

Christ Church Vicarage

One aspect of our conversation about the future of our buildings at Christ Church is the question of whether or not the current vicarage is fit for purpose. Some of the respondents to the vicar's 'vision' document have suggested that the current vicarage seems perfectly adequate. What follows is an unavoidably subjective perspective on the suitability of the vicarage but one written in an attempt at least to make objective observations. It is the case that during both of the last two interregnums a number of possible candidates for the post of vicar did not pursue their interest in the post because of the vicarage.

1. The Parish Office

Sara, our parish administrator, is a model of polite, thoughtful discretion. She is a significant factor in making the presence of the parish office in the vicarage bearable. That said, it cannot be denied that the constant flow of visitors, groups and committees and those who need access to the files and photocopier is disruptive of and intrusive into family life. Conversely it is my perception that because of the above many thoughtful and sensitive Christ Church people are less inclined to actively engage with or indeed use at all the office for fear of disturbing the vicar and or his/her personal life. In addition, the diocese now insist that any parish office is located outside the vicarage.

2. Design

The vicarage is poorly designed. Even in the daytime it is necessary to keep the lights switched on in a number of rooms in order for there to be an adequate level of light. The lighting itself is inadequately located in a number of rooms which means that even with the lights switched on, the building feels dark and dingy.

3. Heating

The heating system no longer functions appropriately. It may never have done. The central heating system cannot heat the whole house. There is always a part of the house that cannot be kept warm. For many years this was the main living room and study and these rooms needed to be heated by portable electric fire even when the central heating system was switched on. After some tinkering by the diocese last summer, the 'compromised' rooms are now the Parish Office, kitchen and hallway. Even with a system that fails to heat the house properly, the system is expensive. The cost last year of gas and electricity was £1800.

4. Windows

A proportion of the windows on the east side of the vicarage were replaced last year. Many other windows have rotting frames, leaky, poor quality (very old) double glazing and ill fitting frames. The house is drafty. There are not, and for the foreseeable future will not be, funds in the diocesan budget for further replacement windows.

5. The Tennis Club

The club makes some effort to accommodate its neighbours. The club manager is a paragon of apologetic, diplomatic politeness. Nevertheless, play begins at 7.30am in the morning and goes on until 10.30pm at night, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. Only heavy snow keeps them away. The lights used for evening play are somewhat intrusive but are as nothing to the constant noise generated by angry middle aged men, stropky teenagers and whooping ladies. The presence and activity of the club is a very significantly negative aspect of living at 16 Copse Hill.

6. Decoration

The parish did a heroic job getting the vicarage into a usable state at extremely short notice shortly before we moved in six and a half years ago. However, the decoration was necessarily rushed. Most rooms need painting, the bathroom was never attended to before we moved in and plaster is crumbling from unfinished walls. The bath leaks and the poor quality windows mean the flooring in the dining room is rotting.