

Statement of Community Involvement Report for Sawbridgeworth Evangelical and Congregational Church Building Project

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3D visualization of proposed development

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1 Introduction

Sawbridgeworth Evangelical and Congregational Church (SECC) is situated on London Road in Sawbridgeworth and was built in 1862. The address of the property is:

Sawbridgeworth Evangelical and Congregational Church, London Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts., CM21 9EH.

In 1911, a School Block was built alongside the church on the north side. A Kitchen and Toilet block was built behind the School Block in 1972. A storeroom was added in 1993 as an infill building between the Church Hall and the Kitchen Block (connecting to both buildings)

The members of the church along with the Trustees of the church are now seeking to make a significant refurbishment of the church sanctuary and church hall area as well as demolishing the School Block and Kitchen Toilet Block to make way for a new annex for the church as it moves forward in its ministries and outreach into the community.

As part of the planning process, a Community Consultation Day was held on 13th January 2024 to get feedback from the local community and to also allow for questions and comments to be raised regarding the project and the impact on the local community.

2 Community Consultation Day Overview

The Community Consultation Day was held on Saturday, 13th January 2024 on the church premises between 10am and 2pm. The aim of the day was to show the proposed building plans and to encourage feedback and questions from the local community regarding the proposed building project that the Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church (SECC) are planning to undertake in the near future.

A range of supporting displays and activities were held to support the Consultation Day. These included a display of the church history and heritage items (photos below) and a Lego model of the proposed building (approximate scale model) as a fun way to help visualise the new building. Refreshments were also provided for visitors.



Figure 1 Lego model of church with new annex from east (front)



Figure 2 Lego model of church with new annex from south



Heritage displays of church records, history and communion items



Heritage displays of old photos, deeds and church bulletins

The event was hosted on a Saturday to avoid normal working hours and maximise the opportunity to attend. The format of the Consultation Day was planned as a drop-in event to make it easy for people to attend at a convenient time within the 4-hour event.

A map showing the location of the SECC church within the town of Sawbridgeworth is shown below for reference.



Figure 3 Location of SECC on London Road, Sawbridgeworth. Map data from OpenStreetMap 2023-12-03.

3 Community Consultation Process

The Community Consultation Day was scheduled to take place on 13th January 2024 from 10am to 2pm. Planning for the event took place over a period of approximately 2 months before the actual day. This was to ensure that preparations for the day could be undertaken and that invitations could be sent out with sufficient notice.

The planning for the Consultation Day was as follows:

Designing flyers and poster	12 Nov – 10 Dec
Compiling list of people and organisations to invite	12 Nov – 10 Dec
Distribution of flyers and posters	12 Dec – 31 Dec
Preparation of FAQ sheet	12 Dec – 12 Jan
Preparation for supporting activities (Heritage, Refreshments)	12 Nov – 31 Dec
Display preparation with latest drawings, etc	2 Jan – 12 Jan
Recruiting of volunteers to support Consultation Day	2 Jan – 12 Jan

On the day, visitor numbers were recorded along with relevant details regarding connection to the church (e.g. Councillor, neighbour, town resident, etc). Comments and questions were noted as required.

A feedback form was designed and available for anyone wanting to provide written comments however none were received on the day. The feedback form can be seen in Appendix B.

The Building Team consisting of Mark Kimber, Julie Urquhart, Rachel Millett and Tim Bray were available to discuss any aspect of the building project and answer questions raised.

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) was also prepared to enable concise and thoughtful answers to be provided.

4 Invitations

An A6 flyer containing the relevant day and times was used as a means of inviting people to the event. A4 sized posters were distributed to shops in the town to ensure wide coverage of the Consultation Day. The flyer/poster design is shown in Appendix A.

Email invitations (along with a soft copy of the flyer) to the Consultation Day were sent to the following people and organisations:

- Mayor of Sawbridgeworth
- Mayor of Harlow
- Mayor of Bishop’s Stortford
- Julie Marston MP
- Sawbridgeworth Town Councillors (via the Town Council office)
- Great St Marys Parish Church
- Bullfields Community Centre
- Community Centre
- Schools

Flyers and posters were distributed with priority on immediate neighbours to ensure they had as much notice of the event as possible.

Name	Date Delivered	Type of Invitation	Invitee
London Road – from Bonks Hill up to Hoestock Rd	12 th Dec 2023	Hand delivered flyer	Neighbours
Maylins Drive	20 th Dec 2023	Hand delivered flyer	Neighbours
Brookfields	20 th Dec 2023	Hand delivered flyer	Neighbours
Brook Lane to Brookfields	20 th Dec 2023	Hand delivered flyer	Neighbours
Bell Street	2 nd Jan - 5 th Jan 2024	A4 Poster/Flyer	Businesses
	End Nov 2023	Email with flyer attachment	Councillors
	End Nov 2023	Email with flyer attachment	Mayors of Harlow, Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth
	End Nov 2023	Email with flyer attachment	Schools in Sawbridgeworth
“Zone” Youth Club	5 th and 12 th Jan 2024	Verbal invitation	Parents attending church event

5 Community Consultation Day

5.1 Attendance

Attendance was noted as people arrived. There was a steady stream of people over the 4 hours that the event was run.

Position in community	Numbers in attendance
Councillors, including Sawbridgeworth Town Mayor	2
High Wych Pre School Representative	1
Uniformed organisations	2
Church activities parents (Zone/Open Door)	4
Neighbours/local residents	15
Other churches	3
SECC Volunteers	17
	44 in total

5.2 Comments Received

The following is a summary of the various comments received. No opposition to the project was voiced by any attendee to the Consultation Day.

5.2.1 Comments on Design and Impact

Comments and questions were very positive with some saying that the more updated and modern design of the church was a good thing and an improvement to that part of London Road.

The immediate neighbours were impressed with the design and the plans for the whole project. Whilst they recognised there would be some challenges during the construction phase, they voiced no specific concerns or objections to the construction taking place and were positive about the overall development.

Immediate neighbours from Maylins Drive were keen to understand the size of the new rooms to the back of the church, out onto the graveyard, and was happy that there would be little impact to her view, due to the single storey design and the height of the current hedge. A follow-up for the church is to help her resolve a fencing issue she has as a result of the differing garden levels between her boundary and the church graveyard.

Other neighbours on Maylins Drive were keen to understand the impact of the development as they are directly adjacent the new rooms at the rear of the development. They voiced no concerns about the buildings, either in size or proximity to their boundary. In the interest of balance, they did express concerns about potential traffic impact during construction and ongoing use.

5.2.2 Traffic and Parking

Many people commented on traffic and parking as being the single most concerning aspect as this is a common and general concern in the town. It was explained that people attending the church were already being encouraged to either walk or park in the Bell Street carpark and that this would continue to be the position of the church. The church would try to discourage/minimise parking on London Road.

One close resident questioning why there hadn't been more parking created at the back of the church, in the graveyard. The building team explained that this had been considered but the detrimental effects to the immediate neighbours would have been greater and that not many additional parking spaces would have been created.

5.2.3 Sustainability and Heritage

Questions were asked about sustainability, fundraising and preservation of some of the history of the church. The Building Team reassured visitors that the statutory consultations were in progress and that any changes to the existing building would be agreed as part of the formal application. The building would be constructed in excess of Building Regulations standards and Photovoltaics, solar thermal and a ground or air source heat pumps would be incorporated into the development.

A display of some artifacts from the church's history had been put together, in the church sanctuary and visitors encouraged to take a look.

5.2.4 Other Comments

One person, from a different village, suggested that we should merge with Great St Mary's church instead of developing our site so that more could be spent on evangelism. It was explained that this wasn't really an option as we are an independent church and Great St Mary's Anglican parish church and that we had different approaches to the Christian faith in terms of practice.

6 Conclusion

A Community Consultation was held at Sawbridgeworth Evangelical and Congregational Church (SECC) on the 13th January 2024. Twenty-seven members of the public and 17 church volunteers attended the event and were able to ask questions and give feedback on the proposed building project at SECC. A lot of positive comments on the design and project were received and no objections to the project were voiced.

The main concerns raised were around parking. Parking provision at SECC will remain at the same level as it is today, and the Church will promote sustainable transport and parking in Bell Street carpark as set out in the Traffic Scoping Note submitted as part of the Planning Application.

7 Appendix A - Flyer and Poster Design

Flyer and poster artwork used to advertise the Public Consultation Day.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION & OPEN DAY

SECC Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church

COMING SOON STAY TUNED

CPL Architects®

Activities

- ✓ Build a church from lego!
- ✓ Free lunch
- ✓ Sweets & cookies stall
- ✓ A tour of the church

COME AND SEE OUR BUILDING AND COMMUNITY PLANS!

JAN 13

All ages welcome!

SECC, London road, CM21 9EH
office@seccchurch.org.uk

10 AM - 2 PM

8 Appendix B – Feedback Form

Public Consultation Feedback Form

Thank you for attending our public consultation. We would welcome your feedback.

Privacy Statement

Your comments will be considered and may be shared with the local planning authority. Details of the consultation may be shared publicly, but no personal information will be included in publicised results. Sawbridgeworth Congregational Church will process any personal data lawfully in line with the principle of Legitimate Interests as defined in GDPR.

Your name (& organisation as appropriate):

.....

Your email address: Your post code:

.....

Your Feedback

1. To what extent do you support the principle of the proposals for SEC Church? (please tick)

Support	Tend to support	Neutral	Tend to oppose	Oppose

2. To what extent do you support the proposals for flexible and sustainable new and refurbished halls, meeting rooms and offices for community use?

Support	Tend to support	Neutral	Tend to oppose	Oppose

3. To what extent do you support the proposals for a new, linked building to replace the School Block?

Support	Tend to support	Neutral	Tend to oppose	Oppose

4. To what extent do you support the architectural designs for SEC Church?

Support	Tend to support	Neutral	Tend to oppose	Oppose

5. Are there any other facilities/services that you think should be provided?

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6. Do you have any concerns about the proposals?

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7. Please provide any other comments here.

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Please continue overleaf if needed. Many thanks for your valued feedback.
And/or please contact us by email at: office@secchurch.org.uk