

# Hooe Parish Council

## Notes of the Meeting with Wealden District Council Planners on 22/3/2023

### Background

It was determined by the Village Hall Project Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 that formal planning advice would be sought from Wealden District Council Planning Authority to consider and advise on the various planning matters relating to the village hall proposals.

A meeting was arranged on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 between the Wealden District Council Planning Authority and Hooe Parish Council held via Microsoft Teams video link. A briefing paper (copy attached) was sent to Wealden District Council Planning Authority explaining the background to the project and the remit of the Village Hall Project Committee to prepare and evaluate the options.

### Attendees to the Meeting

Caitlin Boddy	Wealden District Council Planning Officer.
Ann Loyd	Chairman to Hooe Parish Council
Steve Crawhurst	Councillor to Hooe Parish Council
Jane Warrener	Clerk /RFO to Hooe Parish Council

### The options put forward for consideration were as follows:

- Options 1(a) and 1 (b) for a new village hall on the Hooe recreation ground.
- Option 1(a) of about 400sqm and 1(b) about 280sqm. It was explained that the difference in floor areas was intended primarily for cost comparison purposes.
- Option 2, refurbishment and minor extension of the existing village hall and car park on the adjoining garden plot.

### Meeting Discussion

#### Options 1- Development on the Recreation Ground

Caitlin Boddy expressed a number of reservations with regard to development on the recreation ground. Caitlan Boddy considered that it would represent an encroachment upon existing open space and that a new village hall and associated car parking would introduce an urban element into what is currently an open site. Caitlan Boddy indicated that a new village hall would appear isolated and outside the main body of the village.

Caitlin Boddy stated that should this option be selected, Hooe Parish Council would need to explain why such a large increase in the size of the hall is required. Need and demand would need to be demonstrated, in order that the benefits of the scheme could be seen to outweigh the disbenefits of building on open space.

Caitlin Boddy confirmed that various detailed requirements would also have to be satisfied in any submission, including good visibility splays for the access point, ecological and biodiversity reports, as well as a landscape scheme. These are large and costly studies.

## **Options 2- Development on the Recreation Ground**

Cllr. Steve Crawhurst explained to Caitlin Boddy that the funding of a new hall on the recreation ground has always been based upon the assumption that the existing village hall and allotment garden would be sold for redevelopment for up to 3 houses.

Caitlin Boddy suggested that Wealden District Council would be unlikely to approve more than a single dwelling on the site. Caitlin Boddy indicated that only the village hall building plot would count as a brownfield site for redevelopment purposes, as the space used as an allotment garden is classed as an open space.

Caitlin Boddy stated that Hooe village is not a sustainable location for new housing and is not earmarked for growth. Caitlin Boddy indicated that the site is within the setting of two listed buildings and is thus a sensitive location. Development of more than one dwelling would likely be inappropriate and out of character in this location.

Caitlin Boddy added, should Options 1(a) or (b) be selected, Wealden District Council would expect the village hall to be kept open and functioning as a community facility whilst any new village hall is being constructed on the recreation ground.

Option 2, the proposal for the redevelopment of the allotment garden adjoining the existing village hall as a car park, Caitlin Boddy understood the need for car parking for a community facility and its role in improving the viability of the existing village hall.

Caitlin Boddy stated that as the car park would remove the open space used as an existing allotment garden, Hooe Parish Council would need to provide the same area of land elsewhere in the village as a replacement allotment garden. This is not just allocating an existing allotment garden for the existing tenant, but ensuring the same area of land not currently designated as an allotment garden is earmarked as a new allotment garden. There should be no net loss of land available for an allotment garden in the village.

With regard to access, Caitlin Boddy strongly advised that East Sussex County Council Highways advice is sought. Caitlin Boddy suggested that it would be likely that visibility splay of 43 metres would be required and that maybe we could "get away" with a single width access of 3-4.8m in order to minimise visual impact.

Caitlin Boddy considered it unlikely that the Planning Authority would object to a small extension to the existing hall.

## **Notes taken by Jane Warrener – Clerk / RFO to Hooe Parish Council**

(For a point of clarification, the land adjoining the village hall as advised by the Parish Council's solicitor is classed as an allotment garden based on its use and the tenancy agreement in place.)

# Background Briefing Paper for meeting with Wealden District Planning Department regarding Hooe Village Hall

## 1. Introduction

The Hooe 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 allotment garden adjoining the existing village hall was gifted to Hooe Parish Council. The financial viability of building the new, larger hall on the Recreation Ground depended upon redevelopment of the existing village hall site and this adjoining allotment garden.

In 2017 a scheme was commissioned from an architectural practice for a new hall and associated car parking on Hooe Recreation Ground. It is understood that discussions were held with Wealden District Planning Department regarding their views of obtaining planning consent for such a scheme but the current Parish Council have no minutes from any meetings.

The scheme was exhibited in the village and comments invited from the public. The results of the consultation exercise were inconclusive, with roughly as many residents in favour of remaining on the existing site as wished to move to a new hall on the Recreation Ground.

Subsequently in 2021, a design was prepared on behalf of the Parish council for a new facility of about 400sqm 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 returned to the idea for a new hall on the Recreation Ground. Another draft scheme, this time for the Recreation Ground was drawn up later in 2021 but was not adopted by the Parish Council at that time.

The current Parish Council in 2022 determined to resolve the ongoing debate regarding the village hall and established a Village Hall Project Committee (VHPC). This committee has a remit to prepare and evaluate options for the development of a new hall on the Recreation Ground or refurbishment and minor extension of the existing hall and provision of a car park on the adjoining allotment garden.

However in order to progress the options, the VHPC consider it important to formally consult with Wealden District Council with regard to the planning issues involved in all options. In particular, whether any of the options might need to be discounted purely on planning or related highway grounds.

This paper outlines the options being considered and the broad area of the questions that the Parish would like to discuss with Wealden Planning Department.

## 2. Option being considered by the Village Hall Project Committee

The Parish Council are considering three options as follows:

### Option 1- Recreation Ground (see Figure 1)

Two of the options would be sited on the Recreation Ground, one based broadly on the size of a scheme previously considered and a smaller scheme, included primarily for costing comparison. It is assumed

that they would both be located in roughly the same northern part of the Recreation Ground. The larger hall would have a larger building footprint and greater parking requirements.

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

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

The schemes would not affect the main football pitch but would reduce areas for junior and practice pitches.

### Option 2 - Denbigh Road (see Figure 2)

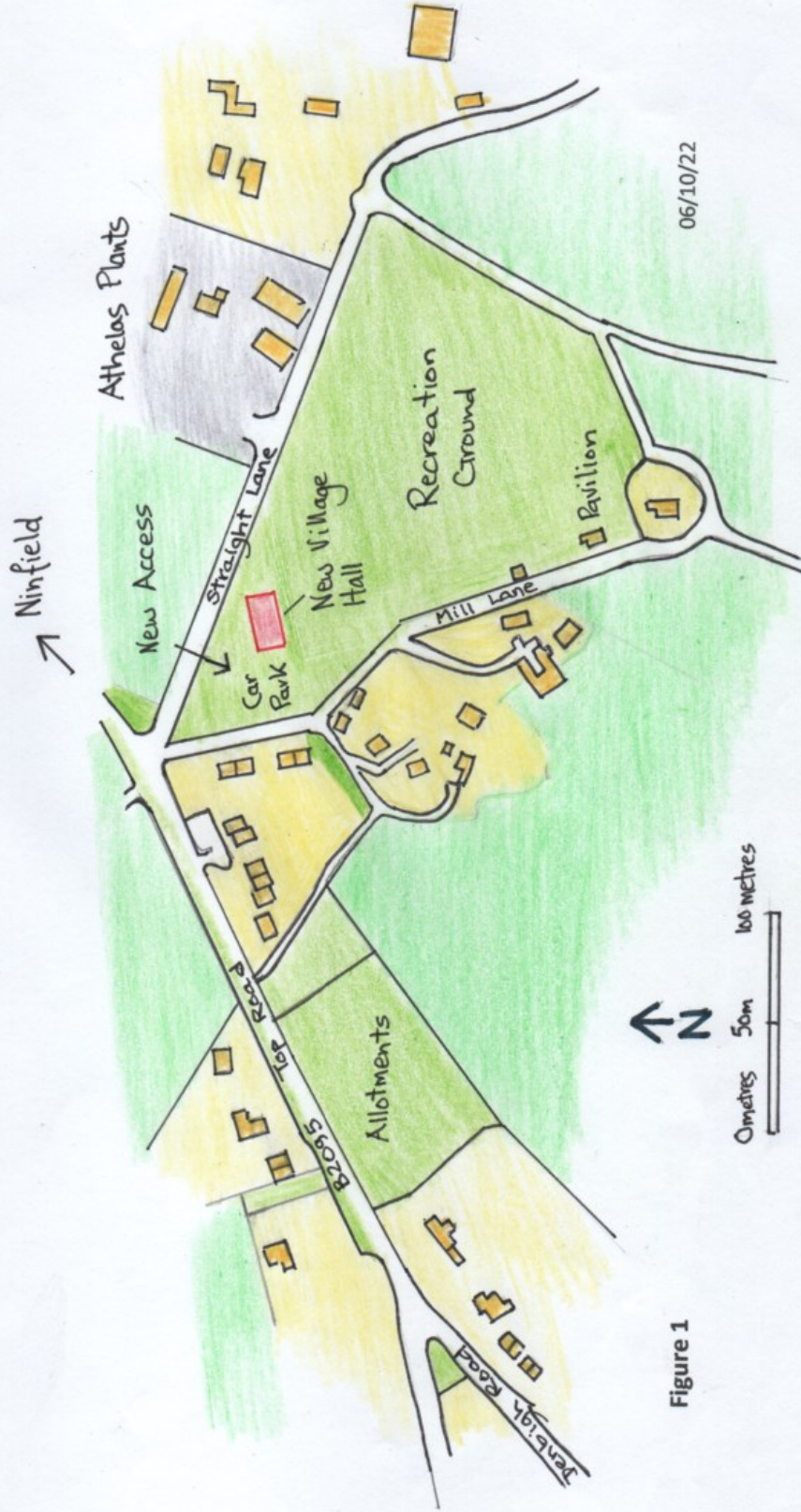
This scheme assumes the continued refurbishment of the existing hall, extension of the existing hall and provision of a car park of 10-12 spaces on the adjoining allotment garden. The existing hall is approximately 120sqm in area and in the short term an extension of about 12sqm is proposed in order to create additional storage space. In the longer term the possibility of a further extension of 15sqm is envisaged.

## 3. Discussion points on the Village Hall Options

The following are the questions that the Hooe VHPC would like to address to Wealden Planning Department:

- a. Whether permission would likely be granted for development of a new village hall on the Recreation Ground. If so, what restrictions might be placed on such a development if it were to be approved, including access arrangements;
- b. Funding of a new build on the Recreation Ground has hitherto been based upon the assumption that the existing village hall and allotment garden would be redeveloped for 3 houses. Such a development would require a new access onto Denbigh Road and would also be within the setting of two listed buildings. Furthermore, as far as the Parish Council is aware, the garden plot is agricultural land and was outside the built up area of the village when there was a formal "village envelope". The village hall and the allotment garden are therefore not a single planning unit. Would the District likely approve such a development or a reduced scheme?
- c. The Parish Council consider that the existing village hall is not viable in the long term without a car park, as on street parking in the village is very limited. The VHPC would appreciate advice as to whether permission would be given for development of the allotment garden adjoining the existing village hall as a car park. As with the redevelopment of the site for housing, this would require a new access onto Denbigh Road and development of agricultural land;
- d. What are the views of the District of small extension(s) to the existing hall?;

**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



Figure 2

06/10/22