

ENFORD PARISH HALL AND READING ROOM

Notes of the Public Meeting held by PARISH HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Held on Thursday 27th September 2018 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall

Present: Peter Cliffe-Roberts, Chairman
Mark Hiskett, Richard Roberts, David Spencer, David Harbottle, Vick Exley, Diane Christie-Rundle, Ollie Stagg, Jacqui Elkins and Jane Young.
Elizabeth Harrison, Secretary & Treasurer
36 members of the village attended.

Chairman, Peter Cliffe-Roberts opened the meeting at 7.10pm

Firstly he introduced all the members of the Parish Hall Management Committee (PHMC) and the various groups/clubs they represent.

He outlined the history of the Hall going back to its having been built in 1909 and the plot and building (freehold) were gifted to the village in a conveyance of 1927. Since then it has had many different uses including the drop off point for evacuated children in WWII, the Girls friendly Society, wedding receptions, dances, mother and baby clinic, supper evenings, Parish Council meetings, jumble sales and more recently, circuit training. In 1998 the Charity Scheme was created requiring the Charity is administered by a committee with the object of provision and maintenance of a Village Hall for meetings, lectures classes and other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation. The freehold title of the land remains vested in the custodian trustee of the charity, Enford Parish Council. The P H M C are a separate body to whom the day to day management of the Hall and site are delegated by the Parish Council.

During the last few years no maintenance or repair work has been done on the building and in January 2018 when the new (current) PHMC took over, the building was independently surveyed with regard to its fitness for purpose. The survey was thorough and conclusive, the Hall had reached the end of its economic life and the PHMC regrettably agreed that it had to be demolished. At present it is costing the Parish Council circa £1,300 p.a. in insurance alone. Electricity and Water are in the process of being disconnected and once Wiltshire Council gives the Consent required, a demolition company will move in to clear and secure the site.

After further discussion the Committee decided that the hall site will not be sold. The Committee has produced some viable options for the future of the site which is to continue to be of benefit to the whole village.

Peter Cliffe-Roberts stressed that the alternative uses for the site shown on the sketches that the public were being invited to view were only simply illustrative and asked that those present not to focus on the visual detail but to think about the overall concept/purpose/ facility offered. All these and any other alternative uses for the site would require Planning Permission due to being in a Conservation Area.

He invited the villagers present to have a good look at the sketches and their accompanying notes, write any comments by each sketch scheme and also note any other viable ideas which the PHMC could consider. A copy of the independent survey was also available for inspection. Tea, coffee and biscuits were then available to everyone present whilst they looked at and thought about the five ideas put forward, and on returning to the meeting Peter Cliffe-Roberts read out some of the comments that had been received and asked for any further questions.

THE SCHEMES CONSIDERED WERE:

1. A parking area:

This section of Longstreet is a “pinch-point” for traffic, and on-road car parking is an issue not only for the immediate residents, but for the village generally. Anecdotally, parked vehicles along the section of Longstreet from the Parish Hall to The Swan have obstructed emergency vehicles needing to pass through the village.

The site is wide enough to create up to 5 parking spaces, and for the spaces to be set back far enough for a 3 to 4 metre deep passing place to be created in front of them.

The site would be gravel-surfaced after site clearance, the boundaries are already fenced (but could be softened in appearance by planting) and the use of the spaces would be controlled by lockable bollards. Initial cost of construction would not therefore be prohibitive.

The spaces would be rented to villagers under an annual licence. As there are likely to be more villagers interested than spaces available, an annual sealed-bid or auction could take place, to allocate the spaces to the highest bidders, although eligibility to bid in the first place could be restricted by address criteria.

The appropriate use of the spaces would have to be monitored, controlled, and if necessary enforced by the Parish Council – we would wish to avoid their use for example by vehicles other than private cars.

Whilst only a small number of villagers would benefit directly from this plan, the village as a whole would benefit from the income generated. After the first few years, the set-up costs will have been covered by rental income, and the ongoing maintenance costs minimal.

The surplus income generated can be used for other village projects.

Comments received:

- ***The spaces option should not be rented to the ‘highest bidder’ but kept back for immediate residents.***
- ***The spaces could include an electric recharging point.***
- ***They would be rented by the residents at a cost of circa £1,000 to £1,500 per annum.***
- ***There are 3 or 4 residents in the immediate area who are known to be happy to pay for off-road parking.***
- ***If part of the plot were used as a passing place, this would encourage speeding in the village.***

- ***This would be a relatively 'cheap' option for the Parish Council/PHMC to install and give a financial return for the benefit of the village.***

2. A single dwelling:

Although the decision has been made not to sell the site of the Hall following its demolition, a dwelling could be constructed and let long-term.

The site is small, but ample for a modest house with a small garden and a parking space.

The funding of the construction would probably be by commercial loan, and in order to offer the lender adequate security for such a loan, the new property would have to be pre-let under a long lease to a tenant of sufficient strength. A company such as Swan Enford Ltd, or a body such as a Housing Association, Charity, M.o.D. etc would all satisfy this purpose. They in turn would sub-let the property to their chosen occupiers.

Under the long lease, the tenant would be responsible for all repairs, decoration, charges etc and the rental income to the village would therefore be effectively "net". It would, however, be wholly swallowed up in loan repayments for many years.

Once the loan had been paid off, the rental income would be for the village to use.

The new building would remain an asset of the village, and once the initial long-lease had expired could be re-let, converted to other uses or even sold if required.

Comments received:

- ***Would in effect increase the need for parking in Longstreet.***
- ***Although planning policy would probably require one parking space, most households have two cars which would aggravate the parking problem not help to solve it.***

3. A Village/Community shop:

A small, simply-constructed single-storey building, providing Enford with a Community Shop serving basic village needs, such as: "Essentials" (bread, milk, tea coffee), newspapers / parcel delivery and collection point, notice board, book exchange etc.

Community Shops trade primarily for community benefit and their interests are linked into community control and supporting local producers and suppliers.

Community Shops have open and voluntary membership, whereby members are part owners of the business and all members have an equal say in how the business is run, regardless of their level of investment.

The majority of Community Shops are managed and run directly by the community, mostly by a combination of staff and volunteers, and some by volunteer or staff only.

In addition to sourcing local food with lower food miles, Community Shops save rural residents car journeys to alternative food stores, saving on average an 8 mile round trip. Community Shops have a 95% success rate (source: The Plunkett Foundation).

Local examples of Community Shops include those at the villages of All Cannings, Urchfont, Rowde, St Mary Bourne, Abbots Ann, The Wallops.....

Funding for such ventures is available from various sources – shares, grants, loans etc – and organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation help with setting-up and fundraising etc.

Comments received:

- ***A reasonably popular option but many pointed out that a list of willing volunteers would soon dry up and managing it would then become impossible.***
- ***It would not be a convenience store or supermarket, just a community shop and drop off point for parcels etc.***
- ***It too would attract vehicles wishing to park and ‘pop in’ thus adding to the problems on Longstreet.***

4. Mixed Use:

Although the decision has been made not to sell the site of the Hall following its demolition, a building could be constructed on the site and let long-term. The sketch shows a two-storey building, comprising a small village shop and two 1-bedroom maisonettes.

The funding and running of a Community Shop is described in more detail above, and this part of the new building could be constructed using funds available specifically for Community Shops.

As to the remainder of the new building, the funding of its construction would be by commercial loan, and to offer the lender adequate security for such a loan, the new property would have to be pre-let under a long lease to a tenant of sufficient strength. A company such as Swan Enford Ltd, or a body such as a Housing Association, Charity, M.o.D. etc would all satisfy this purpose. They in turn would sub-let the property to their chosen occupiers.

Under the long lease of the residential part of the new building, the tenant would be responsible for all repairs, decoration, charges etc and the rental income to the village would therefore be effectively “net”. It would, however, be wholly swallowed up in loan repayments for many years.

Once the loan had been paid off, the rental income would be for the village to use.

The new building would remain an asset of the village, and once the initial long-lease had expired could be re-let, converted to other uses or even sold if required.

Comments received:

- ***This scheme was thought to be a good idea but again raises questions of extra vehicles at the narrowest point of the road.***
- ***Questions were then asked on the cost of building such accommodation. Peter Cliffe-Roberts said this could be in the region of £150,000 with a 20 year or so pay back.***

5. A Village Garden:

Enford is, as we will all agree, a delightful village, but lacks a “centre” – the Green or Pond at the heart of many English villages is absent here.

The Memorial Garden is located at the top of Enford Hill, fronting the main road and rarely, if ever, used. Few, if any, villagers feel inclined to sit out on one of its benches on a summer evening and swallow diesel fumes from the A345!

A simple garden on the site of the Hall would be located at the heart of the village and would cost little to construct and maintain. Contributions from villagers, perhaps in the form of “memorial benches” for example, would assist in keeping the costs low.

The garden would not bring any financial benefit to the village, but villagers would benefit from its use as an occasional meeting-place and aesthetically as a Green Space in the heart of the village.

It might occasionally provide a venue for special purposes such as a village Christmas Tree etc.

Funding the construction would be relatively easy, mostly from grants, and future maintenance could be taken on by the Parish Council gardening contractors at minimal extra cost.

If in the future the need were to be identified for a building for some village purpose, the garden could be built over.

Comments received:

- ***A popular option for the site***
- ***This should be a simple design, not expensive but would give people a pleasant area to sit and enjoy the village.***
- ***Christmas Tree and other Special Uses a good idea.***
- ***It would be more amenable that the Community Garden at the top of Enford Hill***
- ***Maintenance would be relatively inexpensive as this new garden could be maintained by the same contractors who look after the Community Garden and the Playpark area, the cost of which is covered by the Parish Council.***

6. Additional Options for consideration.

- The only new option put forward by the villagers present was a ‘Community Orchard’ which was considered to be an extension of a Village Garden idea.

Peter Cliffe-Roberts closed the meeting at 8.50pm by thanking all who had attended and contributed. The PHMC will continue to study and explore the alternative uses for the site.

Elizabeth Harrison
Secretary and Treasurer
Parish Hall Management Committee.