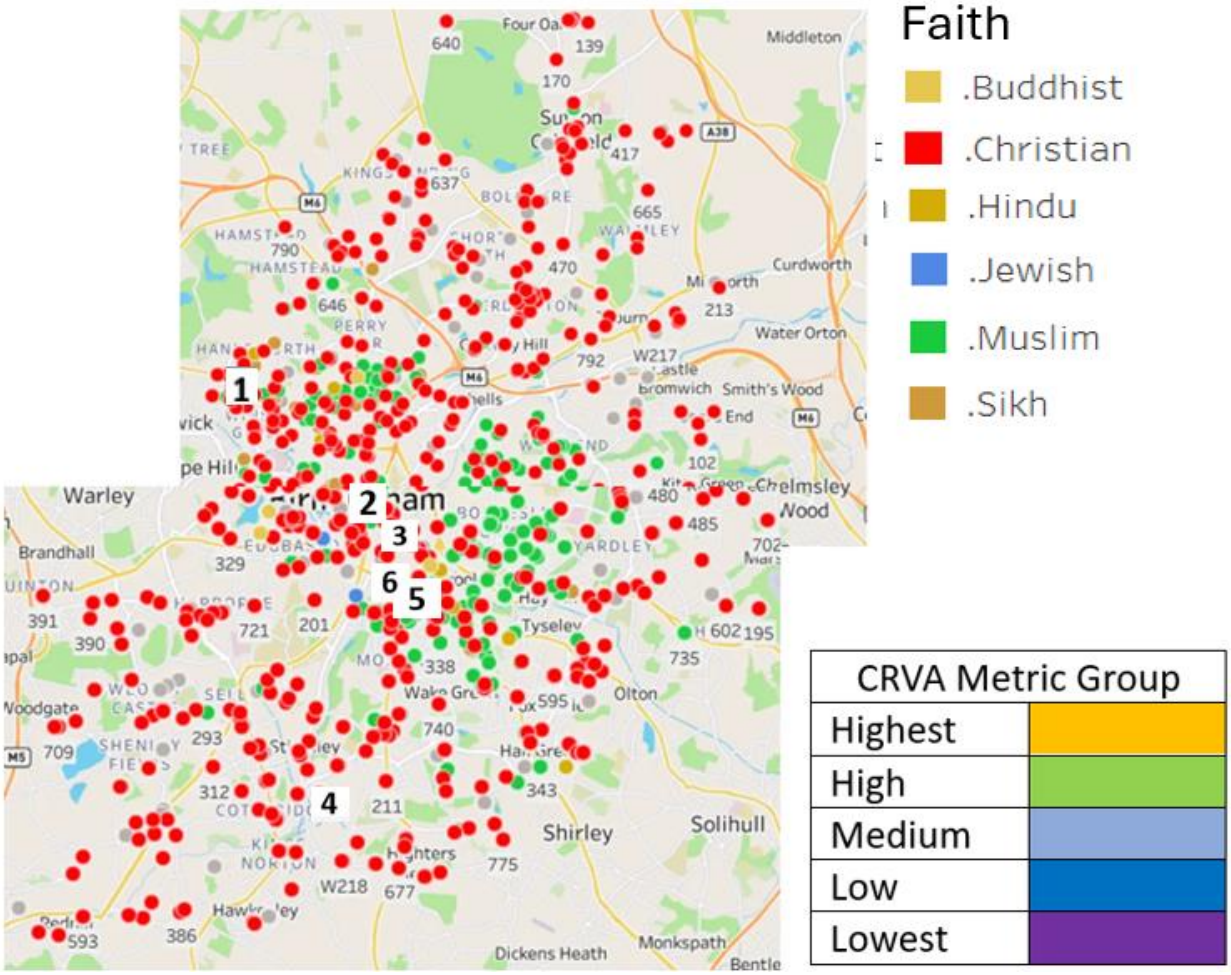
For Local Authorities and West Midlands Combined Authority:

- **Formally integrate PoWs and other community groups into emergency planning and adaptation strategies** through the creation of an action plan/ policy that outlines an engaged climate resilient response
    - This could include mapping PoWs based on physical capacities (e.g. renewable energy, kitchens, gathering space) in order to designate qualified PoWs as cooling hubs or evacuation centres
    - Make Footsteps faith community map accessible to help target priority areas
- **Establish grant and support schemes for 'Faith-Sector Climate Resilience'** that aid less well-resourced PoWs in completing physical adaptation measures from insulation to help keep buildings cool in summer and warm in winter to retrofit to clean energy and also help better-resourced PoWs to continue delivering essential community services.
    - It is crucial to identify and prioritise PoWs with a significant presence in areas most affected by climate risks in the West Midlands when it comes to allocating grants or funds.
- **Provide support to scale interfaith climate toolkits and facilitate peer-to-peer learning** to boost climate literacy and resilience across the region. This could include supplying expertise and resources to help PoWs' promote existing activities/ community events and access funding for further climate action.

For Places of Worship and faith leaders:

- **Regularly review your PoW's and community's vulnerability** to severe weather events, including heavy rainfall, flooding, heatwaves and wildfires.
- **Establish a plan for supporting your community and congregation** ahead of, during and after severe weather events.
- **Integrate physical adaptation measures into PoW building improvements** that protect it from future severe weather events. These could include measures like: water butts and rain gardens to improve drainage, increase vegetation that offers protection from hotter, concrete urban environments and shading for communities to escape the heat.
- Participate in local cooperative faith-based action by forming **complementary networks of local PoWs**, providing reciprocal support and sharing resources.
- **Develop a disaster plan** tailored to the site and local community, including staff and volunteer training, in the event of a local climate emergency.
- As part of this, enhance local communication and engagement channels to raise public awareness of PoWs as climate resilience hubs offering support services.

PLACES OF WORSHIP INVESTIGATED



There over 700 PoWs mapped on the Faith Community map. The six investigated are shown above. Nishkam (1) is on the borders with Sandwell, Cotteridge Church (4) is in the south west of the city and the other four are inner city. They each have a different CRVA risk profile.

	Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA) risk profiles for:	Faith	Ward	OVERALL Total Risk Scorer	Waterway flood risk	Air Pollutant Concentration	Lack of Large Open spaces	Summer Air Temperature
1	Nishkam Centre	Sikh	Handsworth					
2	Bull Street Quaker Meeting	Christian - Quaker	Ladywood					
3	Clifton Road Mosque	Muslim – Shia	Balsall Heath East					
4	Cotteridge Church	Christian – Ecumenical	Bournville & Cotteridge					
5	St Christophers Church	Christian – Anglican	Sparkhill					
6	Bahu Trust Mosque	Muslim - Sufi	Sparkbrook & Balsall H S					

NISHKAM CENTRE

….. as a 'Sacred Space'



Nishkam Centre: faith-inspired charity centre completed in 2006
18-20 Soho Road, Handsworth, Brighton B21 99H

Core Religious Values:
Sikhism emphasises seva (selfless service), equality, community, langar (free kitchen), humility, and stewardship of creation.

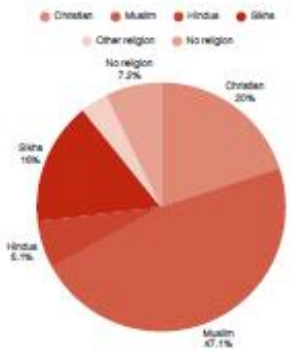


Members partaking in langar.

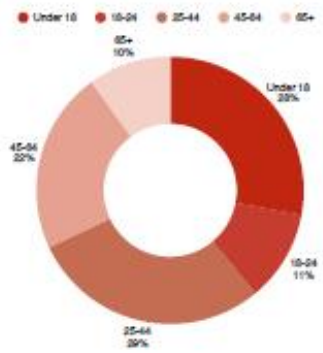
The gurdwara's langar hall is the clearest architectural expression of Sikh values; feeding visitors equally, regardless of background. The prayer hall uses non-hierarchical seating, reflecting equality and humility. Community rooms, teaching spaces, and volunteer kitchens embody seva and collective responsibility. Sustainability measures, solar panels, ethical food sourcing, and gardening, express Sikh stewardship. The building's openness and accessibility reflect Sikh inclusivity and universal welcome.

Local Demographics

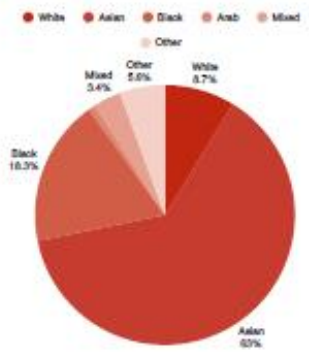
HANDSWORTH: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



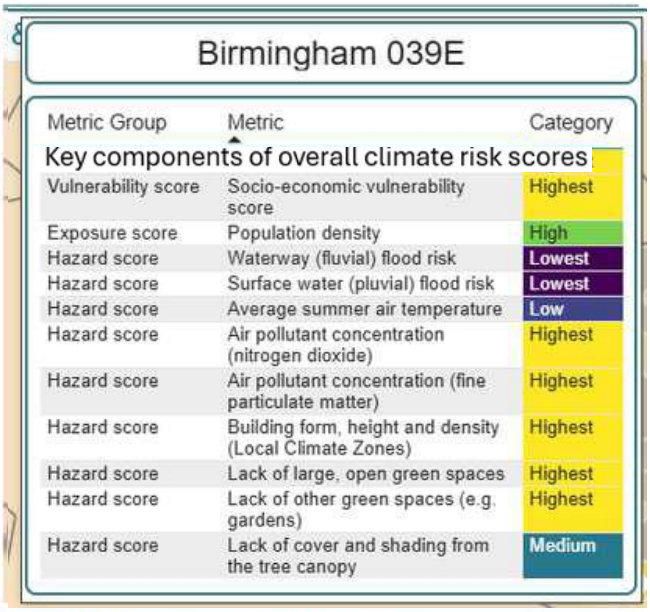
Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)



Birmingham 039E

Metric Group	Metric	Category
Key components of overall climate risk scores		
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Highest
Exposure score	Population density	High
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Low
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	Highest
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	Highest
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	Medium

West Midlands Combined Authority (2023)



Key CRVA risks

Handsworth is an inner-city area of Birmingham with a youthful and diverse population- 39% of residents are under 24 and over 91% of residents are ethnic minorities. 16% of Handsworth residents are Sikh. The neighbourhood faces deep economic deprivation and is currently the 3rd most deprived ward in Birmingham in 2025, a significant increase from 16th place in 2019 (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis



SITE IMAGES



1. Nishkam Centre



2. St Michael's Church



3. Garden beds



4. Timber Co-operative

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) and its associated Nishkam Centre are grounded in the foundational Sikh concept of Nishkam sewa (selfless service). Guided by this, GNNSJ operates a system of mutual aid that includes the Nishkam School Trust, a health centre, a timber merchant co-operative and the traditional langar (community kitchen), serving 25,000 free meals a week (Nishkam Media Centre, 2025).

The volunteer-run health centre provides free dental care (Nishkam Healthcare Trust, 2026), whereas the timber merchant, originating from the 1980s recession in Birmingham, provides local employment. The Nishkam Centre provides a wide range of support from Macmillan cancer services, English & IT classes, and antenatal classes to being a warm hub.

A notable programme is the "Community Safety Net" project, which empowers vulnerable families within a one-mile radius through language support and welfare advice (Nishkam Centre, 2024).

Sustainability at the Nishkam Centre has a dual focus: creating a resilient building and extending support towards the wider neighbourhood. The centre has installed solar panels that help them avoid over 5 tonnes of CO_2 emissions whilst converting over 388 lighting fixtures to energy-efficient LED systems (Nishkam Centre, 2024). At the same time, they deliver the Energy Redress Project under the Birmingham Community Action Network, conducting home energy-efficiency assessments and advising on energy grants for low-income households (Nishkam Centre, 2024).

CORE ACTIVITIES

Faith Services
Daily prayers
Kirtan (devotional music)
Sikh festivals and celebrations
Spiritual education

Social & Community Services
Langar (free meals)
Food distribution
Support for vulnerable families
Youth programmes
Elderly support
Interfaith events
Volunteering networks

Education & Culture
Nishkam School Trust (several schools in Birmingham)
Music and Punjabi classes
Leadership programmes
Peacebuilding workshops



Guests with Bhai Sahib Ji paying obeisance to Sri Guru

Interfaith Leadership
GNNSJ is a founding member of:
Birmingham Council of Faiths
Faiths for a Low Carbon Future (Footsteps)
Nishkam Civic Association
They frequently host:
climate justice events
interfaith dialogues
community resilience workshops

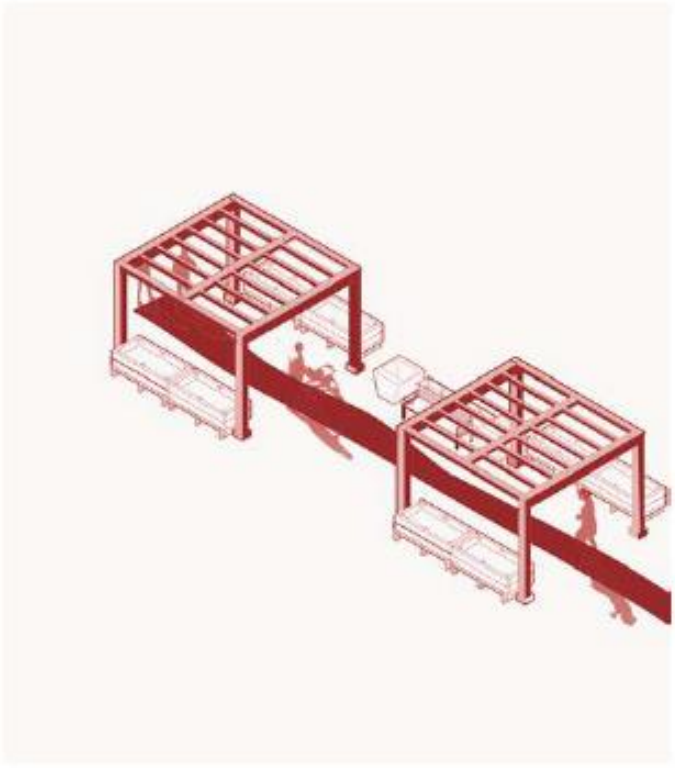
ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE ANALYSIS

Leadership	GNNSJ has already demonstrated its leadership through its strong focus on the local community, and social action, with sustainability being embedded in their wider aim. There is significant potential to build on the foundation of their existing initiative - this could include integrating climate and sustainability themes into the centre, sermons and festivals. This would help grow awareness of climate resilience while encouraging preparedness for emergencies and adaptation.
Ownership by Congregation	The local community at GNNSJ plays a major role in the Gurdwara's climate resilience by combining Sikh principles of seva with practical, community-focused environmental action. The gurdwara strengthens food security through its langar (which is run by volunteers from the congregation), providing reliable access to free meals that become essential during periods of crisis or economic strain. Its sustainability measures such as solar panels, ethical food sourcing, waste-reduction systems, and community gardening demonstrate also how the community can become more involved in making the Gurdwara operate more sustainably with a reduced carbon footprint. These measures form a strong foundation for future schemes to be encouraged, such as walking and cycling schemes
Community Network	GNNSJ's volunteer network is one of its strongest resilience assets, mobilising quickly during heatwaves, cold spells, or emergencies to support vulnerable residents. Alongside this, the organisation delivers climate-awareness education, collaborating with Footsteps and other partners to promote low-carbon living, environmental justice, and community preparedness. Together, these efforts position GNNSJ as a trusted, culturally rooted hub capable of supporting both immediate needs and long-term adaptation in a changing climate.
Financial Resources	GNNSJ benefits from congregational donations and fundraising, as well as the social value they have built up through community projects. In future, there is potential to participate in government schemes, local grants, landfill tax funding and other place-based opportunities, for which eligibility could be strengthened by identifying environmental and social outcomes.
Extreme Weather	GNNSJ can strengthen its adaptive capacity by combining practical building upgrades with community-led climate action. Climate themes could be integrated into sermons, study groups, and festivals to build awareness and encourage ownership of sustainability initiatives among the congregation. Establishing a dedicated green action group, developing partnerships with local organisations, and accessing external funding streams would help support long-term adaptation efforts. To improve preparedness for extreme weather, the proposal recommends creating a zoned heating system that allows individual rooms to be heated as required, improving both efficiency and comfort during cold snaps. Existing solar panels already support the building's electrical and heating systems, and additional measures such as replacing gas stoves with electric alternatives, investing in solar energy storage, and maintaining building systems regularly would further increase the Centre's ability to operate effectively during periods of disruption and changing climate conditions.
Outdoor Space	increasing green space and biodiversity is an essential opportunity which will contribute to improving both environmental and air quality, and climate adaptation at GNNSJ. The Nishkam Centre is located in an area with limited green space, elevated extreme heat risks due to the urban heat island effect, and high air pollution. The proposal for a biodiversity-focused roof garden and planting native, pollinator-friendly species could be complemented by additional composting and allotment areas around the site. Further proposals for increasing green space include adding more shaded outdoor seating, introducing bird and bat boxes, insect habitats, and potentially bat friendly lighting, as well as climbing plants as shown in the coming pages. Implementing some of these proposals would help GNNSJ create a more biodiverse landscape, whilst providing natural shade, shelter and cooling. These improvements would not only enhance the Nishkam Centre's environmental/ecological value but also help create much more healthy and attractive outdoor spaces which can be enjoyed by the local congregation and wider community.

STUDENT PROPOSAL



Final Visual: car park allotment



Student group at site visit

The student group addressing GNNSJ and the Nishkam Centre designed a community allotment space at the front of the Gurdwara. The aim was to provide a local green space, reducing air pollutants and reliance on global supply chains by introducing a phased, low-cost, productive planting space. To support this, the students proposed the creation of a gardening club and seed bank inside the Nishkam Centre. This responded to the high socio-economic vulnerability in Handsworth by helping local residents to develop new skills, access nutritional food and encourage multigenerational access. In order to move towards zero food waste at the Gurdwara, a rainwater harvesting system and compost zone were recommended, with the intention of creating closed loop systems.

BULL STREET QUAKER MEETING

'….. as a 'Sacred Space'



Bull Street Quaker House: A local meeting, part of a regional group of Quaker Meetings called Central England Area Meeting, currently managed as a conference centre by The Priory Rooms. First building opened in 1702, present building in 1933.
40 Bull St, Birmingham B4 6AF

Quakerism Core Values:
Quakerism centres on peace, equality, simplicity, truth, and silent worship.

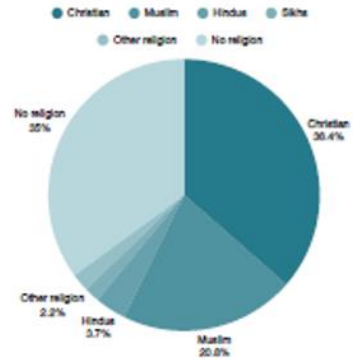


Interior picture of one of the rooms

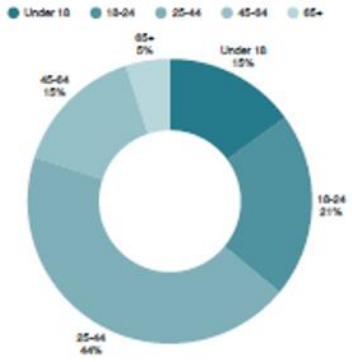
The Meeting House's architecture is intentionally plain, calm, and non-hierarchical, reflecting Quaker simplicity. The worship room has no altar, no clergy platform, and no religious iconography, expressing equality and direct spiritual experience. Natural light, uncluttered interiors, and quiet acoustics support stillness and reflection. Flexible rooms in the Priory Rooms embody Quaker commitments to community, justice, and openness, allowing charities, peace groups, and civic organisations to use the space. Quaker spaces are designed to be shared, flexible, and welcoming. The Priory Rooms and Peacehub host: charities, climate-justice groups, mental-health organisations, professional meetings.

Local Demographics

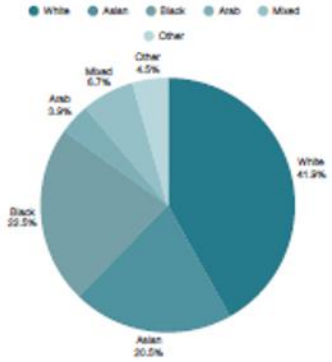
LADYWOOD: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)

Birmingham 138A

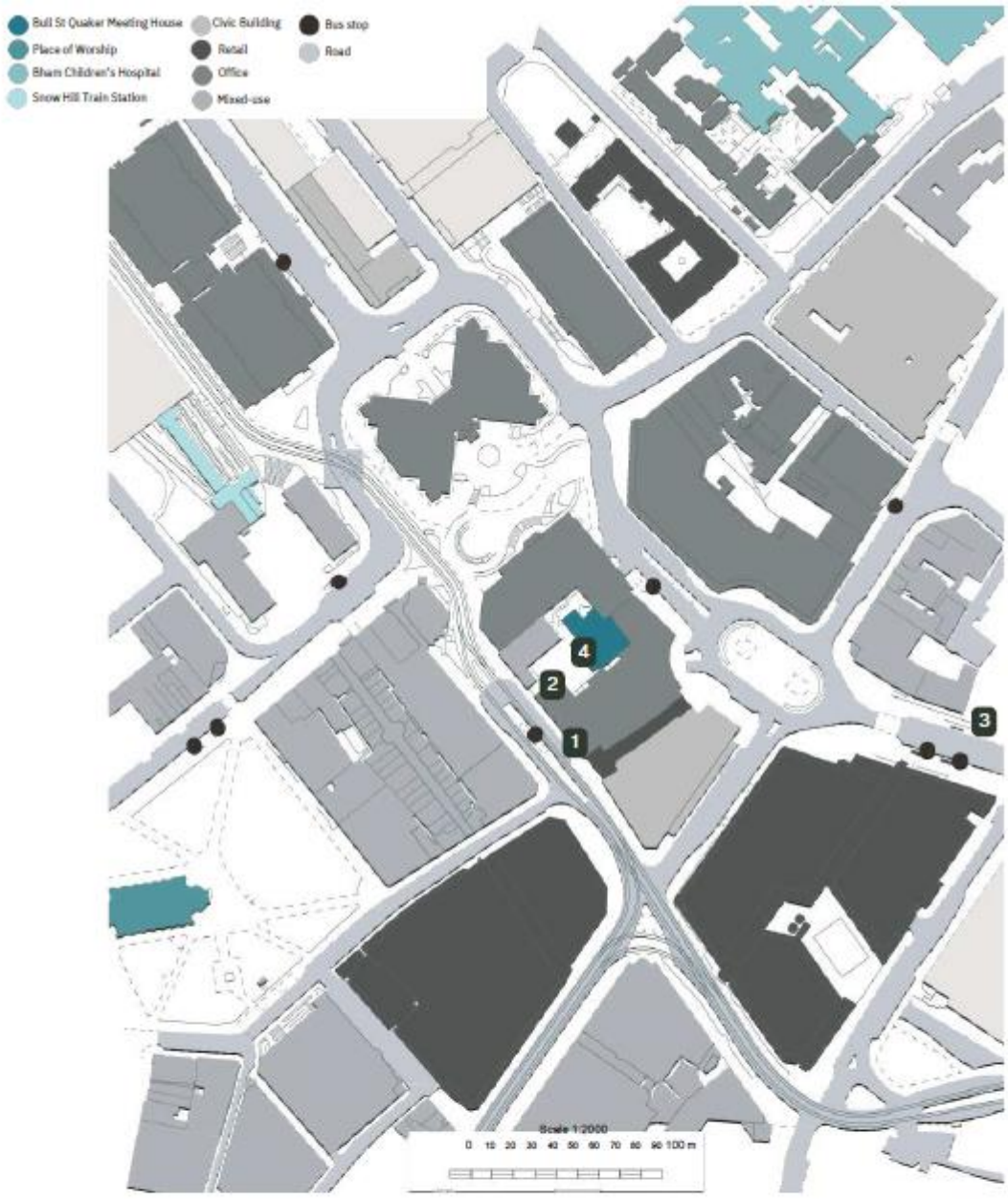
Metric Group	Metric	Category
Key components of overall climate risk scores		
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	High
Exposure score	Population density	Lowest
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Medium
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Low
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	Highest
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	High
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	High
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from	Highest



Key CRVA risks

Ladywood, located to the west of the city centre, is the 3rd most populated ward in Birmingham. While parts of Ladywood experience high deprivation, there is a high wealth contrast across the ward. Almost 30% of residents identify as Christian and around 60% of residents are ethnic minorities. The ward's central location attracts young professionals, driving the 18–44 age demographic to 65% (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis



SITE IMAGES



1. Metro Stop



2. Priory Rooms Entrance



3. The Priory Queensway



4. Priory Rooms

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

MUTUAL AID

The Priory Meeting Rooms, focused on values of stewardship and equality, functions as a not-for-profit enterprise. Beyond its religious role whereby the predominantly elderly congregation gathers for worship twice weekly, the Priory Rooms also operates the nearby Peace Hub. The hub focuses on peacebuilding, climate justice and community support (Peace Hub, 2015). The Priory Rooms subsidises room hire rates for grassroots networks, charities and non-profits, ensuring that local organising spaces remain affordable and accessible (Priory Rooms, 2026).

This presence reinforces the building's role as a flexible civic venue as well as a spiritual space.
The Priory Rooms supports mutual aid networks by donating excess food to Let's Feed Brum (a charity providing food for the homeless), supporting local supply chains (local catering and fair-trade refreshments) and donating trading profits to Central England Quakers to help fund community-focused projects (Priory Rooms, 2026).

Environmental responsibility is embedded into the architecture and governance of The Priory Rooms. The building operates a strict sustainability policy that aims to reduce unnecessary waste, energy and water consumption. Electricity is completely renewably produced from compost as part of a zero-waste-to-landfill infrastructure, nine water tanks collect rainwater on the roof and most recently, a HVAC system has been installed (Priory Rooms, 2026). An HVAC system is a network of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment that works together to regulate indoor temperature, clear out stale air, and keep buildings comfortable year-round (Travis Perkins, 2026).

CORE ACTIVITIES



Meeting with one of the members of the Quakers Meeting House

Adaptation and Resilience Analysis

Leadership	The Bull Street Quakers Meeting House already has an established presence in the community, and a strong ethos focusing on mutual aid and social responsibility. Whilst some aspects such as community capacity and parts of the building are underutilised, there is a good foundation for potential resilience initiatives in future. adaptative capacity could be strengthened by leadership by integrating climate resilience and sustainability themes into faith-based activities and community engagement, which would develop the Meeting House as a local resilience hub.
Ownership by Congregation	Members of the congregation contribute strongly through mutual aid, resource and skills sharing, and support. Other opportunities which the congregation can partake in that are environmentally beneficial include gardening and sustainable travel choices, which are particularly important as the Meeting House is located in the city centre. Growing the culture of participation is key, as it would allow the congregation to play a greater role in maintaining and improving the buildings green infrastructure, resilience initiatives and sustainable behaviours within the community.
Communit y Network	The Quakers Meeting House has already shown a strong commitment to sustainable practices through a combination of environmental improvements, community engagement, and low-carbon building management. The Meeting House has already invested in significant retrofit measures, including triple-glazed insulated windows, a new HVAC system, solar panels to support hot water provision, and nine rooftop rainwater tanks that collect water for toilet flushing and other non-potable uses. They also promote sustainable lifestyles by encouraging the use of public transport and community participation in maintaining local green spaces. Through partnerships such as the Springfield Project and the Black Country Wildlife Trust, the Quakers Meeting House actively supports biodiversity, growing food locally, and community stewardship. These practices reduce resource consumption, improve building efficiency, and demonstrate how a faith building in the city centre can contribute to climate adaptation and environmental sustainability whilst serving the wider community
Financial Resource	The Quakers Meeting House has demonstrated an ability to generate income through its asset management, such as leasing land and the sale of one of their buildings to provide revenue. This already creates a strong financial foundation for future adaptation and resilience projects, in addition to their fundraising and donations. future opportunities to strengthen their finances could include place-based funding schemes to further community wellbeing and climate resilience
Extreme Weather	The Quakers Meeting House is located in the city centre, which is heavily affected by the urban heat island effect and has been identified as having high heat vulnerability, therefore it is crucial to consider what further resilience and adaptation schemes could be implemented to tackle increasing summer temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events. One proposal that could be considered is the building could increase vegetation on its roof spaces to provide additional shade and cooling. As well as this, the buildings vulnerability to climate related disruption could be reduced by ongoing investment in energy efficiency and renewable technologies, in addition to the existing rainwater harvesting infrastructure provides a strong foundation. Enhancing year-round outdoor spaces and continuing to monitor indoor temperatures could also help maintain comfort during heatwaves, ensuring the building remains a welcoming and usable community asset in a changing climate.
Outdoor Space	Increasing green space and biodiversity presents one of the most significant adaptation opportunities for the Quakers Meeting House. Although outdoor space is limited, proposals include introducing vertical planters, bee shelters and bird feeders to create habitats for wildlife and pollinators. Revitalising the Secret Garden with the Black Country Wildlife Trust could transform part of the site into a more productive growing space, providing opportunities for food production, environmental education, and creative activities using natural dyes. These proposals would improve biodiversity, provide cooling benefits during extreme heat events, and contribute to improved air quality in the densely built city-centre, creating create a greener, healthier, and more climate resilient community space.

Student Proposal



Final Visual: Priory Room Secret Vegetable garden







Student Proposal for recycling centre and mural art wall to create a more welcoming space

The student group working on The Priory Meeting Rooms proposed a Secret Vegetable Garden, expanding on an existing initiative with Birmingham and the Black Country Wildlife Trust. Their intervention introduces vegetable planters to create a productive food-growing area. Because students initially found the garden intimidating to enter, they suggested adding community-made mural artwork to make the space more welcoming. They also recommended growing plants suitable for natural inks and dyes to support creative workshops and encourage knowledge exchange. Additional proposals included installing a 300-litre rainwater tank and adding a sedum roof to enhance biodiversity.

CLIFTON ROAD MOSQUE

….. as a 'Sacred Space'



Mehfil E Abbas-KSIMC Birmingham: Spiritual community rooted in Shi'a Ithna-Ashari values, serving members and wider society.
17 Clifton Rd, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 8SX

Core Religious Values:
Shia Islam values khidmat (service), community cohesion, dignity, inclusivity, education, stewardship, and devotion.

The mosque's design reflects its commitment to serving the wider community. Alongside prayer spaces, it includes widows' apartments, a Ghusl Khana, classrooms and community halls, responding to people's everyday needs with dignity and care. Its temporary prayer building demonstrates adaptability and ensures worship remains at the heart of the community throughout the redevelopment.

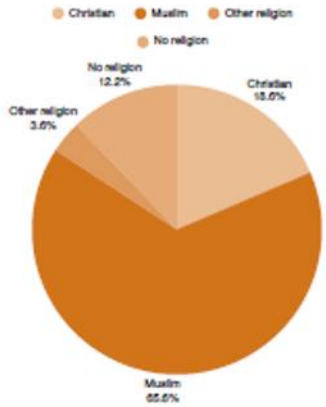


Interior picture of one of the rooms

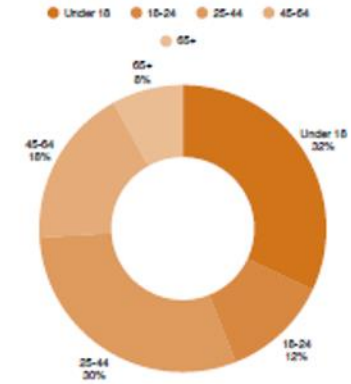
The mosque received the Best Mosque Future Design Award at the British Beacon Mosque Awards 2023, recognising its innovative design and influential role within the community.
Its architecture balances spiritual and practical needs, with prayer halls aligned to the qibla, sacred geometry and quiet spaces for reflection. Gender-sensitive layouts reflect cultural and religious practices while maintaining accessibility. Together, the redevelopment creates a mosque that is both a place of worship and a welcoming community space.

Local Demographics

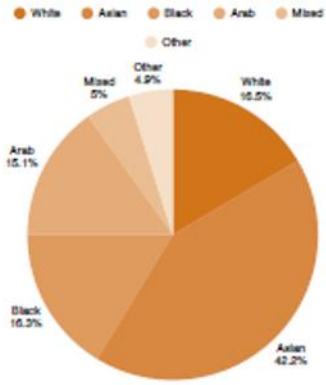
BALSALL HEATH WEST: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)

Birmingham 083B

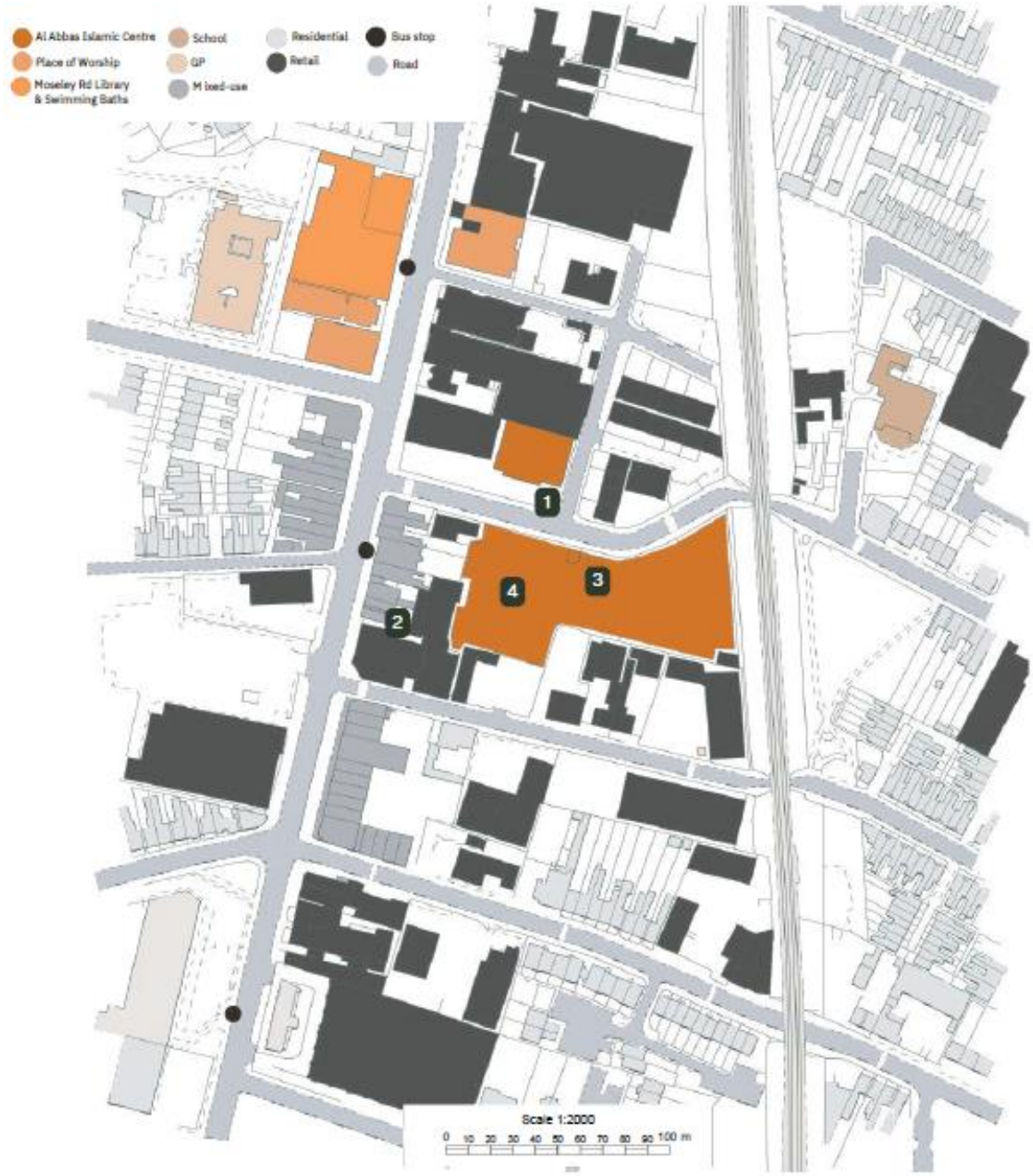
Metric Group	Metric	Category
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Highest
Exposure score	Population density	Highest
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Medium
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Low
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	High
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	High
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	Lowest
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	High



Key CRVA risks

Balsall Heath West, south of Birmingham city centre, features a young age profile (44% under 24) and a 90.5% BAME population. Islam is the main religion at 65.6%. As of 2025, Balsall Heath West is the 9th most deprived ward in Birmingham, facing high unemployment and low qualification rates (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis



SITE IMAGES


1. Existing Clifton Rd Mosque


2. Widows' housing


3. New Clifton Rd Mosque exterior


4. New Clifton Rd Mosque interior

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

MUTUAL AID

Al Abbas Islamic Centre, commonly known as Clifton Road Mosque, is run by the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Community (KSIMC) of Birmingham, evolving from a small collective of families fleeing global conflicts in the mid-20th century into an expansive community (Al Abbas Islamic Centre, 2026).

Whilst building works are underway to create a new £7.5 million mosque (Elkes, 2016), a temporary mosque accommodates for daily prayers, congregational gatherings and religious classes, with an on-site kitchen that provides meals during events.
Currently, the mosque runs a dedicated learning hub, youth seminar programming, a day nursery and eight 1-bedroom apartments for widows in the community. The new development includes the construction of a new sports hall, community kitchen, learning hub and a funeral home (Al Abbas Islamic Centre, 2026). Clifton Road Mosque is a local partner of Retrofit Balsall Heath which has, since its launch in 2022, retrofitted 650 homes with Birmingham City Council "Warmer Homes" funding (Retrofit Balsall Heath, 2025).

CORE ACTIVITIES



Community Events held by Clifton Road Mosque

Adaptation and Resilience Analysis

Leadership	Clifton Mosque already has strong leadership, with a formal governance structure led by an executive committee with 8 departments including social responsibility. This existing framework supports organisational capacity and accountability, and building on this structure could help coordinate climate action and strengthen preparedness. there is significant potential for climate resilience and adaptation planning to be embedded into the leadership structure and decision-making process.
Ownership by Congregation	The congregation at Clifton Mosque is already very engaged, supported by 140 registered volunteers. This volunteer network has created more capacity for community action and service. There is strong potential for future adaptation measure to be built on this network by ensuring that volunteers are involved in resilience planning and encouraging sustainable lifestyles among the congregation and wider community.
Community Network	Clifton Mosque already incorporates a number of sustainability and climate resilience measures through both its building design and community leadership. As a relatively new development, the building benefits from modern construction standards – this includes natural ventilation through its courtyard design, careful building orientation, and well-insulated that reduce heating and cooling demands. The mosque also demonstrates strong organisational capacity through its executive committee and large volunteer network, while its involvement in the Retrofit Balsall Heath programme enhances the connection between the congregation to wider sustainability initiatives. Located adjacent to Seven Streets Pocket Park and Balsall Heath City Farm, the mosque is well positioned to engage with local environmental projects and encourage sustainable behaviours within the community. These existing strengths provide a solid foundation for long-term climate adaptation and resilience.
Financial Resources	Clifton Mosque benefits from strong community support and donations, as well as being connected to initiatives such as Retrofit Balsall Heath. This provides an opportunity to access support from partnerships and learn from existing projects. Future funding opportunities could be strengthened through participation in place based retrofit initiatives and further fundraising and donations.
Adapting to Extreme Weather:	The Al-Abbas Islamic Centre has significant potential to build on existing climate-adaptive design by strengthening preparedness for future extreme weather events and hotter summers. Implementing additional cooling strategies will be crucial, as the area has an elevated heat risk associated with limited tree cover and poor air quality. Potential future adaptation measures could include enhancing external shading, improving natural ventilation systems, and integrating renewable technologies such as photovoltaic panels, heat pumps, and zoned heating systems to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort. Water-saving measures, including rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling from wudu facilities, could further strengthen resilience during periods of drought. If implemented, these proposals would reduce energy demand, improve building performance, and enhance the mosque's capacity to respond to changing climate conditions.
Increasing Green Space:	Increasing green infrastructure offers a major opportunity to improve both biodiversity and climate resilience at Clifton Mosque. Current development plans allocate a large proportion of land to parking. However, proposals developed through the Co.LAB project suggest converting part of this space into a dedicated 'Spiritual Garden' which would provide increased shade and tree cover, and also then reduce local surface temperatures. Additional planting, wildlife habitats, and pollinator-friendly landscaping could create a richer ecological environment while strengthening links with neighbouring green assets such as Seven Streets Pocket Park and Balsall Heath City Farm. These interventions would improve air quality, encourage community interaction with nature, and transform the mosque grounds into a more sustainable and climate-resilient landscape.

Student Proposal



Final Visual: Spiritual Gardening/ green space



inal Viusal of the cooling pavillion within the Green space

The student group addressing Clifton Road Mosque centred their proposal on reworking the planned car park for the new mosque, reducing parking to create a generous green space. Drawing on principles of Islamic geometry and symmetry, they developed the concept of a Spiritual Garden, a transitional zone that guides visitors from the urban environment into a sacred space through soft boundaries such as water features and layered planting.

Students noted that the project was challenging due to the mosque's redevelopment being largely unbuilt, leaving limited physical reference points during their site visit. However, this also provided significant creative freedom, allowing them to explore ideas that aligned with the mosque's future vision.

A key element of their design was a shaded outdoor seating area, offering tranquillity, comfort, and shelter. Plant species were selected for their regional suitability, sensory qualities, and symbolic resonance with Quranic references. The overarching aim was to create a resilient, low-maintenance landscape that supports biodiversity and strengthens the surrounding ecosystem.

THE COTTERIDGE CHURCH

….. as a ‘Sacred Space’



The Cotteridge Church:
24 Pershore Rd S, Cotteridge, Birmingham B30 3EJ

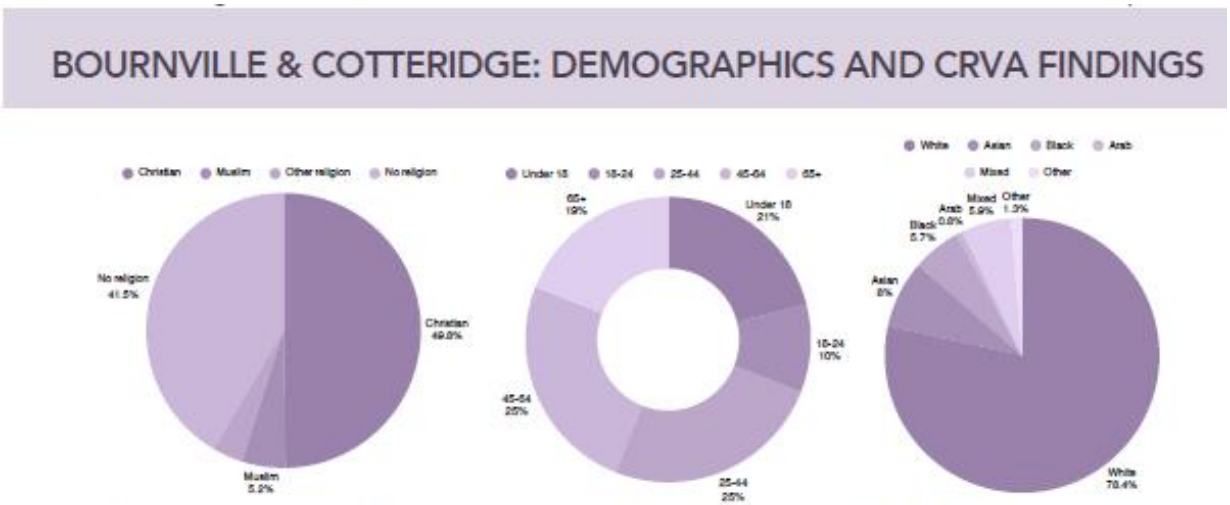
Christian Core Values:
The Cotteridge Church reflects the Christian values of welcome, compassion, service, care for children, community support and stewardship of creation. Its calling is to respond to the Gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission
The church is an ecumenical partnership of The Methodist Church, The Church of England and The United Reformed Church



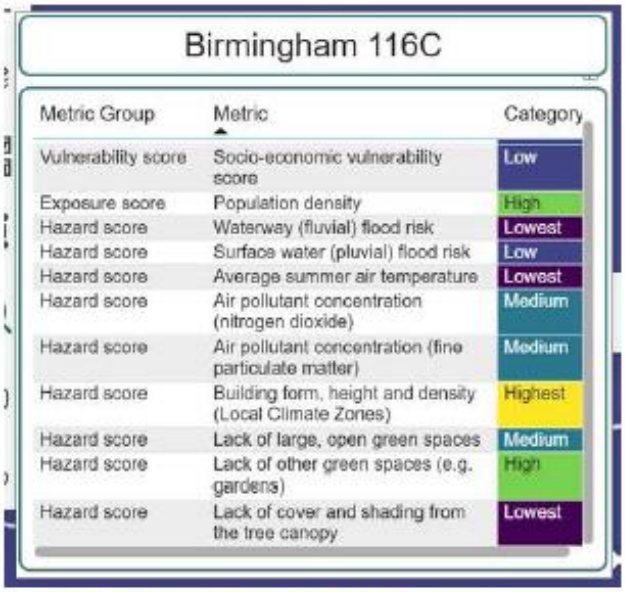
It is an Eco Church Silver Award Winner that encompasses achievements under 5 headings: Worship and teaching, Buildings and Energy, Land and Nature, Community and Global Engagement and Lifestyle.

Cotteridge Church serves the local neighbourhood with a community café, youth activities, Stay and Play scheme for young children and their parents, exercise classes and, until it outgrew the church, the B30 Foodbank

Local Demographics



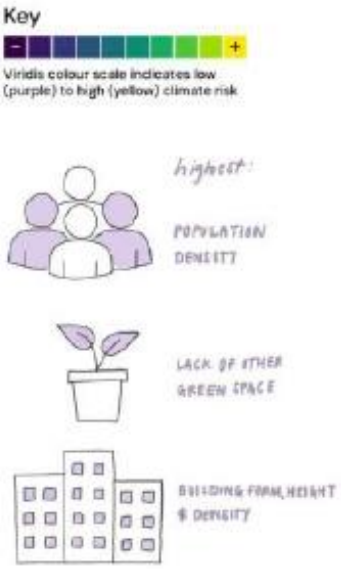
Religion (City Population, 2026) Age Structure (BCC, 2025) Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)



Birmingham 116C

Metric Group	Metric	Category
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Low
Exposure score	Population density	High
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Low
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Lowest
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	Medium
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	Medium
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	Medium
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	High
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	Lowest

West Midlands Combined Authority (2023)

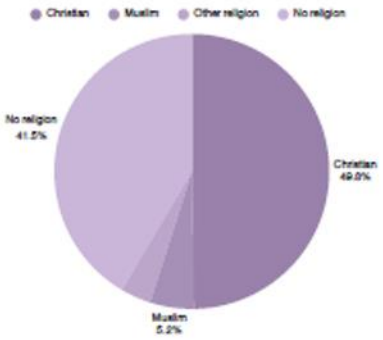


Key CRVA risks

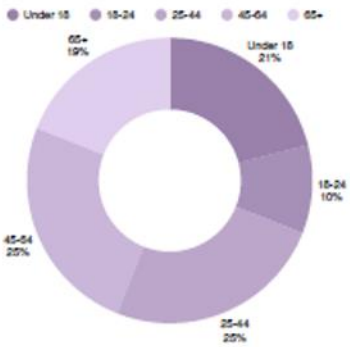
Bournville & Cotteridge is a suburban area in south-west Birmingham. It features an older age profile (19% of residents are 65 and over) and a lower BAME population than the city average, with White residents comprising 78.4% of the community. 49.8% of residents are Christian. It ranks amongst the least deprived wards, with above-average employment rates (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis

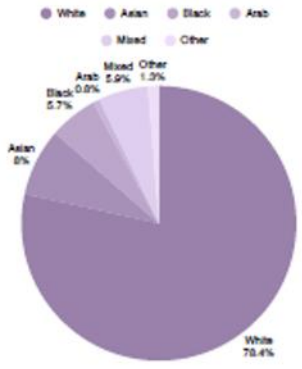
BOURNVILLE & COTTERIDGE: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)

Birmingham 116C

Metric Group	Metric	Category
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Low
Exposure score	Population density	High
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
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Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	High
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	Lowest



Key CRVA risks

Bournville & Cotteridge is a suburban area in south-west Birmingham. It features an older age profile (19% of residents are 65 and over) and a lower BAME population than the city average, with White residents comprising 78.4% of the community. 49.8% of residents are Christian. It ranks amongst the least deprived wards, with above-average employment rates (BCC, 2025).

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

The Cotteridge Church combined the three congregations of St Agnes' Church of England, Kings Norton Methodist Church, and Kings Norton Congregational Church in 1985 to create the Cotteridge Local Ecumenical Project. Operating every day, the church welcomes 3000 visitors a week, including Sunday morning services with children's activities (The Cotteridge Church, 2023).

The church integrates mutual aid into its everyday service, supporting the work of the B30 Foodbank which provides three-day food parcels (B30 Foodbank, 2026). A main part of the church's work is a day centre for older adults with varying needs such as dementia, reflecting community solidarity by meeting local needs. Alongside this, Cotteridge Church operates a non-profit community coffee shop offering hot midday meals, a second-hand book shop and a charity shop that cycles resources back into the neighbourhood (The Cotteridge Church, 2023).

ReRecognised as an official A Rocha Eco Church, Cotteridge Church manages its building, land and lifestyle choices to minimise carbon emissions (Eco Church, 2025). Committed to ethical, ecumenical practices, strict local, fairtrade sourcing policies are enforced across its café and shop. Cotteridge Church also regularly hosts the Central Co-op Gardening Club (Knight, 2025), supporting local sustainability efforts.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Services: midweek services at key celebrations, evening prayer, Sunday morning services with childen's activities, day care services for older adults with varying needs (e.g. dementia), drop in sessions for better mental health, 7th Birmingham boy's brigade, monthly messy church, stay and play (saplings), older adults exercise classes, girl guides groups, sing and sign classes, youth and baby groups



The Cotteridge Chruch members

Adaptation and Resilience Analysis

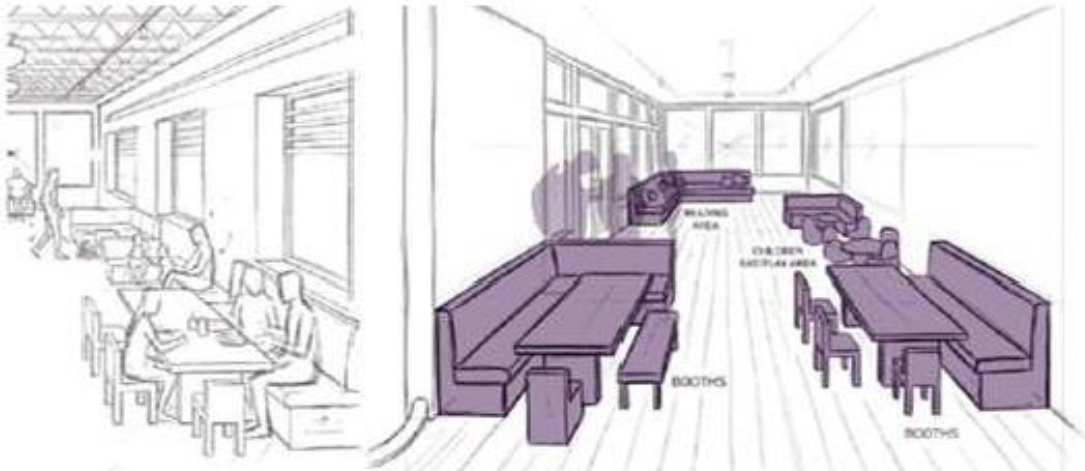
Leadership	Cotteridge Church already has a strong governance structure which involves dedicated committees and an EcoChurch Working Group. This group actively promotes climate awareness, carbon reduction and improved environmental management of the church's activities. This existing leadership framework provides a strong foundation for further embedding climate resilience into the leadership structure and decision-making, as well as encouraging the wider community to engage in future adaptation initiatives.
Ownership by Congregation	The congregation has already demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental action through the church's achievement of a Silver Eco Church Award. Members of the congregation contribute to the church's activities through worships, teaching, community engagement and initiavies promoting a sustainable lifestyle. This strong foundation can be built on by congregation members taking an even greater role in planning and delivering resilience measures, supporting local environmental initiatives and promoting adaptation within the wider community.
Community Network	Cotteridge Church already has a strong community network which is supported by partnerships, volunteering and community services. The church works alongside other local churches to support the B30 Foodbank, organises community activities through its gardening club, and operates as a Warm Hub for the local community. This existing network highlights the church's role as a trusted body within the community. Building on these networks could strengthen the church's role as a local resilience hub by expanding environmental partnerships, supporting local adaptation activities and encouraging further participation in sustainability initiatives within the wider community.
Financial Resources	Cotteridge Church's income is currently generated through venue hire, the café and catering services, as well as donations from the congregation. The church also secured external support, such as a government grant in 2025. This combination provides a good foundation for future adaptation and resilience initiatives, especially when community benefits and environmental outcomes can be demonstrated.
Adapting to Extreme Weather:	Cotteridge Church has the potential to strengthen its adaptive capacity by improving its ability to cope with extreme temperatures and changing weather conditions. There are opportunities for more targeted energy efficiency measures, such as upgrading insulation, draught-proofing doors and windows, introducing zoned heating controls, and expanding the use of localised heating solutions such as infrared panels or pew heaters. The Climate Porch idea designed through the Co.LAB project would create a thermal buffer between the street and the interior of the church, helping to reduce heat loss while improving comfort for visitors. Additional future measures could include double glazing and heating system upgrades, which would further improve energy efficiency, reduce operational costs, and ensure the church remains comfortable and functional throughout increasingly unpredictable weather conditions.
Increasing Green Space:	Enhancing green space and biodiversity provides an important opportunity to improve climate resilience at Cotteridge Church. The church already benefits from an L-shaped garden, a greenhouse, and flower beds, which provide a strong foundation for biodiversity and ecosystem growth. Some potential future measures include introducing bird and bat boxes, wall mounted planters, and additional planting to enhance local biodiversity and air quality. Improvements to seating and garden spaces could provide more attractive outdoor areas to encourage community use. Increasing gardening and vegetation across the site would also help improve air quality (especially given the church's location on the A441) while increasing shade and reducing the impacts of increasingly frequent periods of high temperatures. These measures have the potential to create a healthier, greener, and more resilient outdoor environment for both the congregation and the wider community around Cotteridge Church.

Student Proposal



The student group focusing on The Cotteridge Church proposed a gentle retrofit strategy centred on improving thermal performance and accessibility. Their key intervention was the design of a climate porch, intended to reduce draughts, create a more thermally efficient threshold, and provide a welcoming, accessible entrance. The concept also included relocating the café to the front of the building, making it visible and accessible from the street while enabling new opportunities for outdoor seating. This porch space would offer thermal comfort during increasingly hot summer days—an issue highlighted in the students' climate-change research, which emphasised the growing importance of passive cooling strategies.

The group also explored community-led construction using reclaimed materials to create hybrid seating-and-planting structures at the front of the church, strengthening social identity and environmental stewardship. To further reduce energy use, they proposed integrating renewable systems such as rainwater harvesting, photovoltaic panels, and upgrading the existing boiler.



Final Visuals: Student proposal on relocating the cafe to making it more accesible from outside and to use it as a opportuntiy for outdoor seatings for the communtiy cafe / Sketch of the interior of the new cafe site.

ST CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH

….. as a 'Sacred Space'



St. Christopher's Church: Church of England that uses the eco-church framework to guide our overall progress, original building built in 1906-7

St Christopher's Church, The Springfield Centre, Springfield Road, Birmingham, B13 9N.

Core Values:

St Christopher's reflects Christian values of welcome, compassion, service, nurturing children, community care, and stewardship of creation.

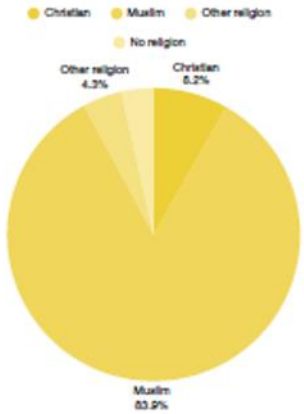


Interior images of the Church

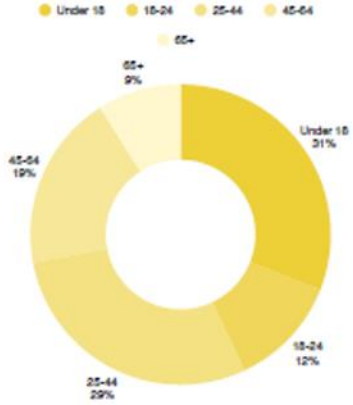
The church's partnership with The Springfield Project shapes a building designed for family support, early-years care, food provision, and wellbeing activities. Spaces such as Seedlings, the food pantry, and community rooms embody Christian hospitality and service. The church garden and Gold Eco Church status reflect stewardship and environmental responsibility. The worship space remains simple and welcoming, reinforcing inclusivity and spiritual openness.

Local Demographics

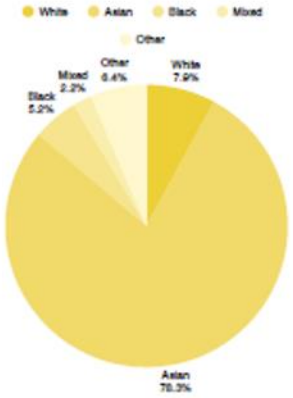
SPARKHILL: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)

Birmingham 143D

Metric Group	Metric	Category
Key components of overall climate risk scores		
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Highest
Exposure score	Population density	Highest
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Highest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Highest
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Low
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	High
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	High
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	Low
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	Highest

West Midlands Combined Authority (2023)



Key CRVA risks

Sparkhill, located southeast of the city centre, skews significantly younger than the city average (43% under 24). The ward is dominated by a large South Asian community and is 92.1% BAME overall. Islam is the primary religion (93.9%), whilst 8.2% identify as Christian. Although mid-ranking for overall deprivation, it suffers from the 6th highest child poverty rate and low employment (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis



SITE IMAGES



. Front entrance



2. Front garden



3. Church interior (Sunday)



4. Church interior (Weekday)

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

MUTUAL AID

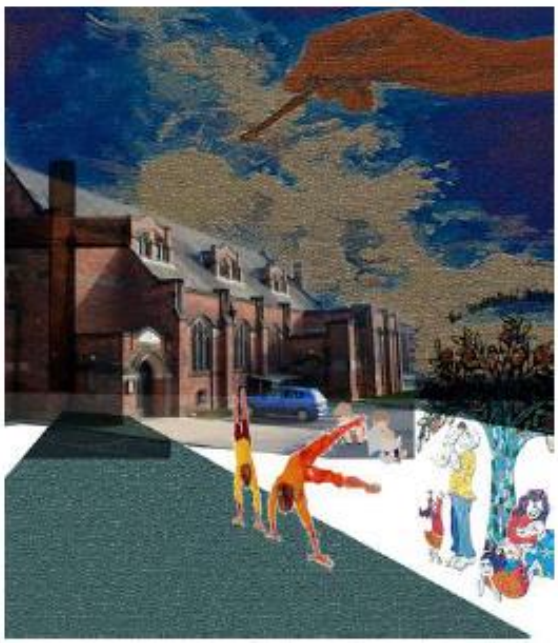
St Christopher's Church, an Anglican church consecrated in 1907, operates with a core mission to provide practical service to the neighbourhood. The cornerstone of this mission is the Springfield Project, which began life as a stay-and-play group. Now a thriving Children's Centre, the project supports over 2000 families annually, including an early-years nursery and family hub (Springfield Project, 2016).

Beyond weekly Sunday services, the church operates a designated Place of Warm Welcome, offering warm meals made from supermarket surplus and a space for community to gather. The church also assists local households with ethical finance guidance and direct support to access cost-of-living energy grants (Springfield Project, 2016).
St Christopher's Church is celebrated for becoming the second church in the diocese to achieve A Rocha's Gold Eco Church award (CofE, 2026). In tandem with the Springfield Project, the church spearheads neighbourhood initiatives targeting green transport, zero single-use plastics, and strict waste reduction.

The church actively conducts local wildlife surveys, plants native trees, and runs Community Action Days to teach eco-tips, seamlessly blending environmental stewardship with community care. Most recently, the Springfield Project hosted a special community screening The People's Emergency Briefing, a 50-minute documentary film and community-led initiative launched across the UK to present scientific evidence on the climate and nature crisis and encourage local discussions (National Emergency Briefing, 2026; St Christopher's Church & The Springfield Project, 2026).

CORE ACTIVITIES

Home of The Springfield Project, stay and play group- Seedlings wide range of services including family support, nursery, adult activity, full Children's Centre, sustainability within Sparkhill- explore nature (guided walks and activities), nature-based crafts, planted new trees, Gold Eco Church award, community services- English classes, food pantry, women's group, cooking group, financial advice, parenting support, employment opportunities, children- early years, health and well being- medical centre, domestic abuse victim support, housing support, pregnancy advice and support, energy advice



Collage of St Christopher's Church featuring architectural drawings and community-created mural artwork.

Adaptation and Resilience Analysis

Leadership	St Christophers Church already demonstrates leadership through the Springfield Project and volunteer-led community projects supporting children, young people and families in the community. This builds skills in the local community, encourages active citizenship and strengthens community capacity. This leadership structure provides a good foundation for integrating climate resilience into community activities, and encouraging awareness of climate change and adaptation opportunities within the congregation
Ownership by Congregation	Members of the congregation are active volunteers, particularly through the Springfield Project and seedling play group. Environmental engagement withing the church is already supported by activities such as nature education, tree planting and encouraging sustainable travel. Building on this in the future would allow for members of the congregation to play a greater role in planning and supporting local resilience projects and increasing green spaces.
Community Network	St Christophers Church already has an established network in the community through initiatives such as the Springfield Project, which works with children, young people and families to improve wellbeing, encourage active citizenship and strengthen community capacity. The church also acts as a Warm Hub and provides opportunities for community involvement through volunteering and environmental education. These existing networks create a strong foundation for climate resilience by bringing people together around shared activities and local priorities. To build on this, the church could further develop their network and community led programmes promoting environmental awareness, supporting vulnerable residents and encouraging wider community participation in adaptation initiatives.
Financial Resources	St Christophers Church delivers community services such as being a Warm Hub, demonstrating social value and community benefit. Financial support can be strengthened by donations, fundraising and wider community support. The church's role in the community may also improve access to funding opportunities in future, such as place-based retrofit, energy efficiency schemes, or climate resilience and community wellbeing initiatives.
Adapting to Extreme Weather	St Christopher's Church can significantly expand its resilience to extreme weather by building on its existing role as a community resource and Warm Hub. This is particularly important due to the high levels of fuel poverty in Birmingham, making accessible warm spaces during cold weather events even more crucial. The church could strengthen its adaptive capacity through place-based retrofit and energy efficiency measures, such as improving insulation, introducing zoned heating systems, potentially installing solar panels on its larger roofs, and utilising the smaller ancillary rooms which would be easier and cheaper to keep warm. There is also potential for the church to make use of their community network and host or offer energy advice sessions and retrofit information which would help support residents. Establishing emergency response procedures and identifying vulnerable individuals who may require additional support in the face of increasingly frequent climate-related risks would enhance the church's position as a trusted resilience hub during periods of extreme weather.
Increasing Green Space	Increasing green space and biodiversity offers a notable opportunity for St Christopher's Church to build on its climate resilience. The church already benefits from green space associated with the Springfield Project, and proposed measures including making improvements to pathways, seating, and garden spaces could be complemented by additional planting schemes such as planting flower beds which focus on enhancing biodiversity and creating a more vibrant ecosystem. Expanding the use of green space around the church would also provide cooling benefits during heatwaves, improve air quality, and create more opportunities for the local community to spend time in these outdoor spaces. These proposed measures would support both thriving ecosystems and community wellbeing, helping to create a more climate resilient space for residents to enjoy.

Student Proposal



Final Visual: Student Front Garden proposal.

The student group working on St Christopher's Church focused on improving the external areas at the front and back of the building. After observing how people already use these spaces, they proposed formal infrastructure to support these activities, including seating made from reclaimed materials. They chose mosaic patterns to reflect the Church's strong tradition of community-made artwork, allowing worshippers to contribute designs that reinforce identity and belonging. The group also suggested adding bike racks to encourage sustainable travel.

To improve thermal efficiency, the students recommended installing an air-source heat pump, destratification fans, and double glazing to reduce heating costs. They further proposed exploring the potential for the Church to operate as a local renewable energy hub, enabling the neighbourhood to generate clean power collectively.

BAHU TRUST

….. as a ‘Sacred Space’



Hazrat Sultan Bahu Trust: Sufi inspired Muslim organisation dedicated to serving the community in the UK.
117-21 Ombersley Rd, Sparkbrook, Birmingham B12 8UR

Core Religious Values:
Sufi Islam emphasises seva (selfless service), compassion, inner purification, justice, environmental stewardship, and community solidarity.

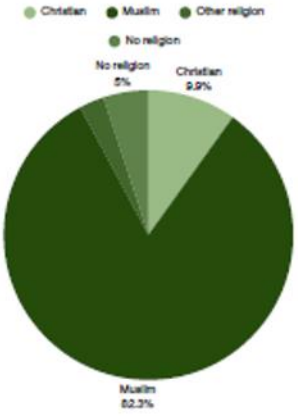


Student drawing of Balsall Heath residental street

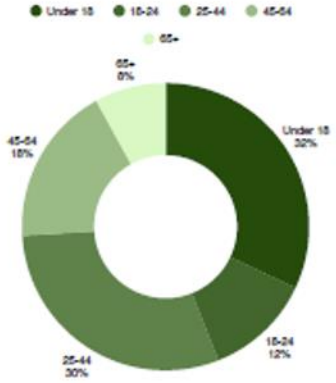
The mosque’s layout supports mutual aid, with spaces for food distribution, debt advice, hardship funds, and community gatherings. Quiet prayer areas reflect Sufi spirituality and inner reflection. The building’s educational rooms, advice spaces, and community kitchen embody compassion and justice. Sustainability initiatives; solar panels, climate-awareness programmes, and eco-Ramadan practices, express stewardship as a spiritual duty. The mosque’s openness to all faiths reflects Sufi inclusivity.

Local Demographics

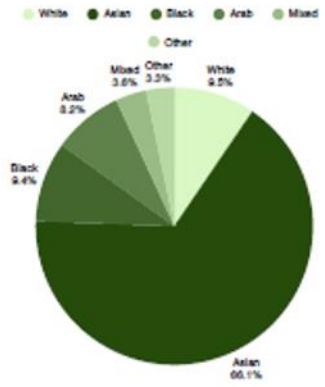
SPARKBROOK EAST: DEMOGRAPHICS AND CRVA FINDINGS



Religion (City Population, 2026)



Age Structure (BCC, 2025)



Ethnicity (City Population, 2026)

Birmingham 083A

Metric Group	Metric	Category
Vulnerability score	Socio-economic vulnerability score	Highest
Exposure score	Population density	Low
Hazard score	Waterway (fluvial) flood risk	Lowest
Hazard score	Surface water (pluvial) flood risk	Medium
Hazard score	Average summer air temperature	Medium
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (nitrogen dioxide)	Highest
Hazard score	Air pollutant concentration (fine particulate matter)	High
Hazard score	Building form, height and density (Local Climate Zones)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of large, open green spaces	Lowest
Hazard score	Lack of other green spaces (e.g. gardens)	Highest
Hazard score	Lack of cover and shading from the tree canopy	Highest

West Midlands Combined Authority (2023)



Key CRVA risks

Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East, located in the inner city, is the 2nd most populous ward in Birmingham. Almost half of residents are under 24 (44%) whilst 90.5% are ethnic minorities. Islam is practiced by 82.3% of the population. Sparkbrook is Birmingham's most deprived ward facing severe unemployment and the city's 8th highest child poverty rate (BCC, 2025).

Site analysis



SITE IMAGES



. Car park



2. Bahu Trust roof



3. Courtyard playground



4. Entrance

Grassroots Community Care / Mutual Aid

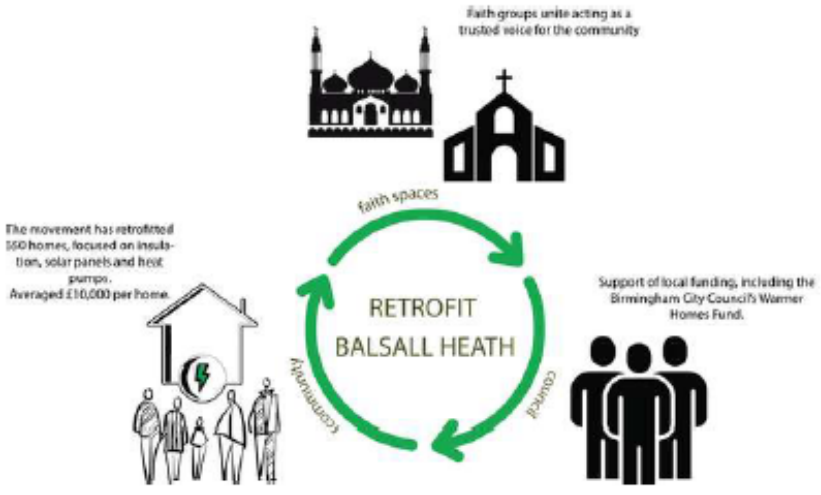
MUTUAL AID

The Hazrat Sultan Bahu Trust operates as a Sufi-inspired charitable organisation. Established in 1983 inside a converted 19th-century piano factory, the charity has grown into a community hub that serves people of all faiths and backgrounds. Community outreach is central to its mission; the Trust runs several programmes exploring topics such as mental health awareness, youth empowerment and climate action (Bahu Trust, 2026).

Every Friday, the mosque operates the Bahu Trust Food Support Service, a food bank that provides free food packs, emergency sanitary products and community support to vulnerable individuals (Birmingham Connect to Support, 2026). As well as this, the Trust runs a Warm Space of Welcome with hot refreshments, charging facilities and computer access (BCC, 2026).
In line with Sufi beliefs of stewardship, the mosque systematically embeds sustainability into daily practice, featuring a rooftop solar panel array and energy efficient lighting whilst eliminating the use of single-use plastic (Bahu Trust, 2026).

Bahu Trust is a local partner of Retrofit Balsall Heath which has, since its launch in 2022, retrofitted 650 homes with Birmingham City Council "Warmer Homes" funding (Retrofit Balsall Heath, 2025). Kamran Shezad, a grassroots environmental activist and social justice campaigner, has developed a range of resources as part of his role at Bahu Trust, with the aim of making climate education more accessible (Footsteps, 2021). Often working with partners such as Fruit & Nut Village and The Compost Connection CIC, the trust hosts tree-planting events and community composting workshops (part of an initiative called "Sacred Soil") (Bahu Trust, 2025; Fruit & Nut Village, 2025).

CORE ACTIVITIES



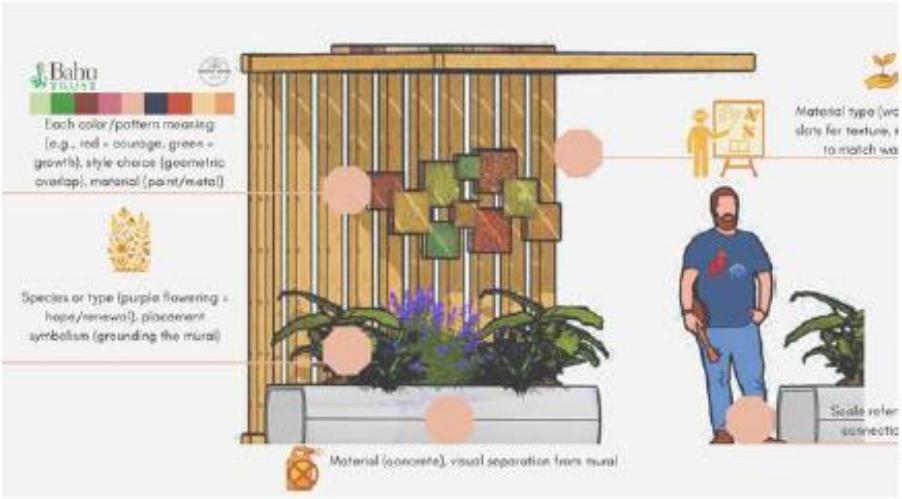
Community Roles within the place of worship

Adaptation and Resilience Analysis

Leadership	Bahu Trust already shows good leadership through community engagement and environmental advocacy. Practical support such as the Abdullah Rehman initiative have been delivered, faith-based environmental stewardship is promoted and sustainable behaviours are encouraged within the community. This existing leadership is a strong platform for increased integration of climate resilience into decision making, community initiatives and environmental education activities.
Ownership by Congregation	Bahu Trust benefits from volunteer involvement, including youth volunteers and strong engagement with environmental initiatives such as Eco Church. Members of the congregation also developed faith-based climate resources connecting sustainability with religious values, as well as achieving accreditation to the UN Environment Assembly in 2019. To further this engagement in future, volunteers and congregation members could contribute even more to the delivery of adaptation and resilience projects, and outreach activities
Community Network	Bahu Trust already benefits from a wide-reaching community network, covering local, national and international organisations. Through its accreditation to the UN Environment Assembly, involvement in Retrofit Balsall Heath, and connections with a network of 22 mosques and community centres across the UK, Bahu Trust has demonstrated its ability to engage with a range of partners and communities. Developing this network further in future will be beneficial as Bahu Trust is well positioned to strengthen climate resilience and awareness through knowledge sharing, partnership and community sustainability initiatives.
Financial Resources	Bahu Trust currently generates income in a number of ways including donations, community fundraising and events. It is involved in regional and international environmental networks, which strengthen its profile and social value. In future, these existing sources of funding, combined with demonstrated community benefit and environmental leadership, could support Bahu Trust's access to climate resilience and retrofit funding opportunities.
Adapting To Extreme Weather	Bahu Trust has significant potential to strengthen its resilience to extreme weather by building on its pre-established role as a trusted community organisation and warm hub. The surrounding area has a high climate vulnerability, including elevated heat risk, air pollution, and limited green space, so Bahu Trust could develop plans for responding to extreme weather events such as heatwaves. Improving insulation and airtightness of the building would help maintain comfortable indoor temperatures whilst reducing energy demand, and the Trust could convert to an electric heating system powered by solar energy, which would improve energy security in periods of disruption. Additionally, developing emergency response procedures, training volunteers, and identifying vulnerable community members would further strengthen Bahu Trust's ability to operate as a safe and supportive resilience hub during extreme weather events – such as opening cool spaces for the local community, particularly vulnerable visitors.
Increasing Green Space	Increasing green space also presents a valuable opportunity for Bahu Trust to improve its biodiversity and climate resilience. Current proposals to phase out the car park to create more green space could create a more resilient and attractive environment, whilst helping to address local challenges such as the increasing heat and high air pollution in Balsall Heath. The introduction of a green roof, increased vegetation or green space would enhance biodiversity if native and pollinator-friendly planting is introduced, as well as providing more shade, and encouraging community participation. Additional measures such as raised planters, bird boxes, and seating areas could create further opportunities to enhance the education, wellbeing, and social interaction of the local community. The installation of air quality monitors around the site could also bring benefits to not only Bahu Trust and its local community, but also the wider residential area. These measures would not only improve the environmental performance of the site but also strengthen its role as a welcoming community space capable of supporting its community during increasingly hot summers.

Student Proposal





Final Visual: community garden and garden mural Art

The Bahu Trust student group proposed transforming the existing car park into a meadow roof and community garden to address the lack of greenery and shade. Their design creates a nature corridor inspired by Sufi beliefs, celebrating God's creation through diverse planting and features such as honeycomb planters and a bug hotel. Drawing on Islamic teachings that describe plants, fruits, and shade as heavenly gifts, the students incorporated symmetry and productive planting areas for vegetables and fruits. They also aimed to introduce art and colour through murals based on the Bahu Trust palette, where red symbolises courage and green symbolises growth. Their research further highlighted purple flowers as a sign of hope and renewal—an appropriate choice for a garden intended to welcome new visitors and revitalise the space.

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APP 1 - ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

BUILDING ADAPTIVE CAPACITY – enabling a community of faith to implement measures that create a resilient community ……. *These are mainly people-based involving community, relationships and systems-based approaches. Access to funds* **enables adaptation.**

Building Leadership and 'people capacity'

Activities that:	Specific measures
Faith and spiritual leadership	• 'Care for people, responsibility towards creation and service to others are deeply embedded within many religious traditions' • Integrate climate themes into sermons, study groups • Link to and join with Festivals
Encourage congregation's sustainable behaviours -	Make sustainability more human – not a technical matter • Eco Church and similar schemes have many practical actions of how congregation members can reduce carbon footprints • Cycling and walking initiatives e.g. Install secure bike parking to encourage low-carbon travel
Ownership by 'congregation' and action groups	• Enthusiastic congregation with a sense of empowerment. • Active 'green' groups

Becoming community intermediaries that local authorities trust and others can work with

Activities that:	Specific Measures
Develop relationships with key partners	• Obtain access to funding schemes, learn from others, build on each other's strengths • Provide trusted spaces where different organisations can meet and work together. KS TK • Build on relationships with local residents, community organisations, schools, charities and other faith communities. KS TK
Implementing Warm Homes and other schemes	• Help provide access to local communities • Bristol found that 'Local authorities will get much better results if they work with trusted community groups to deliver tailored, place-based approaches that are joined-up with investment in local delivery mechanisms and skills provision'

Financial resources and funding from within own community

Activities that:	Specific Measures
Build financial strength from within	• Congregational donations, fund raising activities

Seek funds from PoW's own wider faith community	• Some Churches and faith communities have their own funds for supporting their local PoWs
Identify place-based sources of funding	• Land-fill tax funding, local schemes, • Create toolkit wth specific suggestions • Use specialised fund-raising databases etc and professional fundraising support • Identifying and quantifying 'community benefit' helps unlock local authority and other funds

Strengthening Health and Well-Being

Activities that:	Specific Measures
Support people to improve their baseline health can help them to be more resilient to climate impacts	• Service delivery - Health interventions that are delivered in collaboration with faith communities and places of worship can be more effective than those delivered in clinical settings alone, due to the ability of such collaborations to ensure delivery is more inclusive and culturally sensitive • Diet - Faith communities and places of worship can support healthy diets and nutrition in ways that respect faith traditions and religious laws. • Physical activity - regularity of many religious practices (e.g. having a holy day) supports the building of routines. This creates an opportunity to introduce regular exercise into this routine and increases the likelihood of it being maintained.
Involve connecting with and experiencing the beauty of nature has multiple mental and physical health benefits.	• Creating resources and leading activities where engagement with nature is encouraged, connecting this to known religious texts, practices or rituals • Managing the buildings and grounds at places of worship with maximum care and benefit for the ecosystem • Reinforcing the connection between religious identity and climate-care/eco-action with a sense of pride and purpose (as opposed to guilt)
Help with processing loss	Practical steps that communities can take include: • Adapting existing grief frameworks and rituals to support with climate grief • Increasing awareness of what support is available within religious traditions or external services for those experiencing climate-related grief or anxiety • Creating groups and spaces for people to process climate grief and anxiety in community

ADAPTATION MEASURES - ***practical changes you make to a building and community so it can cope with new climate conditions*** ……. *Adaptation feeds into resilience. Resilience thinking helps ensure adaptation is holistic, not just technical fixes*

Adapting to warmer, wetter winters with more rainfall

Measures that:	Specific Measures
Addressing increased rainfall	• Ensure all gutters etc clear • Improved drainage and guttering • Replace hard surfaces with permeable paving • Rain gardens and appropriate planting to slow run off
Combating local flooding	• Build flood protections walls • Protect key electrical systems from ground-level water

Adapting to hotter, drier summers

Measures that:	Specific Measures
Prepare for heatwaves	• Block solar gain before enters building - Shutters, awnings, cool reflective roofs • Improve natural ventilation - Design for cross-ventilation and night-time purge ventilation to release accumulated heat • Cool rooms for vulnerable visitors • Plant shade-giving trees or climbers where possible

Adapting to extreme weather events

Measures that:	Specific Measures
Prepare for cold snaps	• Zonable heating • Create small warm-able space.
Prepare for storms & High Winds	• Eliminate hazards • Secure signage, bins, and outdoor furniture. Lightening protection • Inspect roof tiles, flashing, and fixings • Check trees for dead branches or instability

Retrofit - Increasing Faith Building Climate Resilience

Measures that:	Specific Measures
Make buildings warmer, healthier, and better able to cope with heatwaves, floods, and rising energy costs.	• Whole building energy audit. Access support from own faith group advisors • A quinquennial inspection is a good opportunity to reflect on the sustainability of the building and its use. • Consider adapting the building to allow greater community use • Considering how to increase resilience in the face of predicted changes to the climate, as well as increasing energy efficiency and considering other environmental issues.

	• Identify skills and experience – these gifts represent an important resource for building faith community resilience.
Improve Insulation and reduce heat loss in winter and help keep building cool in	• Upgrading windows • Enhanced insulation • Use of sustainable and resilient materials in construction where possible
Heating system	• Maintain boilers, pumps, electrics regularly • Assess age and vulnerability of heating system. • Contingency plans for heating systems failure • Smart heating systems • Explore renewable energy (solar PV, heat pumps)
Airtightness and ventilation	• Review ventilation and airtightness
Sustainable electricity generation	• Investigate suitability of roofs etc for generation. • Big Solar can give financial help with faith building projects • Battery storage can help reduce costs by flexible buying and enjoy lower tariffs

Grounds and Outdoor Spaces Adaptive Measures that increase resilience

Measures that	Specific Measures
Increase the potential for nature-based approaches to adaptation and resilience	• Create more natural grounds, outdoor spaces and graveyards that encouraging insect life etc. • Plant drought-resistant, pollinator-friendly species • Reduce mowing to support biodiversity • Add composting or food-growing areas • Create shaded outdoor seating • Encourage wildlife, respect bats and other protected species
Improve air quality	• Install air quality monitors • Time activities around periods during day of better air quality • Discourage car idling etc.

CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES of FAITH with the ability to cope with and recover from climate shocks ……. *Resilience is the capacity of the building and the community to prepare for, absorb, respond to, and recover from climate shocks.* ……. *It's about functioning well despite disruption*

Developing PoW's ability to support their local communities at times of environmental or social stress

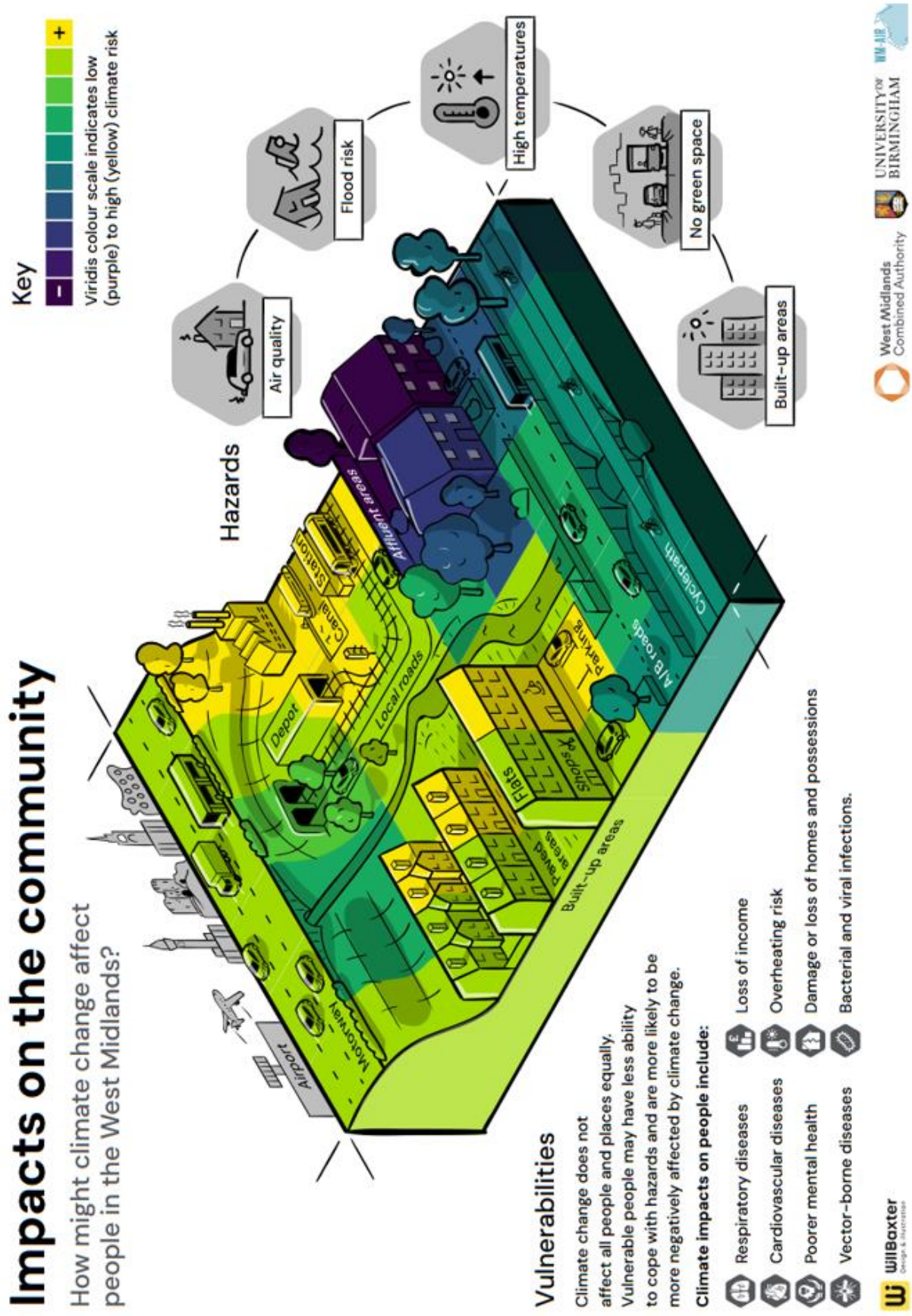
Measures that	**Specific Measures**
Involve creating an emergency plan and	• Create a simple emergency plan (heat, cold, flood, power cut) • Torches, blankets, first-aid kits accessible

developing emergency resilience	• Keyholders know how to shut off utilities
Support the local communities by acting as a local resilience centre	Community orientated activities • Community café • Warm / Cool space provision • Health and well-being support • Hold stocks of emergency supplies
Help develop and provide emergency response capacity by drawing on available skills and human resources	• Train volunteers in emergency response • Train stewards/wardens in emergency response • Tabletop planning exercise - Emergency Scenario Civil Unrest and Fire (see Faith Forum for London) to check preparedness, practise responding, work better with partners, build team capability
Insulate against power and communication outages	• Understand sub-station location and local infrastructure • staying open, safe, and supportive when power and communications losses occur.
Support vulnerable groups	• Map who may need extra support (elderly, isolated, asylum seekers) • Partner with local charities and neighbourhood groups Offer drop-ins, cafés, or wellbeing session

Being able to open as local hubs - heat refuges, flood shelters, power-cut spaces

Measures that	Specific Measures
Enable PoWs to act as a local warm/cool hub when needed	• Warm / Cool / Safe Spaces • Register as a warm space or cool space if appropriate • Provide water, seating, and accessible toilets • Ensure safeguarding and volunteer cover
Build on unique resilience advantages each faith tradition offers	• Churches — community halls, warm spaces • Mosques — strong mutual-aid networks • Gurdwaras — Langar: free meals at scale • Synagogues — strong governance & safeguarding • Hindu temples — community kitchens & volunteer energy • Buddhist temples — calm, wellbeing-supportive spaces • Quaker meeting houses — flexible, uncluttered spaces
Enable a PoW to act as a local community emergency coordinating hub	• A community-run space for coordinating mutual aid • A hub for local information and problem-solving • A link between the community and official responders • Flexible, spontaneous, empowering provision

APPENDIX 2 – CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS



Source: Greenham, Sarah and Ferranti, Emma and Cork, Nicholas and Jones, Stephen and Zhong, Jian and Haskins, Bethany and Higgins, Will and Grayson, Nick and Needle, Simon and Acton, Joe and MacKenzie, Rob and Bloss, William (2024) *Mapping Climate Risk and Vulnerability in the West Midlands.* https://doi.org/10.25500/epapers.bham.00004371