

Community Hall Feedback Document

To the Community Hall Group,

HEALTH WARNING: This is intended to be helpful and constructive. Please keep that in mind as you read.

Thank you for putting together the consultation and for all your hard work to date. I believe that there are many great things we can do in this village and that South Stoke is a special, unique place.

The projects we are planning as a village are significant and will have a large impact on life in South Stoke; hopefully that impact will be a positive one.

I therefore believe that whatever happens, we must proceed in an open, honest and transparent way ensuring that we have exhausted all options available to us. This is especially important if we are considering spending significant sums of money.

I would like to start with the history to the project. I understand there have been at least 2 previous attempts to obtain a replacement village hall and that these caused significant divisions within the village which took some years to recover from. This latest project has come about from the Village Plan with the initial intention being to refurbish the existing village hall.

I understand that the advice received was that it was not economical to refurbish the existing hall and that a replacement was the only option. Multiple sites were proposed and the village had a chance to comment on these prospective sites, with the Rec being the preferred option.

With the shop also requiring a permanent home, the decision was taken to combine the projects.

I would like to play devils advocate and challenge a few points here. I am doing this because I feel we should be completely open and by addressing these points completely it will prevent issues further down the line. It will also give those who are questioning the process the confidence that everything that needs to be done is being done.

Firstly, the report regarding the state of the existing village hall has not been made public. We have neither seen cost estimates for carrying out repairs nor those for refurbishing the village hall. Without public scrutiny on this, we can not put to bed this option. This is fundamental to the whole project and in my mind, must be resolved. I would therefore urge that a) the report is made public and b) we go through the exercise of obtaining estimates for refurbishing the existing hall.

Secondly, I am unaware of the option of extending the existing village hall having been considered. In order to have a full and complete mandate for moving forward, we must have considered all options. There will be various implications of extending and these should be considered until such time as an extension it is either rolled out or ruled out for clear and complete reasons.

Finally, the locations being considered are based on the survey from 2017. I have tried to find the data from and results of the survey, but with no luck. Again, this should be made public.

Once these activities have been carried out completely, there will be a clear mandate and reduce the possibility of any criticism of the way the project has arrived to where it is. Of course doing this may also provide us with options or opportunities that we had not previously considered.

Moving on, there is the design information provided on the current plans to consider.

I think the plans provided have jumped the gun a bit. The plans provided are certainly very useful, however the elevations, which are important for planning have not considered any design options for the residents of South Stoke. I will refer to this as style options.

We have only been presented with one style. Whilst it is a valid option, we should be provided with multiple styles to consider. Just carrying out a short web search on google provides many options for styles. I have attached just a few examples below. It is only once these style options are considered that the elevation drawings can be done.

I have to be honest, I was very surprised to see such detailed drawings at this stage in the project. There are plenty of things that still need to be done before we can think of producing planning drawings and my fear here is that the money that has been spent has been, to a certain extent, wasted.

Anyway, specific feedback on what was presented:

Roof pitch - I feel that the ridge is far too high. Nearly all the houses in the south west corner of the Rec are bungalows and as drawn at almost 7.5m, the hall would be equivalent to a 2 storey house. This would have a negative impact on those neighbouring dwellings. Please consider a shallow mono pitch over the shop, possibly with a living roof and/or PV panels. The hall roof pitch should also be shallower to reduce ridge height or again, shallow mono pitch with part solar, part living. Alternatively, dummy pitches or hipped roofs can help reduce the impact.

Location - For the separated design, I would like to see the shop on the location of the current shop. Prior to construction, if the services for the new hall were installed, then the existing shop could be moved to the other side of the car park near to the proposed hall site. Then the new shop could be constructed. Downtime would be the time taken to move the containers of the existing shop, so potentially only a few days. This would mean that there was less dead space behind the new shop premises. (see below numbered steps)

If the cranked option (which is currently my second favourite) were used, I would prefer this to be towards the railway as that would mean the building could be kept away from the centre of the rec.

The cranked and straight designs are still both too central - something that has been rejected by the Amenities Charity already. They need to be moved away from the entrance road and towards the edge of the rec. They should be designed so as not to interfere with the play equipment. The cranked building could also be cranked the other way. This would provide a better view of the rec from the building and make better use of sunlight on the verandah. The only way I can see this working is if the footprint was reduced and/or the 9m covenant is removed.

Out of the three, I think the separated design would work best. The shop and hall do not need to be together and having two smaller buildings may have less of an impact on the rec overall. If separated, any hall users would not be disturbed by shop users. It would also mean the shop could be built if there were an issue with the hall for whatever reason.

Building them separately would also provide an opportunity to minimise downtime of the shop as the following procedure could be adopted:

1. Install the services for the new hall
2. Empty the shop premises and lift the containers across to the site of the new hall - connect the services, refill the shop and continue trading
3. Build the new shop premises on the existing site
4. Transfer the shop fixtures and fittings / stock
5. Remove the old shop containers
6. Build the new hall.

Budget - well you certainly shouldn't go over budget!!! Having spoken to the committee members at the consultation, I think you are acutely aware that the costs are unrealistic. Given the restriction on grant funding presently and the proposed costs, I would like to see something a bit more realistic. I'd also like to see a bit more honesty on the likelihood of funding as I do not believe for one moment that we can fund a £1.25M project on the basis that has been suggested, even if the Glebe development goes ahead.

It would also be good to get an understanding of the ongoing cost of the building. This could only be indicative at the moment, but it is important to get an idea based on design so that we know the likely impact on the precept.

I would also like to see us go further on ecological measures. For example, rainwater harvesting is a relatively low capital cost and can save large amounts on water bills. Alternatively / additionally a bore hole should be considered as I understand it is very expensive to connect a new water main.

I hope this is helpful,

Aldworth Village Hall



Cooksbridge Village Hall



Cherhill Village Hall



Matfield Pavilion



Tarrant Hinton Village Hall

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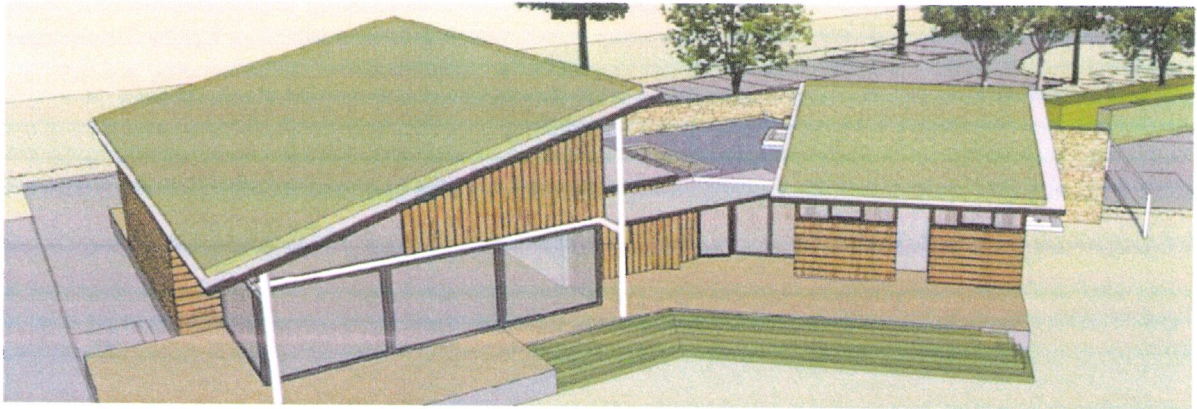
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