

Hooe Village Hall Project

Appraisal Study

May 2023

Structure of the Presentation

- Background of Village hall debate
- Future options considered
- Criteria used in the evaluation of options
- Evaluation of Options
- Conclusions

Background up to 2021

- In 2012 the existing 100 years old hall was in need of repairs
- The Parish Council at that time examined whether it might be better to build a new, larger hall on the Recreation ground (the Rec)
- In 2014 land adjoining the hall gifted to the Parish – for a car park?
- 2018 a number of schemes drawn up for a new, larger hall on the Rec., inc the Baker Scheme
- Scheme met a mixed reception, not taken forward

More Recent Developments

- In 2021 a design was prepared for a new hall on the existing Denbigh Road site
- Significantly larger than the existing hall but no car parking provided
- Proposal failed mainly on lack of on- site parking
- The Parish Council returned to the idea of a new, large hall on the Rec
- A concept scheme was prepared but not adopted.
- It is understood that the funding opportunities for this hall fell far short of requirements

This appraisal

- By 2022 HPC faced a problem that the existing hall was in urgent need of repair but no decision on refurb or building a new hall had been taken.
- It was therefore decided to undertake a comprehensive appraisal that looked at all options together
- A shortlist of 3 options was therefore drawn up :
 - Option 1a - the Baker Scheme on the Rec
 - Option 1b - A budget scheme on the Rec
 - Option 2 – Refurb of existing hall with on site car park

Options 1a and 1b Recreation Ground

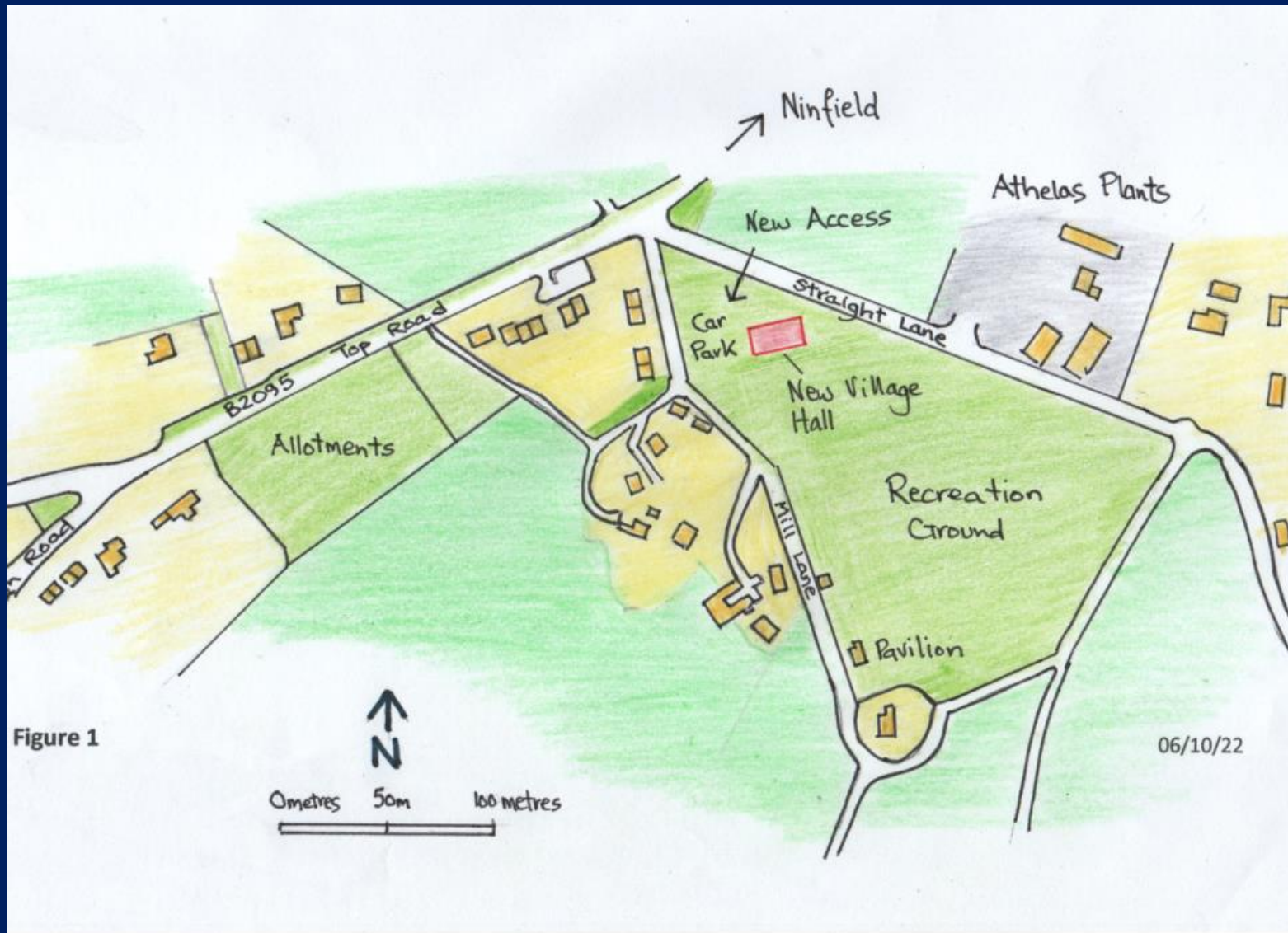
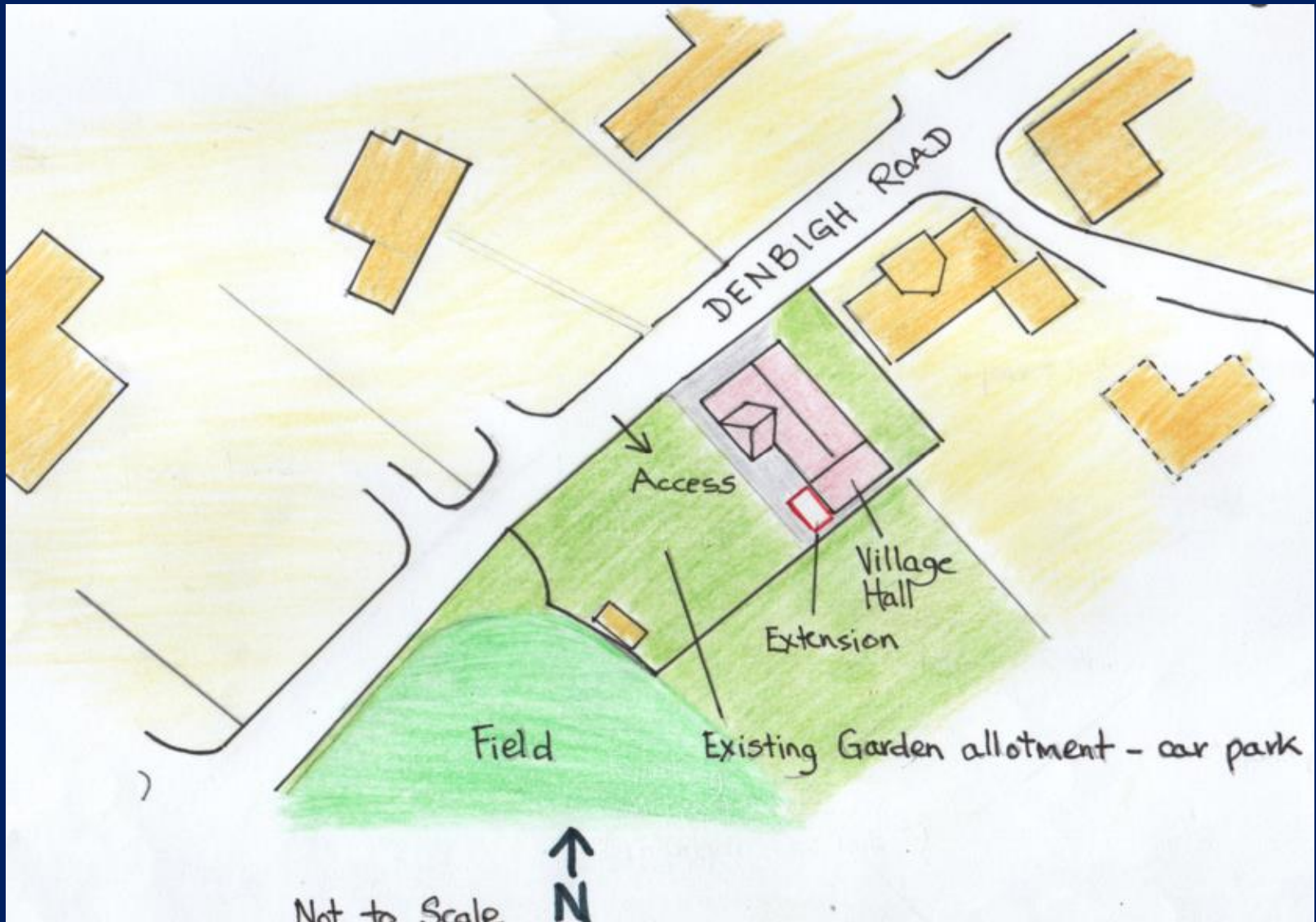


Figure 1

Option 2 : Refurbishment of existing Hall



Basic Components of Each Option

- Option 1a:
 - Two halls & support facilities totalling approx. 390m², accommodating 139 people, 93 seated at tables. Cost approx. £1m
- Option 1b:
 - One main hall & support facilities totalling approx. 250m², accommodating 90 people, 60 seated at tables. Cost approx. £780,000
- Option 2:
 - Existing hall totalling approx. 120m², accommodating 64 people, 43 seated at tables. With small car park & refurb Cost approx. £90,000

Evaluation Criteria

- Need or Demand
- Size and quality of facilities provided
- Planning
- Finance
- Operational Issues
- Environment and Sustainability

Need or Demand

- No demand studies have been prepared to support investment in a larger village hall, although a hall seating say 100 people would benefit occasional events such as the annual harvest supper
- However use of the existing hall has declined over recent years and few groups now regularly use the hall
- Hooe is an unclassified settlement, with no growth scheduled in the Local Plan – so demand for larger facilities will not come from a growing population
- Many newer and larger village halls are used to host weddings, as it is a major revenue earner. However weddings demand from Hooe residents is likely to be very low. Halls offering weddings tend to have better road access than Hooe or are close to larger towns

Size and Quality of facilities

- Hooe village hall is one of the smallest in Wealden and is small even by national standards. The population is also very small.
- Many halls in the District have been improved and enlarged over recent years. Hooe is unusual in not having carried out any improvements until last year.
- Existing facilities are limited and unable to host many events.
- A new, larger hall would undoubtedly attract greater patronage and ability to hold more events and functions
- However Hooe is not isolated and residents have easy access to alternative & larger facilities, e.g. Ninfield.

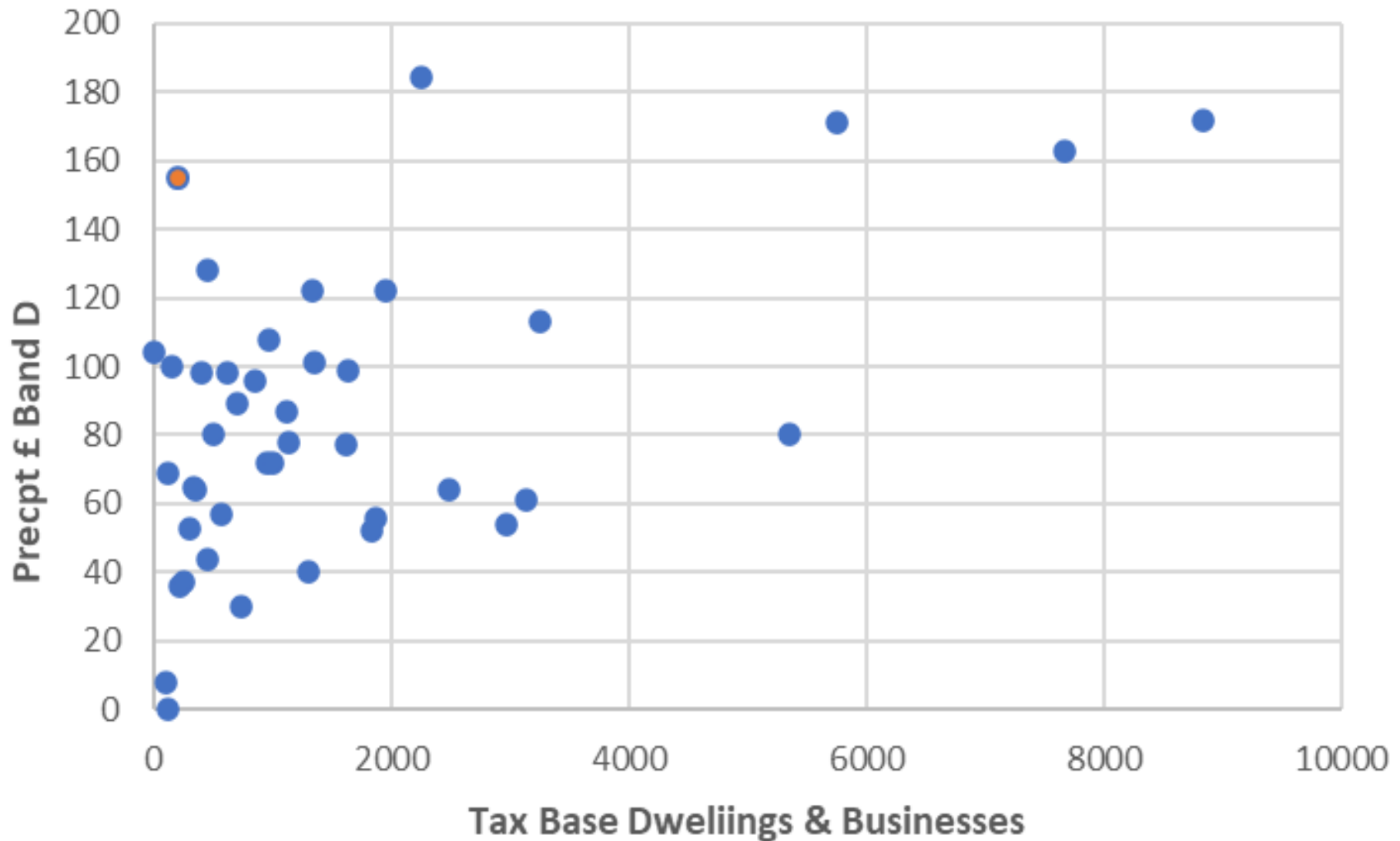
Planning

- Formal advice sought from District planners indicated that they were not keen on development on the Rec, as it would be an urbanizing element. Also they would need to see demand for a larger hall demonstrated in considering any scheme
- With regard to selling the existing hall site for housing, the planners would consider more than one house as over development & inappropriate in this location
- Even if developed for a single dwelling, the existing hall could not be closed (and sold?) before a new hall on the Rec is opened
- Development of the allotment garden next to the existing hall for parking was thought justified provided an alternative allotment site is provided by the Parish

Finance – Capital Costs

- Financing a new hall on the Rec has always been based upon a mix of grants, fund raising, sale of the hall and precept.
- Grants are now far less generous than in the past
- Fund raising has been successful but not sufficient on its own
- Sale of the existing hall would raise significant funds but not realized until after construction of a new hall
- Loans, inc bridging loans would be needed for options 1a & 1b
- Repayment of loans with borrowing charges over 4% from public works lending board are unaffordable and risk of default , therefore unlikely to be granted
- Hooe precept is very high & ideally should be reduced. No support in the village to increase it to fund a new hall

Finance – The Precept



Finance – Running Costs

- Increased electricity and water charges means that the viability of all public venues has become less secure. The existing hall is currently not covering its costs
- A new building would be more energy efficient but this advantage would be negated by virtue of a much larger floorspace to heat and service.
- A larger building would also have greater cleaning & other costs

Operational Issues: Implementation

- Construction of a new hall would take many years, from planning through to raising finances, tendering, site prep, building and fitting out. This would present a major administrative burden for the Clerk & Council and cost to the Parish over that period
- Even the continued refurbishment of the existing hall and provision of a car park in Option 2 would increase the duties and time of the Clerk

Operational Issues: Management & Admin

- Running a larger hall, especially bookings, would increase admin, the duties and wages of the Clerk
- Interestingly, few parish councils own & run village halls – most are run as charities
- Legal advice has been sought by the Parish & they warned against the charity route
- The Parish would see only a peppercorn rent & would have little or no control over the operation of the hall.
- However the Council would be liable if the charity ran into financial trouble. Apparently a number of councils have got into difficulties pursuing this course.

Environment & Sustainability

- Existing open space would be lost in all options, although a larger area would be impacted by building on the Rec
- A new building would use more natural resources such as energy and building materials than refurb of the existing hall
- The existing hall is arguably slightly better sited to allow people to walk to the hall than the options on the Rec

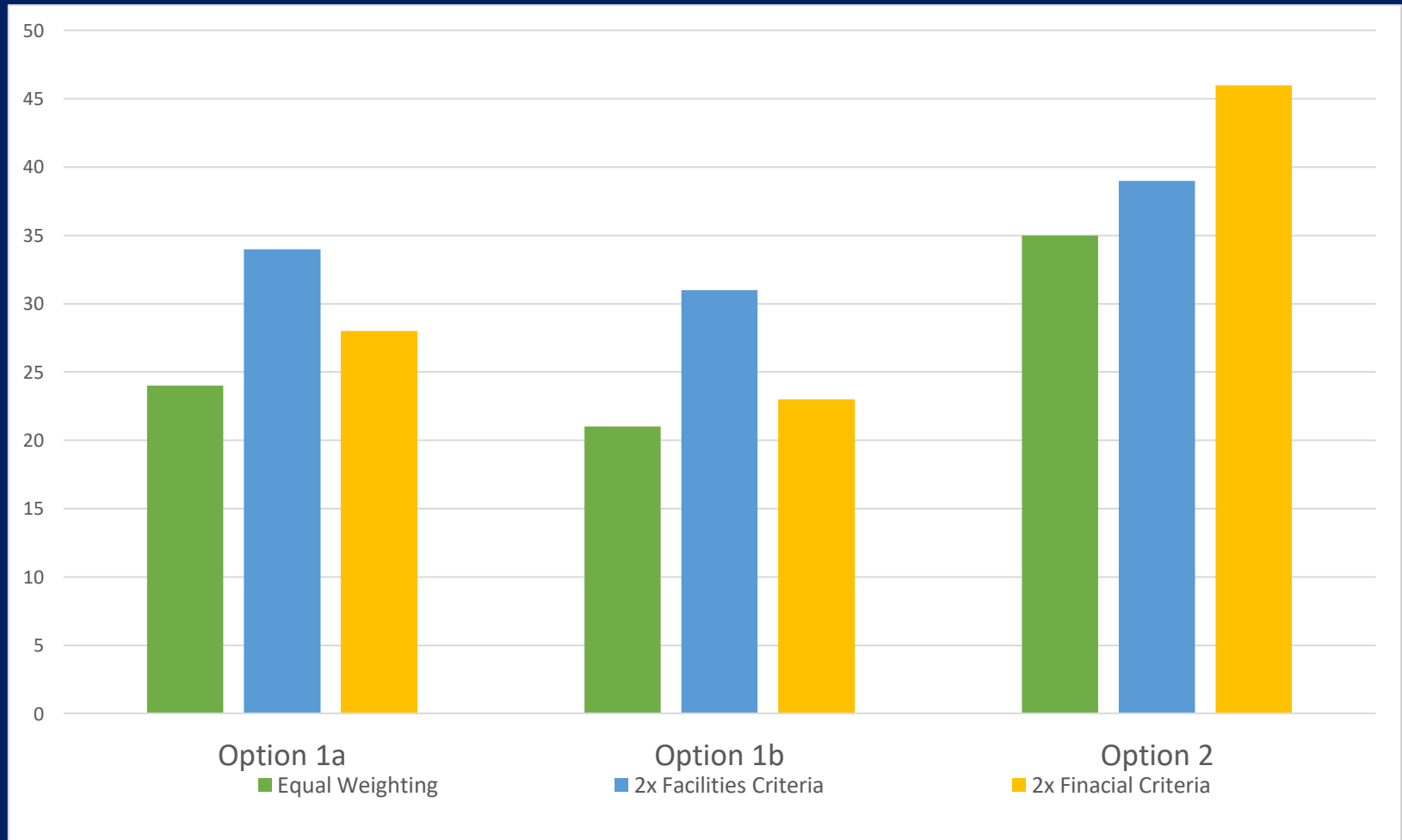
Summary of the Evaluation

- The need for a larger hall not proven
- Options 1a and 1b best in terms of facility size and quality & ability to hold larger events
- Planning considerations tends to favour Option 2
- On Finance, Options 1 a & b do not appear fundable & would be a major financial risk to HPC
- Implementation & Admin favour Option 2
- Environment and sustainability marginally better under Option 2

Summary Appraisal

Evaluation Criteria		Recreation Ground		Denbigh Road
		Option 1(a)	Option 1(b)	Option 2
Need or Demand	1. Does the option meet the needs or demands of the village?			
Size and quality of facilities	2. Does the option provide facilities, including car parking, capable of accommodating larger gatherings and a variety of users?			
	3. Are the facilities provided user friendly and of high quality?			
Planning	4. Does the option meet District Planning Objectives and Requirements ?			
Finance	5. Are the capital cost of the hall realistic and affordable and could there be a requirement for long term & bridging loans?			
	6. Will building running costs, notably heating, lighting and cleaning be affordable?			
Operational Issues	7. Will it be easy to implement the project, including raising finances, procurement and construction?			
	8. Will running the hall, inc. staffing, booking, administration be easily manageable?			
Environment & Sustainability	9. Will the scheme minimize adverse impacts on natural resources?			
	10. Does the option provide easy access for parishioners, particularly for walking?			
Total score out of 50		22	24	31

Summary scores with weighting



Conclusions

- A new hall on the Rec would provide larger & better facilities than the existing hall
- However need for a hall is not required because of village growth. Nor has increased demand been proven
- Financially a new hall is totally unaffordable and unfundable. Loans unlikely to be granted and even if they were, would be major risk to the Parish
- Implementation and operation of a new hall would be time consuming & a major admin burden

Other Options & Way Forward

- The Councils auditor queried whether Hooe even needs a village hall, given how little it is used
- Could the existing site be sold off and proceeds used to reduce/eliminate the precept ?
- Unfortunately no - Proceeds from any sale can only be used for another capital project, e.g. a new village hall - *Catch 22*
- Overall it would appear that Option 2 is the only feasible option open to the Parish and which offers the least financial risk
- We would appreciate your questions & opinions and thank your time.