

Catholic Parish of St Edward the Confessor

Buildings update – **progress!**

December 18th/19th 2021

Dear Parishioner,

Much has been happening since the last update about the building plans. Sometimes progress is slow, and then suddenly quite a lot comes together, all at once. I am pleased to share three main pieces of news with you, along with some immediate changes:

1. **We have a firm buyer for the land surrounded by the blue hoardings.** The sale is not yet complete, but a lot of legal work has been done, and hopefully the last few steps will be smooth so that contracts are exchanged at the start of 2022. Unfortunately no other information can be given at this stage, due to the strict commercial confidentialities around the sale. As soon as it is possible to share more, we will do so, with an open meeting for parishioners in the spring.
2. As part of the preparation for the sale **we have received planning permission to carefully take down the club side of the parish community centre, and we are in the process of appointing a contractor to do that.** We are hopeful this work will begin at the end of January / beginning of February.
3. After guidance from the Historic Churches Committee and Havering Council at pre-Application stage, **we are about to submit our main plans for (we hope) approval by the Council.** This is likely to take about four months, and in the meantime we will be continuing to prepare for those major works to begin. We are likely to have to proceed in stages, as the finances are worked out, and we will keep everyone fully up to date with that in the New Year.

What happens now?

The most immediate and pressing matter is the completion of an asbestos survey in the area to be taken down. This survey involves taking chunks from several walls and it means the **parish centre cannot be used on or after THIS MONDAY, 20th December.**

To ensure minimal interruption to parish groups, and to ensure we still have a social space, as well as a space for catechesis, etc., **we are making provisions for a section of the parish hall to be brought back into use.** The existing fire doors will be modified to form entrance doors, with partitions in front of the stage and in the hall. This will give us a usable space (seating up to 50 people, plus toilet facilities and tea/coffee making area) from late January. It will cost about £15,000 but after exploring many avenues this is by far the best and cheapest way to give the parish a social space for as long as the main works continue. This will be for at least a year, so we'll also be asking for volunteers to paint, etc., in late January, to make it all as pretty and welcoming as possible.

Therefore all groups that use the parish centre, who have in any case already stopped for Christmas, will be off for another three or four weeks in the New Year, and most likely can resume in the first week in February, in the parish hall. This includes children's liturgy and coffee on a Sunday morning, as well as the Golden Club, Beavers, Scouts, SVP, Knit'n'Natter, etc. Best to see it as an extended Christmas holiday!

And that is all the news for now. Please keep everything in prayer, as there are a few complex weeks and months ahead.

Many blessings
Fr Dominic