

Shinfield Community Church – Statement of Need

In the last five years the village and surrounding areas of Shinfield have more than doubled in size with the population having grown from 8,000 in 2001 to 17,500 in 2021. In March 2020 just half of the proposed 3,000 new homes were inhabited indicating that there is still considerable growth to come. No new churches have been built to serve this area and local community facilities are at full stretch.

Shinfield Community Church has seen a revival in the last ten years. It is now a dynamic church made up of people from all walks of life and from many different nations, with a regular congregation of about 60 adults and 15 children.

We are well known and valued in the community for providing many much needed activities including toddler groups, coffee mornings for the elderly, holiday clubs, youth group, services in care homes and a foodbank. We have also taken the lead in Community activities such as the Remembrance Day services, Christmas Carols and pancake races. Our members are active in local political, sports and musical groups as well as serving the community as school governors.

We have now outgrown our chapel building and currently meet for Sunday worship in a local primary school. The bungalow attached to the chapel is very dilapidated and no longer meets our needs.

In conversation with local residents, groups and agencies in the area to assess local needs and interest we have established that there is strong support for our scheme and a real desire to see more and better facilities in Shinfield. There is a need for more space for activities for young families and the elderly in particular, youth and health projects, advice work and counselling for example. We would seek to offer or work with local organisations to address these needs.

Our new building will meet many of these needs and we believe it will be a major asset in the community, providing a more attractive and useful space than we have at present. We plan to retain and refurbish the original chapel building and demolish the bungalow and build a large hall in its place that will be multi-functional.

These will provide:

- A large hall for meetings and concerts, youth and children's activities as well as worship, also available for community events
- A café area open at times throughout the week for people to drop in and meet their friends and to host our coffee mornings
- A smaller hall for use by our youth and children's groups, also available for community events

Parking

The plans that are being submitted retain our current parking spaces and add two more, making a total of 19 spaces. More and more of our members are coming from the new developments and are within walking distance of the church. We already encourage people to walk, cycle and lift-share wherever possible, being mindful of our impact on the environment.

We currently number an average of 20 cars on a Sunday morning at the local school where we meet, and see no reason why the numbers would change significantly when we move back to Fairmead Road. There is not much street parking available in the vicinity but we are aware of spaces available at the nearby Doctor's Surgery and Primary School, which are not in use on a Sunday morning which would be our peak time, and are open to discussion with them to see if an arrangement can be made to secure those spaces for our use.

Although it is likely that the number of weekday activities would increase in the new building we do not envisage any difficulty with parking except for occasions like weddings or funerals when we would have an events plan in place.

It is also worth noting that we allow our car park to be used during the week for parents picking up their children from the local primary schools to ease congestion in the village.

Numbers

We currently average around 60 adults and 15 children on a Sunday morning, but can have as many as 80 adults. We have seen significant growth in the last three years, particularly in the number of young families attending. A new building generally attracts some uplift in the early days, which then levels off. We predict an increase of perhaps 5 - 10% per annum.