

Hadlow Down Community Centre Public Meeting Notes

Friday 9th February 2018

In attendance: F.Bickerton, G.Lake, C.Harrison, R.Lewis, B.Ball, R.Smyth, K.Cracknell, C.Cracknell, J.Fake, P.James, G.Carwardine, J.Eliot, A.Yarrow, C.Yarrow, P.Smyth, B.Floyd, J.Gale, G.Osborne, M.Ariseanu, D.Bingham, S.Allen, J.Singh, S.Prall, F.Shafer, G.Allen, J.Thompson, C.Thompson, G.Terry, B.Spencer, N.Russell, N.Harrison, J. Foster, S.Richards, T.Boorman, A.Bentley, M.Chapman, J.Stevens, A.Verhegen, R.Prall, S.Blyfield, T.Blyfield, J.Tourell, C.Thompson, P.Presler, G.(Graham) Terry, R.Lake, G.Allen, E.Westfield, M.Barber.

Apologies: J.Dummer, J.Wiltshire, V.Richards, L.Russell, D.Smith, G.Smith.

The purposes of the meeting were threefold: i) to receive an update on the current proposed design including the process of arriving at certain key decisions such as size, lay-out, internal circulation, choice of building materials, cost estimate and issues related to planning ii) to be advised of future timescales with particular reference to a full planning application submission iii) to hear more about fund-raising ideas and intentions.

Mike Barber provided an overview of the design drawing attention to the positioning and orientation of the new building. Dealing with the existing levels was a challenge and inevitably will lead to a rise in cost. You will note that the sports area is to be housed over two floors:- the ground floor will contain a large storage area and two large changing rooms that can be sub-divided to create four smaller changing areas. They will contain showers and toilets. The first floor will comprise of a large clubroom area with small kitchen and bar area as well as a further two toilets. It will provide a viewing area linked to an exterior patio. An important feature is that both these spaces and the main hall are designed to be self-contained so that the whole building doesn't have to be opened if only one area is in use. But also this means that a number of activities can happen simultaneously. The difference in levels between the sports areas and the main hall will necessitate the installation of a small platform lift – importantly this will be used for users/visitors with mobility issues such as wheelchair users.

The main hall space measures 18 metres x 10 metres compared with the current hall space of 14 metres x 8 metres. The new dimensions are accepted as a minimal footprint for new community and primary school halls. There will be a small meeting room to the side of the stage, a large kitchen and a storage space of 40m². The hall will be over 6 metres in height and will enable sports such as badminton to take place. Importantly this will improve our chances of attracting a grant from Sport England.

The play area will be re-located to the current ball park area – this will provide a safer environment as far as traffic is concerned and also enable parents to supervise when seated on the patio and covered area running alongside the main hall facing the cricket pitch.

Area 1 – Design and associated issues

Questions related to:-

- **the size of the stage and storage space underneath** – *the current stage requires side and front portable extensions to enlarge it and this is still unsuitable. MB pointed out that the proposed stage has greater depth and will be as wide as the existing main hall i.e. 8 metres. The required depth of storage can be looked at.*
- **cost** – *taking into account the knock-on effect around the uncertainty of Brexit and the fall in the value of the £, building material costs are rising steadily given that a substantial proportion are imported from Europe– current estimate to be around £1.1/1.2 million. This figure includes the cost of landscaping and provision of car parking.*
- **the size of the kitchen** – *this will be twice the size of the existing kitchen.*
- **heating and energy saving measures** – i) use of solar panels – *indeed, the main roof space faces south west towards the cricket area so one has to consider maintenance and damage caused by cricket balls;* ii) provision of electric car charging points – *one would think that the adoption of such ‘green measures’ would strengthen our position with the planning authority but sadly this is not the case. Currently the cost for each charging point is £2500;* iii) proposals for heating – *underground source heating will be installed given the area of the main hall floor space and also it will be a highly insulated building – thermally efficient to meet current building regulations;* iv) are there grants for renewable? – *there are interest loans available but grants are becoming increasingly more difficult to secure;* v) would the adoption of such ‘green’ measures tick the planning box? – *yes and no, it isn’t a planning requirement but current building regulations do require them.*
- **cost re the use of block brick construction rather than wood and cost of foundations** – *the depth of foundations is the same for both block brick and timber frame construction. The issue one has to consider is one of cost and repair. As this will not affect the outward, exterior appearance, it isn’t a matter to concern ourselves with at this stage.*
- **why so many toilets?** *One has to remember that this is a dual facility i.e. general community and sports usage. Both areas will require toilets and with regard to the sports facilities, these are the minimal specifications laid down by the various governing bodies of sport and Sport England. If these are not adopted, no funding in the form of grants will be available.*
- **could the roof space in the storage area to the rear of the building i.e. north facing side, be adapted to provide a additional ‘mezzanine’ level of storage?** *In theory ‘yes’ but the practical issues to consider are how do you gain access to it and what can be stored there safely.*
- **pedestrian access to the hall across the car parking space.** *Suggestion that the route should be re-aligned so it is a direct line to the entrance doors rather than across the car park.*
- **will the car park be illuminated?** *Yes but low level, controllable lighting; such lighting will only be operation when the building is being used.*
- **security measures** – *the building will be fitted with CCTV and fire alarms.*
- **provision for waste disposal and foul drainage** – *a treatment bed will be located in the upper part of the cricket outfield towards the top south western corner and the waste will be pumped to it. The cost of this has been allowed for in the overall cost estimate. As the car park surface will be permeable, it is expected that there will be a minimal run-off of rain.*

- **What happens to our annual bonfire?** *Fireproof cobbles could be laid to provide a site.*
- **What is the situation with the warranty and the collateral warranty for the new building?** *(Please note that this more comprehensive answer was provided after the meeting)*
 - i) *A 'design warranty' All consultants involved in the process will carry full professional indemnity cover (PII) for their part of the design work and anything which results as a direct result of their failure to carry out their work correctly. PII usually lasts for a period of six years after practical completion.*
 - ii) *A 'collateral warranty' can be put in place which effectively protects the fee investment in their work. This means that they undertake to carry out their work in the proper manner and in the event that they cannot continue or are found to be deficient then they carry the cost of employing alternative consultants to rectify so that the client does not pay twice.*
 - iii) *A 'construction/structural warranty' - any building contract will usually be set up with a defects rectification period of twelve months from practical completion and a retention sum held over from the final account to ensure that the contractor is diligent in dealing with initial issues resulting from settling in of the building and problems in first use by the client. Inherent defects may often come to light much later and established case law makes it possible to hold the contractor responsible for a period of up to 13 years if the fault is sufficiently serious ie major settlement or subsidence, major failure of the superstructure etc.*
- **Given the height of the hall, will it be sound-proofed?** *Yes*
- **Will the pavilion remain in use until the new hall is built?** *Yes, if you look at the Site Layout drawing, you will see that the boundary of the new building does not encroach on to the current sports pavilion footprint.*
- **Has St Mark's School been involved to date?** *Yes, Clare Rivers, co-head teacher, has attended meetings and the intention is that the school could use the space for the teaching of gymnastics and dance during curriculum time as well as during after-school hours.*

Area 2 – Future timescales

MB stated that the intention/plan is to submit a full planning application during the middle of March 2018. Given the scale of this project, it is certain that the application will be considered by the Wealden's Planning Committee i.e. councillors. The usual period of time between submission and receiving a decision is around 8 weeks i.e. mid June.

Questions related to:

- **how long does planning consent last?** *3 years but providing you make some start on construction, this time limit is removed.*
- **what happens if planning approval is refused?** *It would depend on the reason for refusal and whether or not the planning authority would reverse its decision on appeal. The first step would be to take advice from MB to decide if an appeal would be appropriate or to consider reducing the scale of the building e.g. floor area of the main hall itself. Even the option of reverting to the original intention to submit a Community Right to Build Order seems unfeasible, given that European legislation supersedes a community order.*

Area 3 – Fund raising ideas and intentions

Questions related to:

- **how will the money be raised?** *It is best if one deals with the building in two halves – sports accommodation and usage and general community usage. For the sports element, our intention is to apply for grants from Sport England (Community Asset Fund - £150k maximum), Football Foundation (£10k - £500k) and quite possibly several charitable trusts. We estimate that the construction cost for the sports facilities be between £400-450k. With regard to general community usage, we will be applying to large charitable trusts e.g. Garfield Weston, large companies, Veolia Environmental Trust and Reaching Communities (£100k maximum)*
- **will any funding be provided by the sale of the existing village hall site?** *It is our understanding that the project will be receiving some funding but this is an issue for both the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee to resolve. At this point the Chair of the Hadlow Down Parish Council, Sandra Richards, provided further information: The land is owned by the Parish Council and the current building by the Village Hall Committee. Yes, there is an idea to dispose of the site at the appropriate time i.e. only when the new hall is built and the possibility of housing being built on the site. The Parish Council has submitted an Outline Planning application to this effect but reassured all present that no decision will be made until it has been considered and voted on by parishioners at a public meeting. The rationale for submitting the application is simply to capture spare vehicle trips that currently are available in the Buxted/Hadlow Down area.*
- **what happens if the funding isn't raised?** *Difficult to answer at this stage but one option could be to focus efforts on refurbishing and extending the current hall and providing a new sports pavilion on the playing field site.*
- **at what stage has the Business Plan reached?** *The latest draft takes us to the stage at which we had been awarded the final grant from the Community Buildings Programme and the appointment of MJB Architects (March 2017). So there is a great deal to update but critically it will not be completed until we have been able to achieve more reliable energy costings and running costs. Parishioners should be confident that the plan will be shared with them for scrutiny –the question is do we share an incomplete version or wait until we have all the facts and figures?*
- **how will hire costs of the new building compare with existing ones?** *One would expect them to be slightly higher particularly with the appointment of a person or persons to manage the building, take bookings and be responsible for cleaning. However, we are only too aware of the high energy costs of the current hall- 'feeding the meters'- and the hall will be much more energy efficient. Our view is that Hadlow Down based voluntary organisations should be offered a preferential rate in comparison to those from outside the parish.*

Some final thoughts and information

Should anyone wish to find have a further opportunity to re-examine the drawings and make comments, you will find all the information on the Hadlow Down Community Centre website: www.newvillagehall.co.uk

If we are granted planning permission, you can see that we have a real challenge ahead of us to raise the necessary capital within the available time. We need your help – there may be fellow parishioners or others who can advise and get involved with fund-raising. Could we access support from large companies, the City and other sources? We are becoming an extremely small committee and we need fresh blood and added impetus. To help, you don't have to become a trustee and/or

committee member but offer to serve on a sub-group that will be topic focused. The HDCC trustee or committee member chairing that sub-group would report back at committee meetings.

On the website, you will find a copy of our Lottery form - £12 annually to buy a number with a draw taking place three times a year and you are not limited to one number. Maybe you could persuade family members, friends and business colleagues to do so.

On behalf of those present, Sarah Prall thanked Mike for his invaluable input to the meeting.

Finally, on behalf of HDCC, many thanks for your support.