

Hooe Parish Council

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Minutes of the Village Hall Project Committee of 26th October 2022

Attendees: Cllr Ross Clifton (RC), Cllr A. Loyd (AL), Cllr Stephen Crawhurst (SC) Cllr Dick Carey (DC),
Gayle Kirk (GK)

Other attendees:

8 members of the public present. Meeting opened at 7pm

Business To Be Transacted

1. **Introduction and welcome**

AL welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. To request for nominations and select a chairman for the Village Hall Project Committee

DC nominated AL . Seconded by SC. All agreed

Resolved that AL be chairman of the Village Hall Project Committee.

3. To request for nominations and select a vice chairman for the Village Hall Project Committee

RC nominated SC for vice chairman. GK seconded. All agreed.

Resolved that SC be vice chairman of the Village Hall Project Committee

4. **Disclosure of Interests**

Interests in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Parish Council code of conduct.
To receive councillors' declarations of interest regarding matters on the agenda and consider any written requests or dispensation as a result. Any changes to the register of interests should be notified to the clerk.

None

5. **To receive apologies and reasons for absence** in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 S85 (3)

Apologies received from Cllr Paul Yeeles, DC Pam Doodles and Jack Rist St. Oswald's Church

6. **To Receive Questions from the Members of the Public**

Meeting Closed to receive Public Questions

Please note: Only matters may be raised for public discussion that are listed the agenda, any other question should be put in writing to the clerk in advance of the next meeting. Questions raised for items listed on the agenda that cannot be answered at the council meeting will be brought forward to the next council meeting for response.

AL announced the parish council will accept public questions throughout the meeting on this occasion, as it is important to receive the feedback from the residents on the options document presented to the parish council.

Written question sent into the clerk:

Q1 Having read the public statement regarding the reason for the cancellation of the first meeting of the village hall project committee, is it legal for a non member of the parish council to withhold the parish council's documents that have been paid for out of council tax funds?

A1 AL explained it is not legal for any other party to hold the parish council documents except the parish clerk on behalf of the parish council. AL stated that more than £3,000 was spent with council tax funds to draw up plans with an architect named Bernie Baker, and the whereabouts of these original plans and documents is unknown. AL informed the meeting that it is a breach of the General Data Protection Regulations to be held by any other party than the parish council without express permission of the parish council. AL explained the clerk has written to the Pam Doodles, chairman at that time regarding the missing plans, but no response has been received. AL asked the clerk to write to Pam Doodles again and report back to the next committee meeting.

2 **Comments sent in by a resident for the parish council to take note:**

I would strongly recommend that the council members organise a mini referendum of all residents. Which includes a cost impact of the various options for the village hall. In these days of cost of living pressures it is important to know the cost impact on the council tax. To support any option, we need the cost impacts both one time and ongoing. Thanks for your continuing diligence, on these matters.

Public Questions Raised:

Q3 How are we going to move forward?

A3 AL outlined to the meeting that different options are to be considered and the paperwork is to be reviewed. AL explained SC will be running through the options. AL stated the options will go to the residents of Hooe to establish their views of the preferred option once the process is completed.

SC pointed out a lot of work has been done and this project has been rumbling on for ten years or more. SC stated the parish council will gather all the information and undertake a proper analysis of all the options, look at all the proposals that have come up before including looking at the demand for the hall, selling the existing village hall site plus issues to resolve in the building on the recreation grounds.

SC reported all the information should be considered and made as clear as possible, detailing all the financial implications. SC advised an appraisal paper will be produced setting out all of the above and more. SC explained previously there had been an exhibition of the new village hall presented to the residents with the costings of the refurbishment of the existing village hall on Denbigh Road, but no costings were provided for the new village hall to compare. SC advised the proposal for the new village hall did not find a solution to the car parking issues. SC stated he wanted to ensure all the information and unanswered questions is considered in one place.

Q4 When will this happen?

A4 SC explained the parish council is to agree the terms of reference this evening, and over the next couple of months undertake the work to get to a resolution on how to proceed. SC pointed out the first piece of work is to meet with the planners to obtain their views. SC commented that the previous parish council had met the planners on more than one occasions but no records of these meetings are held by the clerk.

Q5 I find it totally unacceptable that the plans have gone missing, and its come from my money.

A5 AL confirmed the clerk will write to Pam Doodles again and take advice as necessary.

Q6 Is there any difference between a full council meeting and a committee meeting?.

A6 AL asked the clerk to explain. The clerk advised a committee is set up for a specific project or an ongoing matters, as such projects or issues are likely to take up too much time at a full council meeting, and impact on the time allocated to deal with day to day business. A committee does not always have the same powers as a full council meeting, and non councillors can be co-opted on to the committee which cannot happen at a full council meeting.

Q7 Who had the overall responsibility for the safe keeping of the plans and who physically took responsibility for them?.

A7 AL believed it was the chairman at that time, Pam Doodles.

Q8 DC should give an explanation where the plans are?.

A8 AL explained Pam Doodles was the chairman and was involved in the management of this project.

Q9 I am aware information is put in the parish newsletter, but why can't parish information be put on the Wealden District Councils 'my alerts' and more residents are likely to hear what is going on.

A9 AL asked the clerk to look into this as an option. AL commented that information is put on the parish notice board and within a month, the parish website will be up and running.

DC commented that only the parish council and Wealden District Council can allow the building on the recreation grounds. DC said that the parish council must put an estimated cost on the project and how the money is to be raised or if not whether it is to come from the council tax payers. DC explained these questions have come up repeatedly, but no answers have been given to date.

SC explained this will be covered as part of the appraisal paper.

DC confirmed there had been two previous meetings with the planners and there were no decisions either way. DC explained the only definite response was that the planners would like the front elevation of the existing village hall retained.

SC stated it is unclear what was presented to the planners at that time.

Q10 Why can't we have a simple vote for what people want. Most people don't want a new village hall.

A10 AL explained that is what the parish council wishes to do.

Meeting Re-Opened

Matters For Consideration and Resolution

7. To discuss and agree the Terms of Reference for the Village Hall Project Committee.

Proposed by SC and seconded by RC. All agreed.

Resolved to accept the terms of reference for the Village Hall Project Committee as written.

8. To agree to adopt the options put forward for a new or refurbished village hall and agree any actions required.

SC explained the village hall project has been ongoing for over 10 years. SC suggested in 2014 the situation changed, as the parish council was gifted the piece of land adjoining the village hall, the parish council holds no information as to why it was gifted.

DC stated his understanding on the matter was the parish council may use the land as they felt fit.

SC advised in 2017 Baker Associates were commissioned to prepare designs for the new village hall at the recreation grounds and the plans were put to the residents, but the response was unclear. SC explained these are the plans that are missing. SC indicated further drawings were commissioned for the existing village hall which included an extension, and again had a mixed reaction from the residents, the residents liked the designs, but concerns were raised about no parking being available. SC commented that discussions took place about having a potential car park in the field owned by the parish council by the parish notice board, discussions also took place about the option of using the farmland to the south of the village hall, and also the plot of land gifted to the parish council next to the village hall. SC explained it reached a point where some residents wanted a village hall on the recreation grounds and some residents wished to remain at the village hall.

SC made the point it is time to decide. SC explained the original reasons for moving up to the recreation grounds was that it was reported by the parish council that the village hall was beyond repair, this is not the case. SC explained a structural survey has been undertaken that states the village hall is not structurally unsound, but does need work to be carried out to bring it up to standard. SC further advised that building work had to be done to the village hall to meet fire regulations, health and safety legislation in order to keep the building open and obtain valid insurance.

SC explained before any proposal is put to the residents, the parish council must put the options to Wealden District Council planners to find out what they would allow. SC indicated that he had been led to believe the planners would accept a new village hall on the recreation grounds. SC advised the parish council has no information whether the planners would allow car parking on the adjoining land at the existing village hall. SC explained until we have the meeting with the planners we cannot know what they rule in or rule out.

SC indicated the parish council has a lot of background information now, able to prepare costings of the various schemes and prepare an evaluation document of the options. SC explained there are two options, one is to build a new village hall on the recreation grounds, one option is larger and one smaller. SC outlined the larger building is one similar to the size prepared by Baker Associates, meeting the briefs discussed at that time. SC advised a smaller version is to be considered, no designs have been prepared yet. SC explained if the residents would like an all singing all dancing village hall, weddings etc. it will be 400 sqm and that will cost you X and if a modest village hall is to be considered that will be around 280sqm at a cost of Y. SC suggested that both these options then can be compared with the cost of refurbishment of the existing village hall?.

SC commented that if a car park is to be considered at the existing village hall, the problem arises with access and what access the planners would allow on to Denbigh Road and whether there should be a small extension to the village hall to make it slightly bigger.

SC explained once the parish council has the observations from the planners, an appraisal will be prepared setting out all the issues including additional questions such as is there a demand for a larger facility and can we justify a 400 sqm village hall.

Meeting Closed to receive Public Questions

Q11 Is the village hall actually used ?

A11 AL advised the village hall is currently used once a week.

Q12 If there is a larger hall, can the parish council afford to pay for it?.

A12 SC explained those are all the kind of questions that need to be asked as the parish council must look at the need and demand, what facilities are required and what facilities are not required.

Q13 The most important thing is that the village hall is in the centre of the village with the use of a car park, and if anyone wants something else, they should go somewhere else.

A13 SC advised if the village hall is to be viable a car park must be established, otherwise it becomes less viable without a car park. SC explained this has always been a disadvantage to the existing village hall.

Q14 Even if we don't have a car park, how many years have we managed without one?. How about you Dick, how have we managed since you have been with the parish council?.

A14 DC explained when he started here there were just two bike stands to store push bikes, these days everyone has to come by car.

Q15 Will there be a car park on the recreation grounds?.

A15 SC stated yes.

Q16 Have the plans already been submitted?.

A16 SC no.

Q17 Pam Doodes rang me and said that I will be pleased to know the plans submitted were refused.

A17 SC said that he had no information to support that statement.

Q18 How big is the existing hall and how does it compare with the small and large proposed sizes for the hall ?.

A18 SC stated the existing village hall is about 60sqm, the smaller proposed hall is 280sqm and the large hall 400sqm. SC explained that from the research carried out, most village halls are larger than 60 sqm and 60sqm is not an ideal size, but Hooe parish probably has the smallest number of residents compared with the rest of Wealden.

Meeting Re-opened

SC outlined that the parish council must cover all the arguments, not to say one is better than the other. SC stated the key question is how the parish council can finance whatever project is chosen? Does the parish council take out a loan, what risk does that put on the residents should there be a default on any loan. SC explained there will be all kind of problems to resolve particularly going to the recreation grounds, previous assumptions have been the existing village hall site would be sold off for housing to pay towards the new village hall on the recreation grounds. SC suggested if the parish council sells off the existing village hall site, how many houses would the planners allow to be built ?. What does the parish council do in the interim while the parish council builds a new one on the recreation ground, it could be up to two years. SC explained all these issues must be evaluated and debated.

DC said that it must be put to the village if they want their village hall destroyed and do they want more houses built?.

SC explained this is a question for the planners as well. SC stated the parish council is trying to cover all arguments and to put all this information down on paper for the residents to make a proper judgement and not just providing bits and pieces of information.

Closed Meeting

Q19 Will you cost out how much a car park will cost ?.

A19 SC yes.

RC indicated the village owned the field by the parish notice board and that it could be used as a car park, it is only 150 yards away. SC stated this has been suggested before. AL reported the field is very marshy and would need a lot of work.

DC suggested a new village hall could also be built on this parish land and still be viable.

Meeting Re-opened

AL summarised the parish council position, it will look at all the options, cost out the options, see what the planners will agree, identify the issues and send out a proposal to the residents for their view so the parish council can carry this project forward.

It is proposed that the parish council adopts the option document.

Proposed by RC and seconded by DC. All agreed.

Resolved the parish council adopts the option document as written for the village hall project.

9a. A meeting with Wealden District Council planners to seek an opinion on the options agreed

Proposed by SC and seconded by GK. All agreed.

Resolved to set up a meeting with the planners to consider the option document.

9b Approve the planning fee and identify the budget allocation

AL explained to the meeting that the fee can be funded from either the village hall donation fund or the general village hall project fund. AL confirmed the consensus was to allocate the fee from the general village hall project fund.

Proposed by SC and seconded by GK. All agreed.

Resolved the planning fee to be taken from the Village Hall Project fund.

9c. Agree attendance arrangements for the meeting with Wealden District Council planning department

AL suggested as a minimum the clerk, chairman and vice chairman must attend the pre-arranged planning meeting. AL advised all councillors should attend where possible.

Proposed by SC and GK. All agreed.

Resolved that the clerk, chairman and vice chairman must attend the planning meeting.

Closed Meeting

Q20 There is a long waiting list for planning meetings are you aware of this and may be costly if a long meeting?

A20 AL stated the clerk will organise the planning meeting and establish the time frames asap.

DC stated the only reason for the large village hall is to seat 100 for the harvest festival which is just one event. The parish council would not build a large village hall for a private person just to hold a large event each year. DC indicated it will be very expensive to run and need to staff to run it.

Meeting Re-opened

Meeting Closed at 7.45pm

In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 all attendees of the meeting are hereby notified that the meeting will be recorded as an aide memoire for the clerk when compiling the minutes. The recordings are held securely and are deleted after the resolution that the minutes are a true and correct record. Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its committees or sub-committees will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present. A person or persons recording the parish meeting are reminded that the "Public Session" period may not be part of the formal meeting and that they should take legal advice for themselves as to their rights to make **any recording during that period.**

Agenda Item 7 – Supporting Document

HOOE PARISH COUNCIL

Terms of Reference for the Village Hall Project Committee

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Village Hall Project Committee is constituted to consider a review of the village hall development options and agree to adopt and implement a plan of action.
- 1.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall undertake a review and evaluation of all village hall studies, designs and consultations undertaken to date.

2. GOVERNANCE OF THE VILLAGE HALL PROJECT COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall comprise of all members of the Parish Council
- 2.2 The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parish Council shall be members of the Village Hall Project Committee in an ex-officio capacity.
- 2.3 The Village Hall Project Committee may choose to appoint a non-councillor to the Village Hall Project Committee under section 102 (3) of the Local Government Act. Any non-councillor appointed will have no voting rights.
- 2.4 A non-councillor may only be appointed to the Village Hall Project Committee if the non councillor meets the terms of section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972, failure to meet these requirements will result in the disqualification of the non councillor to undertake the role (all councillors are required to meet this obligation as part of their declaration of office).
- 2.5 Any councillor or non-councillor appointed to this committee shall make a declaration to include the requirements of section 2.4 of this document, and shall accept an undertaking that by participating in this committee, the councillor or non-councillor shall agree to the obligations set out as follows:
 - To accept and work within the parish council's standing orders, regulations, policies, procedures and other statutes as imposed by law.
 - To accept any work undertaken is pro bono, is not confidential unless stated by law, or subject to copy right, as the sole purpose of the committee is to deliver the objectives set out by this committee for the benefit of the residents of Hooe parish.
- 2.6 The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Village Hall Project Committee shall be elected by the membership at the first committee meeting following the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.
- 2.7 The Village Hall Project Committee shall approve and review the terms of reference annually following the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.
- 2.8 The Village Hall Project Committee shall be constituted each year at the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.

3. QUORUM

- 3.1 The quorum shall consist of a minimum of three members.

4. POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall have the powers to determine on all matters set out in this document including any financial considerations.

5. VILLAGE HALL PROJECT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall carry out a review of the options considered by the previous parish council, including the results of public consultation exercises and Parish Councils resolutions and decisions.
- 5.2 The Village Hall Project Committee shall assess existing demand studies and data justifying the need for a larger village hall, undertake comparative studies of other parishes in Wealden regarding their facilities and the size of the populations served.
- 5.3 The Village Hall Project Committee shall consult with Wealden District Planning Department to establish:
- a. Whether permission would be granted for development on the Recreation Ground and what restrictions might be placed on such a development if it were to be approved.
 - b. Whether the existing village hall could be redeveloped for housing and the likely number of dwellings that may be approved
 - c. Whether permission would be given for development of the garden / allotment plot for car parking and the creation of a new access onto Denbigh Road.
 - d. Whether permission would be given to extend the existing village hall.
- 5.4 The Village Hall Project Committee undertake a review and approve a short list of options for further evaluation. The Village Hall Project Committee shall shortlisted options, confirm the elements of each option, i.e. facilities provided, total floorspace and seating & dining capacity, car parking provision and cost estimates, capital and running. The costings should be based upon current building costs and robust enough so as to give a realistic estimate of the financial costs and thus risks.
- 5.5 The Village Hall Project Committee shall establish relevant criteria for the evaluation of a shortlist of options and undertake a multi-criteria analysis of these options. This analysis should include the quality of facilities provided, accessibility, financing, including the impact of any schemes upon the parish precept, operational issues and environment and sustainability.
- 5.6 The Village Hall Project Committee shall prepare a draft feasibility report of the work carried out. This shall include the conclusions of the parish council as to the preferred way forward.
- 5.7 The Village Hall Project Committee shall ask the clerk to send out an approved summary document to every resident in the village to obtain a mandate, setting out a timescale for response. The findings submitted to the Village Hall Project Committee for consideration and agreement as to the option to go forward on behalf of the residents of Hooe.
- 5.8 The clerk shall investigate and seek sources of funding for the village hall project and report the findings to the Village Hall Project Committee.

6. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 The Village Hall Project Committee meeting will be open to members of the public to attend. The members of the public may be allowed to speak for 3 minutes in accordance with the parish council's standing orders on matters (not classed as confidential) as set out on the agenda at the public section of the committee meeting.

MEETINGS

The Village Hall Project Committee meetings will only be convened when business is required to be transacted.

Options for Evaluation by the Village Hall Committee

1. Introduction and Background

The Village Hall Project has a long history, going back to at least 2012, when Hooe Parish Council observed that the existing hall needed a number of repairs. A suggestion was put forward at that time that perhaps the construction of a new and larger hall would offer better value for money than the repair of the existing hall.

In 2014 the parcel of land adjoining the Village Hall currently used as an allotment garden was gifted to Hooe Parish Council.

In 2017 a scheme was commissioned by the Parish Council from Baker Associates for a new hall on the Recreation Ground. Comments on the scheme were invited from the public, the results of which were inconclusive, with roughly as many residents in favour of the existing site as preferred a new hall on the Recreation Ground.

Subsequently two years later, in 2021, it is understood that a design was prepared on behalf of the Parish council for a new facility of about 280sqm on the existing site. The scheme was exhibited at the village hall and comments invited. Again, there was a mixed response from residents. Many liked the design but lack of on-site parking, meant that overall it was not favourably received by residents.

The Parish Council therefore determined to revisit the matter and returned to the proposal for a new hall on the Recreation Ground. Two committees were established, one to prepare designs for the new hall and the other to look at funding opportunities. A number of outline schemes for a new community hall on the Recreation Ground were developed up to nearly 400sqm gross. These comprised large activity halls and generous support facilities, based on facility briefs.

The proposals for the new hall appears not to have been adopted by the Parish Council at that time, whether on design, cost grounds or a combination of the two, it is not clear. It is nevertheless understood that the funding committee reported that the cost of the new hall would far outstrip the likely funding opportunities.

2. Option to be considered by the Committee

It is proposed to consider a shortlist of three options for evaluation, including discussions with the Wealden Planning Department. Two would be sited on the Recreation Ground, one based roughly on the size of the exhibition scheme and a larger scheme for costing comparison. For planning purposes it is assumed that they would have similar but not identical building footprints and the larger hall might have increased parking requirements. The other scheme would be for the continued refurbishment of the existing hall, provision of a car park and a small extension.

Option 1- Recreation Ground (see Figure 1)

Option 1(a) - A new hall of about 280sqm;

Option 1(b) - A new hall of about 400sqm;

Option 2 - Denbigh Road (see Figure 2)

Option 2 – Refurbishment and minor extension of the existing hall and provision of a small car park on the adjoining plot.

Option 1 – Indicative site plan for a new Village Hall on Hooe Recreation Ground

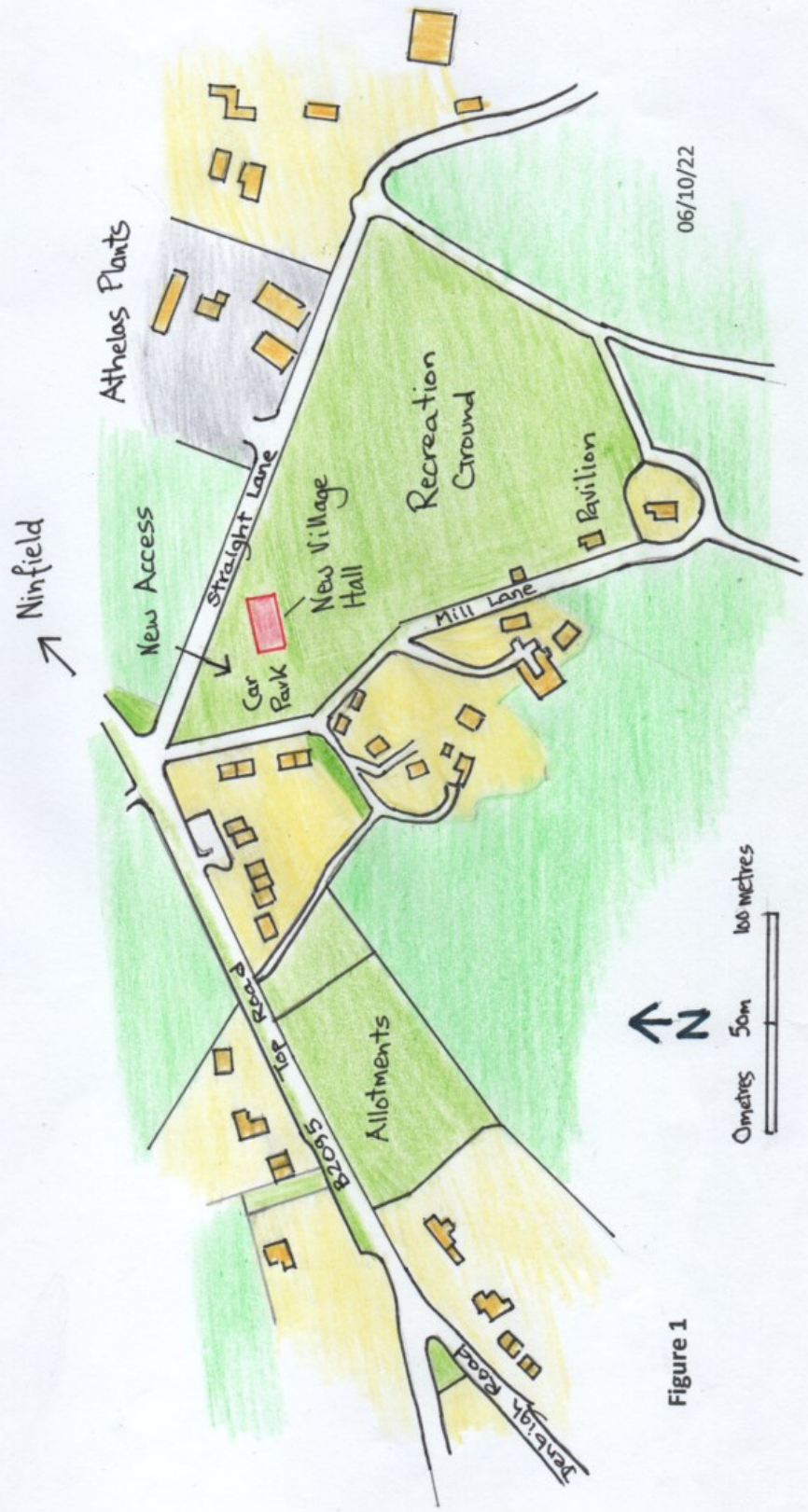
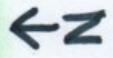


Figure 1

Option 2 – Indicative site plan for car park and minor extension, Hooe Village Hall



Not to Scale

Figure 2

06/10/22