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Clarification Concerning the Letter to the Catholic Community of the Parish of St Thomas More, West Malling, 20 December 2019

The Archbishop of Southwark, the Most Rev John Wilson, writes:

Since my letter of 20 December 2019 to the Catholic Community of the Parish of St Thomas More, West Malling, there has been contact from a number of individuals and media outlets, together with an online petition. The Letter never proposed the closure of the parish, but the relocation of liturgical, spiritual and pastoral provision for the Catholic community of around 250 people who attend Mass each weekend across three Sunday Masses. This has been prompted by the urgent need to address the problems of the site as a whole on which, alongside other buildings, the presbytery and church are located.

I am sorry for any upset caused by this letter. It was issued following a series of meetings, over a number of months, between Diocesan Officers, the Parish Priest, Fr Peter Soper, and representatives of the Parish Finance Committee. The proposal it contained was endorsed fully by all involved. The Letter was requested, and acknowledged gratefully, so that its content could be shared with the parish community. In the course of this there seems, sadly, to have been a breakdown in communication.

In order to move forward in a constructive manner, Fr Peter has proposed an open parish meeting from which written suggestions about how to resolve the challenges faced will be collated. These will then inform our ongoing future collaboration towards a sustainable solution in the service of the Church's mission.

I would ask you to please do all you can to support this process positively as we seek to work together.

With the assurance of my prayers and very best wishes.

The Most Reverend John Wilson
Archbishop of Southwark