Report from Consultation on the Future of Rushcliffe Parishes, July-September 2025

This is a brief summary of the consultation report, which is available on the parish website or from the parish office, or from the QR code here. Please do read the full report if you can. It presents what 406 people said.

About closing churches[1]

- **People understand and accept the need for change.** The majority recognise that change is going to happen, that it is inevitable. They know we don't have enough priests. But many are unsure whether closure of church buildings is the only option.
- Attitudes towards the prospect of closing churches are mixed, and mostly fearful. Only a quarter of the responses expressed a positive acceptance of whatever change happens.
- A larger number – at least two thirds – saw the impact of changes as bringing loss, sadness and diminishment. It is clear that the impact of closures is not just about convenience. It is about faith and Catholic identity and how these are woven into a community and a place.
- Many worried that the changes, whatever they are, will reduce mass attendance and parish income.
- **The biggest loss would be of community and relationships.** The distress people expressed reflects the strong sense of community and relationships in all five church communities.
- **This was closely followed by the loss of a visible Catholic presence in each particular local community.** People feel that closure of any church will make our missionary task more difficult.
- **No-one wants their own church to close; but many also take a larger view of our mission in Rushcliffe; they cannot believe that the diocese would close Holy Spirit Church.** Many said that no evidence had been given to justify the risk of closure or explain why it is too expensive to maintain or renovate Holy Spirit. They want to know the scale of repair and costs needed.
- **A significant number of responses wanted to know whether other options had been fully explored.** For example, partnering Holy Spirit with Our Lady and St Patrick's and Corpus Christi, Clifton, and/or leaving the four villages as a separate parish.
- **Many asked about other options for retaining and using the church buildings for prayer and worship even if they cannot have Sunday Mass.** They want to know whether we can have lay-led Services of the Word on some Sundays to keep communities together.
- **The overwhelming majority were opposed to the idea of building a single new church or having just one church for Rushcliffe.** They felt it would be too big and impersonal, a 'Mass factory'. Only a small number were positive about the idea of one church, whether new-built or extending an existing one.
- **Most expressed a preference for two or three churches with Mass rather than one church.** But opinions differ about which two or three churches should remain open and which should close.

People described the practical and pastoral impacts of closing one, two or three churches.

- There would be more hurdles to cross to get to Mass, particularly for older people and families. Distances would be greater; many don't have their own transport; public transport might not be possible or work well. More people would have to drive and the environment would suffer.
- Around a quarter said they would go to a different church if their church closes. The majority were uncertain and said it depends on which churches remain open.
- Our mission and outreach would suffer. Unless the Church has a presence in the local community, it will be harder to attract people to join us.

[1] Very few related these issues to the reduction in priests supporting the parish and the likelihood of having only one or two priests going forward.

- Sacramental life might suffer. People might go elsewhere for weddings, funerals and baptisms that would have taken place in familiar churches.
- There were deep concerns about the impact on children and young people. Many said that a local church close to home is important for bringing children up in the Catholic faith, especially for children not at Catholic schools. There were fears that existing groups for children would be lost.
- There was a strong sense that there should be a church in walking distance from the Catholic schools.

Ideas about positive ways forward were fewer and briefer.

Practical suggestions included: having a rota for the churches to have Mass, to nourish those who cannot travel and keep communities alive; using the churches for weekday prayer even if there's no Sunday Mass; lay led Services of the Word with communion on some Sundays in some places; streaming Mass to the churches that don't have a Mass that Sunday.

- Many asked for more participation in decision-making and greater collaboration across the church communities. This would need more formation to equip people for leadership responsibilities.
- Although parking featured in many responses, it was not a major concern. Most thought it could be managed. Some suggested practical ways forward to explore.
- Some responses recognised the need to encourage people to give more. But they would like clear explanations of the funding needed and for which purposes.
- People are asking for bold decisions and radical actions, rather than what one response described as 'putting sticking plaster on an intermediate solution'.

What people saw as the possible benefits of change.

- Around a quarter of respondents said they could not see any benefits, or the benefits were uncertain.
- Others suggested possible benefits, mostly without much detail. These included: the idea that a fresh start could encourage creativity and new opportunities and help us become a more welcoming, and vibrant community; a hope that we would use our resources more effectively, reducing costs and releasing capital for renovation; a hope for better facilities for communities and for young people especially to use; and a hope that we would protect our priests from intolerable workloads. Some saw this point as the only benefit.

People expressed cautious willingness to help ensure churches are well used for other activities

- **Ar**ound a quarter of respondents would not be able to do more, either for reasons of age or health or work or family commitments. Some said they would contribute through personal prayer.
- For many, whether they can do more depends on which churches remain open and their locations and the available travel options. Many were already very active and said this is all they can give.
- Many said that they would be willing to help, to pray, to go on rotas, and to take part in new activities.

Reactions to the context and evidence and comments on the consultation process.

- Most people found the evidence and context unconvincing and inadequate. They asked for up to date figures abut Mass attendance and future capacity needed.
- Many also wanted better financial information. They would like more transparency and openness. They ask for better explanations: of the deficit; of the running costs for each church; and of the costs of necessary maintenance; and more detail about whether any sites have been commercially valued.
- Many commented on the consultation process. There was a strong desire to contribute and be part of the decision-making and be treated as co-responsible adults.
- People wanted to understand why East Leake had been included so late in the process. They would like to hear from the diocese about many of the issues raised here.
- But many find it difficult to trust this process; a large number fear that the decisions have already been made. They are critical of the timing and rushed nature of the consultation. They wanted to hear from young people whose voices may be missing.
- There was strong criticism of the questionnaire design. People found it repetitive and difficult to answer.