

New Community Facilities in Wootton – A Proposal

1. Introduction

The Persimmon plan envisages a Community Building which is at the furthest point from the existing village. They imply this will be a hall primarily for their estate and will essentially be another village hall similar to our existing Village Hall and Memorial Hall.

Following Dr MacKenzie's visit to council in February the Parish Council agreed that what the village needed was a Community Facility which centralised many community, social and healthcare needs of parishioners. This was backed up by the Community Liaison Group (of which the Parish Council is a member) who took their ideas to the Mayor.

To take this matter further (and not to let it drift into oblivion) Council must **now** put forward to the Borough Planners proposals of what it would like (and when) so they can be considered in conjunction with the Persimmon Development. The alternative is the default status of the Persimmon Community Hall on the outskirts of the village at some future point in time.

This note gives proposals for the basis of a new Community Facility in the village – the complete package may, or may not, be possible now but it is believed to be a target that should be aimed at for the future.

2. The Vision

The vision as laid out in the document that the Community Liaison Group discussed with the Mayor was

*A **Community Hub** which would bring together Community Facilities for the whole population from new born to 90 and beyond, with Health Care and related services on a single site.*

Facilities could include

- *Healthcare through the Healthy Living Centre*
- *Creche/nursery*
- *A centre for social and voluntary care services such as Carers group, hearing advisory, mental health.*
- *Community rooms for general use from keep fit classes to children's dance classes and from sewing groups to art groups. These rooms would be shared with the healthcare, social and voluntary care services*
- *A Community library – perhaps under the Borough's Library auspices but mainly staffed by volunteers*
- *A Community Cafe – perhaps run by a paid caterer but mainly staffed by volunteers*
- *Space for an informal day centre for the more senior members of the village*
- *Space for a 'Youth Club' for the younger members of the village*
- *Space for day and evening classes for the whole population – perhaps making use of IT equipment within the Community Library and in conjunction with the Upper and Lower Schools.*
- *Gym area – possibly in conjunction with the Physiotherapy centre.*
- *Service areas for Pharmacy, Dentistry, Chiropody, Physiotherapy, Parish Council office, etc*

Being realistic this **will not happen** as a single project because of timescales and other reasons.

The WVHLC have permission from the PCT to go ahead and create a new building and this is expected to start by the end of the year ready to open well within 18 months. There is no way that the Parish will have money to contribute to a grander scheme within that timescale.

However, **this vision can still be achieved**. The proposal in this document is that there is a Community Centre building on land adjoining the WVHLC. Together, the two facilities could give the same wide range of services outlined above in a single location.

3. Components of the Community Building

The village is short of community infrastructure but to replicate just a carbon copy of the facilities at the Village Hall and Memorial Hall would be a mistake. This section gives suggested components for the new facility. Many of these are interlinked as well as being linked to the services at WVHLC. Financial constraints will determine how many of these components will be built.

a) Community Library with learning room

The Community Library would open 6 days a week under the auspices of the Borough Library but mainly staffed by volunteers. The IT centre of the library (maybe in an adjacent room would be used for

- a. During the day, as the current library is for access to the internet
 - b. In the evening, (and during the day when applicable) for use for educational classes for all ages.
- There would also be a white board with overhead projector for Powerpoint etc presentations .

It should be noted that the current library is satisfactory (more opening hours would be better) and the Mayor has assured all earlier this year that there are no plans for closure of libraries. However, the Borough has to cut its budget by 20% over the next three years (10% next year) and in this period the library will again be under threat of closure. This component of the Community Facility can be thought of as a library for the future Wootton.

b) Community Room

A room, with suitable seating, that could be used as an informal day centre for senior members of the village. With innovative design the area may be suitable for other groups (eg youth) in the evenings.

c) Activity Room(s)

A room for general use from keep fit classes to children's dance classes and from sewing groups to art groups. A large room could be provided with a partition (sound proofed) to create two smaller rooms. These rooms could also be used, in conjunction with the WVHLC, for a range of social and voluntary care services.

d) Kitchen (cafe) area

A kitchen area to be used by users of the facility would be needed. The ideal situation would be to have a Community Cafe – perhaps run by a paid caterer but mainly staffed by volunteers. This would act as a focal point for people using the facilities of the building and the services at WVHLC as well as a meeting point for all ages within the village.

e) Gym Area

A small fitness area for villagers, possibly run in conjunction with a Physiotherapy centre at WVHLC.

f) Creche/Nursery

Subject to discussions with the current Playgroup providers in the village there appears to be a need for additional nursery facilities in the village. Whether this could be incorporated into the existing building or whether a purpose built unit (room) is needed should be considered.

g) Office for Parish Clerk

A permanent office for the Parish Clerk in a location where villagers can easily access.

4. Size and Location

The size of the building is envisaged to be between 400 and 600 sq meters. With car parking an area of 0.2 acres is suggested. The location should be about the WVHLC land. It is suggested that the Borough Council is approached to see what arrangements can be made for the Parish Council to lease or own such a strip of land.

5. Finance

The majority of the capital cost will be provided through the S106 agreement with Persimmon. The site is located close to the new estate. Additional grant funding will be applied for. This will determine how many of the components described can be implemented.

Revenue from hiring out the facilities will contribute as much as possible to the running costs. Since this proposal is providing community and social services to the Parish it is suggested that the Precept is used to part fund the Facility. Assuming that the Precept per household remains the same, the extra houses in the village will provide extra revenue to the Parish Council.

A business plan is necessary to determine Capital and Running costs. This plan will determine whether the project is feasible.

6. WHEN?

The Inspector noted the current deficit in community infrastructure in his report. Hence the facility is needed now. The 2005 recommendation stated '£642,000 at 2003 prices to be provided before 200 dwellings in total had been occupied'. Phase 1 of Persimmon's application is for 195 houses so it is suggested that the 200 figure is lowered to be within Phase 1 (eg 190).

This could still be at least three years and by then there will be over 600 new residents wanting to use the village's over subscribed facilities. It is therefore suggested that the Parish Council discusses with WVHLC and the Borough Council if there is any possibility of taking over the temporary building WVHLC currently occupy when WVHLC move into their new premises. This would be a stop gap measure until the new Community facility is ready to use.

7. RESOLUTION.

At the meeting of the full Parish Council on August 10th under item 11/111 Council is asked to resolve that 'Wootton Parish Council agree in principle to the proposal outlined above and instruct the clerk to work with other councillors and relevant people to produce a feasibility study (including a business plan) for the project'.