

The Christian Community Stroud



Community Consultation Report

The Christian Community, 73 Cainscross Road, Stroud GL5 4HB
ccstroud@talktalk.net stroud.thechristiancommunity.co.uk

Introduction

In order to gauge public response to plans for their new Church in Stroud, The Christian Community decided to hold a Community Consultation and to invite neighbours, key individuals and representatives of relevant organisations from the wider Stroud community.

The Consultation took place on Saturday 20th April from 10 am until 12 noon, at The Christian Community, 73 Cainscross Road, Stroud. Two of the architects were present, as well as members of the New Development Group from the congregation and the two priests.

Extensive advertising had been carried out in the weeks leading up to the event, in the local press, on the radio, and through leafleting and personal invitations.

Why we are planning a new building

The original building for The Christian Community at 73 Cainscross Road cost the humble sum of £20,000 in 1968. Over the past 45 years the congregation has worked hard to maintain it as a worthy and adequate space for the community and its sacramental life, and has made various improvements, including the addition of the wonderful sheltered garden on the south side.

Over the years the community has grown steadily and these worthy spaces are now no longer adequate to house all the people and activities that want to be here. This was already felt several years ago when the idea first arose that we build new facilities.

Since then the situation has become increasingly acute, with packed Sunday church services and congestion in the other community spaces. We host a growing number of regular congregational as well as independent activities and events in our limited spaces and garden. These include a parent and child group, many varied study groups, therapy and art workshops, wake room facility, counselling, children's festivals, gym classes for a local group, and a puppet theatre. In addition, we host national conferences and synods of The Christian Community, and run an annual Spring Fair where local social and environmental initiatives are invited to promote their own fundraising at no charge. We provide the base for the organisation and storage for our annual national children's and youth camps. We also regularly make our Community Room available as a polling station. And the list goes on

With all this in the background, we have mustered the courage and conviction both locally and nationally in The Christian Community to go ahead with plans to build a new church and community facilities at 73 Cainscross Road. The proposed design will enable us all the more to provide worthy spaces both for the sacramental life and for the life of our broader Stroud community.

Aims of the Consultation

1. The consultation should aim to attract as many ordinary local people as possible so that, through a listening based approach, their opinions, concerns and feelings might be appreciated.
2. Key individuals in the local community (councillors, the mayor, business leaders, planning officer) should be specifically invited to attend. Immediate neighbours should be encouraged to attend wherever possible.
3. People unable to attend the event itself should to be provided with an alternative means of making their opinions known.
4. Maximum participation from people outside the Christian Community is sought.
5. Visual aids (drawings, models, samples) should be large scale and easy for the novice to understand. They should be professionally displayed.
6. The atmosphere should be relaxed, welcoming and informal.
7. The whole church should be open so that anyone interested can roam at will.
8. Attendees should be encourage to stay for as long as they wish (seating, refreshments)
9. Attendees should know who is who (architect, priests, New Development Group members)
10. The consultation should be conducted in a safe (risk assessed) and professional manner.
11. The findings of the consultation should be presented in a Consultation Report to NDG and SDC within two months.

Planning the Consultation

The timing of the event, being at a weekend and during the morning, was intended to make it most likely that people could attend.

Two weeks before the Consultation, letters of invitation were sent out to forty named individuals in the wider Stroud community, the residents living opposite the church site in nos. 64 to 86 Cainscross Road, and those living behind the church in Lodgemore Close (nos. 1 to 12) and Lodgemore House and Garden Cottage.

April 2013

Dear Neighbour

Community Consultation

On behalf of The Christian Community in Stroud, I would like to invite you to a community consultation which will take place on **Saturday 20th April at 73 Cainscross Road from 10 am to 12 noon.**

For some time we have been looking at how to address the needs of our growing congregation, and have now developed draft plans for a new church and community spaces on our present site.

We would like to share our ideas with the wider Stroud community, answer questions and listen to any comments or concerns. The accompanying leaflet gives more details of the project, and we are hoping that as many people as possible will attend the community consultation so that we can address any issues which may arise.

We would particularly like to welcome you to attend as one of our immediate neighbours, so that you are able to learn more about our plans and we can hear from you if you have any questions.

The programme for the day is as follows:

10.00 am Viewing of plans and model, informal discussion

10.40 am Short presentations by priest and architect

11.00 am Informal discussion

As well as hearing your questions on the day, we will be asking everyone to fill out a brief questionnaire in which we will also ask you to write your specific questions or concerns, so that we can ensure that these are addressed in a proper manner.

If you have any queries about the consultation please do not hesitate to contact me, preferably by email at ccstroud@talktalk.net

Yours sincerely

Paul Abel
Community Secretary

A general invitation was delivered to all other houses within a certain radius of the site, especially in Gannicox Road and Burford Drive.

A banner was put up on the fence outside the church so that drivers and pedestrians going along Cainscross Road would see it.

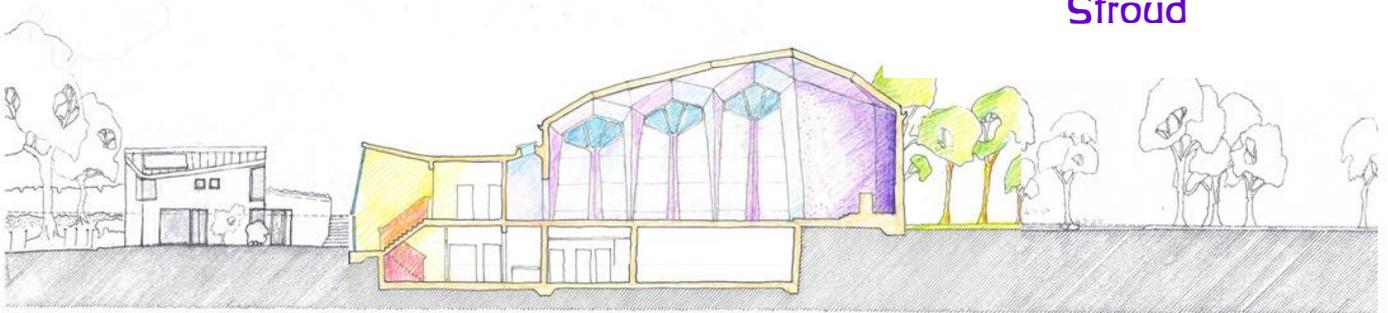


Local journalists were approached, and comprehensive articles about the new development and the forthcoming consultation were printed in *The Citizen* on 5th April and *Stroud Life* on 10th April, with a shorter entry in the *News and Journal* of that week. One of the priests was interviewed on *Radio Gloucestershire* and details of the event were sent to *Stroud FM* for broadcasting.

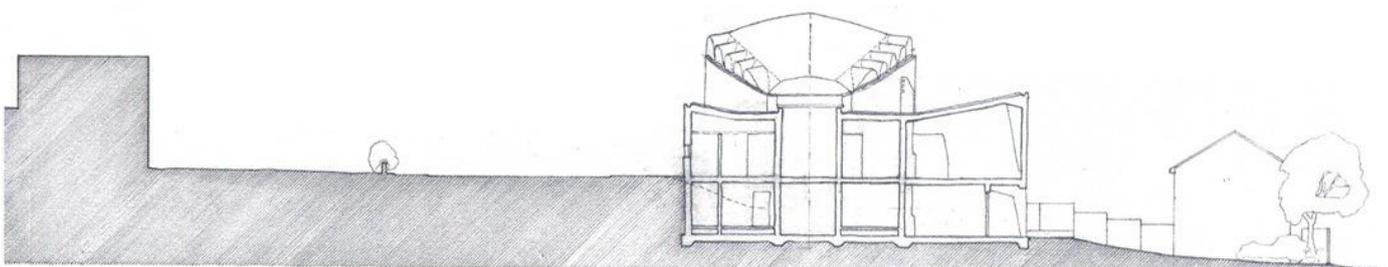
A new website was set up to give up-to-date information about the plans.

A leaflet was produced to give background information about The Christian Community and the reasons behind our need for a new building, and this was circulated with all the invitations and put in strategic locations around the town (eg The Subscription Rooms, St Luke's Medical Centre). Posters were put up in cafés, shops and other public places.

The Christian Community Stroud



Community Consultation



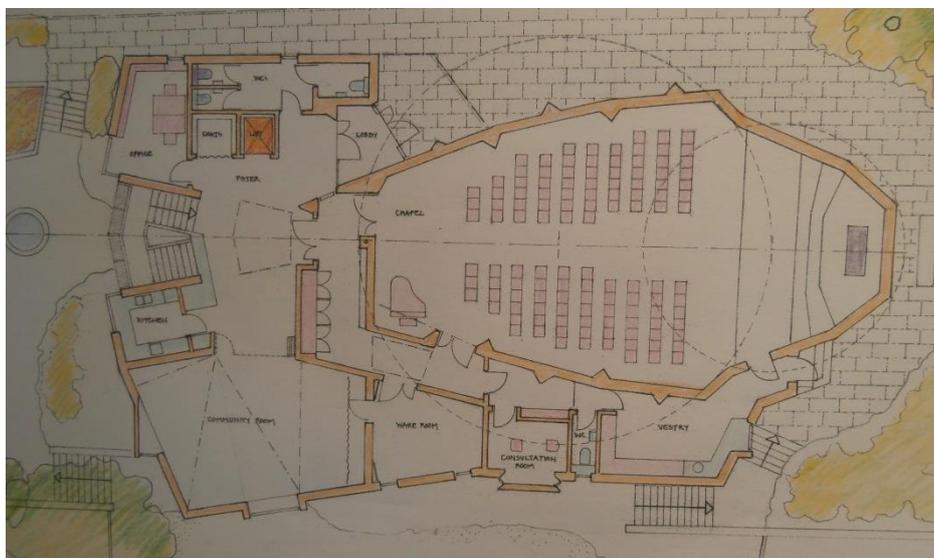
An Introduction to The Christian Community

The Christian Community was founded in 1922 in Dornach, Switzerland by a group of young theologians under the selfless guidance and help of Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), whose science of the spirit, Anthroposophy, has become a central source of renewal in the most varied fields of life. Waldorf education, eurythmy, bio-dynamic agriculture, the caring for people with special needs, such as the Camphill movement, and anthroposophical medicine and therapy all bear witness to this.

From its beginning The Christian Community has been an independent movement which strives to place itself within the universal healing stream that flows from the resurrected Christ for all humankind and for the earth. It welcomes all who are looking for an authentic religious life that combines spiritual substance and integrity with full individual freedom. Members are encouraged to form independent judgements and there are no restrictions to free participation in the sacramental life.

The seven sacraments and the gospels are understood to be inspired content that provides, together with the insights of Anthroposophy, the 'bedrock' of the work of The Christian Community. Priests and members pursue their own independent research out of a love and interest for the world and for all spheres of spiritual, artistic and scientific endeavour in human life.

The Christian Community today is an international movement with approximately 350 congregations in 27 countries. Each congregation is financially independent and is carried by the voluntary contributions and donations from members and friends. Supporting the work of the congregations on an international level is The Foundation of The Christian Community in Berlin. The work in Great Britain and Ireland began with the founding of the first congregation in London in 1929. Since then the work has grown to fourteen congregations around the British Isles. The congregation in Stroud was founded at 73 Cainscross Road in 1968 and currently has over 500 members and friends.



The Consultation

On the morning of the Consultation, the Community Room at the church was set up with display boards, models and samples of building materials. The two architects were in attendance, together with members of the New Development Group and the two priests.

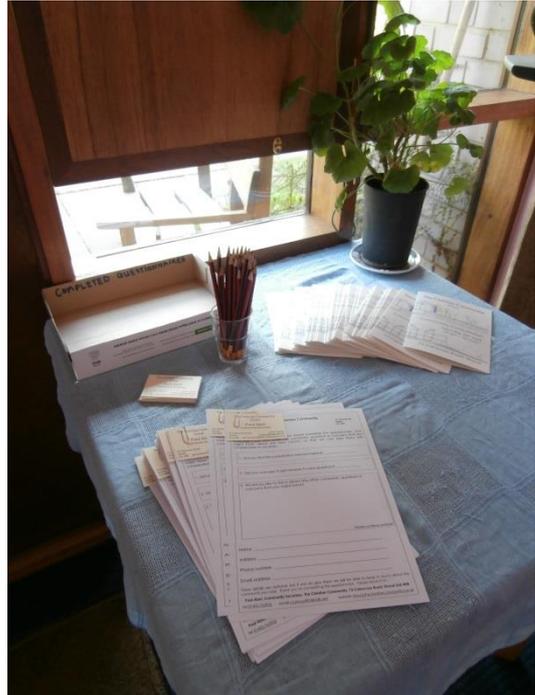


As people arrived, they were welcomed and given the questionnaire which everyone was asked to use to give their feedback, either as they left or later in the week. They were shown to the Community Room.



Visitors were able to talk informally to the New Development Group members, architects and priests, and many questions were answered in this way, before there was a short verbal presentation by Aaron Mirkin, one of the priests, and Nic Pople, one of the architects. A question and answer session followed, and then the informal discussions resumed until midday.

There were twenty-three visitors who were not members of the congregation, and these were mostly immediate neighbours. Eight apologies were received beforehand from people unable to attend. Seven completed questionnaires were received, two emails, and a letter.



The Christian Community

73 Cainscross Rd
Stroud
GL5 4HB

QUESTIONNAIRE

We would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire, and especially if you write down any comments, questions or concerns that you might have about our new church, so that we can take them into consideration in our plans.

1. Did you find the consultation exercise helpful? _____

2. Did you manage to get answers to your questions? _____

3. Would you like to tell us about any other comments, questions or concerns that you might have?

Please continue overleaf

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Email address _____

These details are optional, but if you do give them we will be able to keep in touch about the comments you raise. Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please return it to:

Paul Abel, Community Secretary, The Christian Community, 73 Cainscross Road, Stroud GL5 4HB

tel 01453 762926

email ccstroud@talktalk.net

website stroud.thechristiancommunity.co.uk

The Findings

All the returned questionnaires stated that the consultation had been helpful, and everyone said they had received answers to their questions. Two people who were unable to attend the Consultation sent in their comments later, by email and letter.

Positive comments included:

- Praise for the vision
- Enhancement of the site
- Improved facilities for The Christian Community and for the wider Stroud community

The feedback highlighted concerns in the following areas:

- Parking
- Height of the new building
- Boundary wall with neighbouring properties in Lodgemore Lane, and the feeling of being overlooked
- Capacity of the foul drainage system running through neighbouring property

Suggestions were made to look into the following areas in more detail:

- Bicycle storage
- Construction time
- Acoustics & soundproofing

There was also a request that good communication should continue to keep everyone informed, and hopefully this report will be seen as part of this intention.

We would like to thank all those who attended the Consultation and also everyone who has given us such valuable feedback.



Conclusion

- In general terms the eleven key objectives were fulfilled to an adequate extent.
- Inevitably those attending were the local people likely to be most affected by the proposed scheme. They expressed concerns based on personal circumstances (change to the view from their window, for example) rather than material planning observations (the building is too large for the site or would dominate the townscape, for example).
- 'Key individuals' in local government and organisations did not attend in significant numbers: this could be interpreted as agreement in principle.
- As was hoped in the planning stage, comments continue to arrive after the event through meetings, feedback forms and letters.
- Some attendees spent a long time examining the drawings and discussing matters with the hosts: one lady remained for the entire time.
- Attendees appreciated the opportunity to be informed about the plans and expressed a desire for this to continue
- Following the consultation the actual building height was shown with a helium filled balloon at the maximum level, which could be repeated.



The Stroud Christian Community New Development Group must carefully consider the following findings:

- Concern exists regarding the proposed roof height and the effect on the views from neighbouring properties.
- Concern exists regarding the possibility of an increased demand for parking along Cainscross Road.
- The outcome of the consultation process and decisions arising from it must be communicated widely.