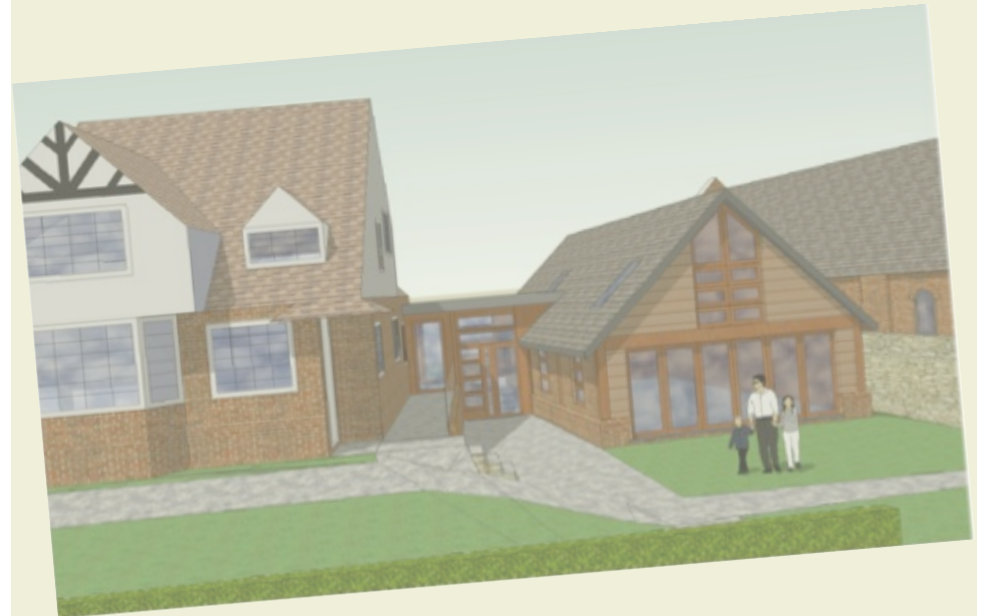




# St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

serving Westerham, Brasted, Sundridge and Ide Hill



**PARISH ROOM PROJECT  
BULLETIN 2  
23 May 2015**

This is the second of bulletin to inform parishioners of progress being made with the Parish Room project. We had hoped to provide you with information sooner, but there have been, and continue to be, delays with the planning application which was due for resolution on the 8<sup>th</sup> April, but is still “pending consideration”.

The delay to the decision arises from green belt issues raised by Sevenoaks District Council which we hope will be resolved in the near future. The application might well have been refused, but for the tremendous support it received from parishioners with over 75 having written to SDC. We are extremely grateful for this support with so many good reasons being put forward for having a parish room for the future of our community. We had a strong indication that the application was going to be recommended for approval because of it, but there appears to have been a change of mind on a technicality relating to green belt planning rules for infilling between existing buildings. As a consequence, we were asked to consider connecting the parish room to the church. In discussion with SDC, it was acknowledged that this was not a practical option, but linking it to the presbytery would be, with some potential advantages. We are now proceeding on this basis and are awaiting a decision on whether a simple amendment to our planning application will be acceptable. A perspective illustrating the change is included in this bulletin. The change involves a small re-orientation of the building to align more closely with the presbytery and a single porch linking the parish room to the presbytery’s kitchen.

We have received tenders from three local builders based on the original design. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons relating to the site and current market prices, the tenders were higher than expected and there will be some additional costs arising from the change to the design. These will increase the budget despite having included a reasonable contingency originally. We plan to enter into contract negotiation with two of the builders when we have planning permission and will seek some price reductions. At that stage we will revise our forecasts having established a firm contract price.

As far as fundraising is concerned, we have deferred the main thrust of this until we have planning permission and have revised our forecasts. We will, however, continue to be holding fundraising events and in particular, look forward to a very successful Dinner and Auction on 30<sup>th</sup> May with 150 tickets sold and some very generous donations for auction. This we hope will give us a solid platform of funding on which to move forward. One very good bit of news is that we have secured an interest free loan from another parish in the Diocese for £90,000.

We are sorry for the delay, but please be assured that we are doing everything we can to move matters forward. It probably means that it is now unrealistic to have the parish room by Christmas and means more of a challenge to fundraising. We are nevertheless confident that with your support and prayers, we will succeed in building the parish room which will be so important to our parish community.