

Grundisburgh Village Hall
Report and Update for the VHMC and PC

3rd January 2019

Introduction

This report is the first bi-monthly update for the VHMC and the PC, as promised at the PC meeting on 12th November 2018. It will be uploaded to the Village Hall website and a message sent on Grundisburgh Google with a link to this report. The intention is to continue to work in an open and transparent way and keep the community informed of the progress being made.

There will be times when commercial sensitivity over-rides the desire to be open and transparent. For example any tenders we receive for the build contract or offers for the existing hall site are clearly commercially sensitive and will not be revealed publicly until the commercial sensitivity has passed.

I would like to thank Peter Kendall for the many hours he and his team have put in so far to this project. I offered to take the load from Peter and chair the Steering Group and he and the VHMC accepted. We have re-organised the Steering Group and we now have Peter Kendall, Paul Whittingham, David Scrivener and Bryan Laxton on the Steering Group.

User groups

Since the initial report in October, we have had a number of discussions with various groups who form the largest proportion of those who use the current village hall. These groups, with a total of 222 bookings in 2018 between them, were:

GADS

The Youth Club

Folk Dancing Group

Carpet Bowls Group

Just 42

Café 66

To inform those who are not aware, GADS is the second most frequent user of the current hall with 56 bookings every year including the 6 performances of their two annual productions which attract around 500 people to the hall.

When some of us met with the architect, the intention was to identify a smaller design than the last proposal (June 2018) which still met all their requirements but ensured there was no unnecessary space included and therefore unnecessary cost in the design.

The result of the discussion was a variation to the midway option (B) previously outlined in the initial report (for design and comparison of this midway option see Appendix A below) The discussions ended up centring around a slightly larger design than the midway option, to allow the stage to be used in a far better way. The architect is currently re-drawing the previous design to show the layout fully and this will then be discussed with each of the above user groups to ensure they are happy to sign off those plans. The QS will then be able to advise us of the likely cost of this new proposal. It is

probably a 10-15% or so increase in the floor area of the midway option and therefore in the order of a 10-15% increase in total costs.

This new design will need a new planning consent.

Community Feedback

We have received quite a lot of feedback after the appeal for comments in the initial report. The overall sense we get from these comments is positive and the vast majority are encouraging us to continue our efforts to build a new hall. We have sought the permission of everyone who wrote, to publish their comments and almost all have given permission, either with their names being noted, or anonymously. All the comments we are able to publish are attached in Appendix B below.

We continue to welcome feedback from anybody and everybody and intend to continue to publish these comments where permissible.

Property Advisors

The initial report recommended we start to identify a property firm to advise us on the value and the best way and time to market the existing village hall site. In November we approached 6 firms of agents to seek proposals to advise us. As a specific strategy, these firms ranged from local to regional to national advisors. The firms we approached (in alphabetical order) were:

Bedfords

Fenn Wright

Mortimers

Savills

Strutt & Parker

Woodcock & Sons

Of those we approached, 5 responded positively and made a proposal. We scored each of the proposals according to a number of criteria, being the issues we asked them to address in their submissions. We chose to interview three of the five agents and from this our recommendation to the VHMC is that we appoint Savills which we believe would be the most appropriate advisor for us.

We were impressed by the quality of advice and experience of the lead person, Andy Redman who will take personal responsibility for this instruction. We see it as a definite positive that Andy lives in Grundisburgh and therefore will want to ensure the site sale is a success and that we get the best possible deal. Andy is a Director at Savills who has been leading Savills' development team in Chelmsford since 2006, focusing on strategic land and development consultancy/agency. Savills' fee is 2.00% + VAT of the sales price of the site, but with no liability on us for any fees if the site does not sell. Their recommended asking price for the site is £250,000. There will be some modest costs for marketing once we move to that phase, but we have some work to do before marketing commences - see below.

We believe Savills will be excellent advisors to us because of their experience in the sale of residential development sites and in particular Andy Redman's local knowledge and commitment to this instruction. Over the months ahead we will need to navigate the tricky path from preparing, to marketing to completing the sale of the current site.

Existing hall site: Planning Consent – demolition condition

The initial report referred to a condition of the existing planning consent for the site which restricts the developer from demolishing the existing hall until the new hall is ready for occupation. The arguments for seeking to remove this condition are set out in the initial report. The agents strongly advised we seek to have this condition removed as, in their opinion, it would severely restrict the level of bid we received and may, in extremis, make the site almost unsaleable. We will therefore instruct the architects to make an application to have this condition removed.

Existing hall site: Planning Consent – improvement

A few agents, in their proposals and interviews, commented that they thought it might be worth considering seeking a few minor changes to the existing outline consent to enhance the value of the site. It may be that a cart-lodge for each house might add value as would a re-arrangement of the design. As soon as we have formally instructed Savills as our agents, we will ask them to review this carefully with a recommendation as to what might be sought as an improved consent to give greater value to the site.

Registration of title for the existing hall site

The current title is not registered and having spoken to a few legal firms we will be instructing Ashtons Legal to start the process of registering the title. Ashtons gave a competitive quote and have the added advantage that Paul Whittingham is a partner and although not directly involved, he will ensure we get the very best service at all times. The agents have also recommended registration is undertaken ahead of any marketing to ensure a smoother sale process.

Finance

Finance is clearly a critical part of this project. If the village wishes to build a new hall costing more than the circa £500,000 we have on our balance sheet, then third party funding is required. Without pre-judging the outcome of any future community consultations (see below), it is prudent to assume that some level of funding will be required. Funding for this new build can be broadly placed into three categories:

Self help – raising our own funds through various activities

Grants – from third party organisations or individuals. This may be a series of modest grants or one substantial grant

Loan – seeking a long term loan from an entity which will need to be repaid over a period of time.

If anyone would like to volunteer to undertake any fund-raising activities in the village, their efforts and financial support would be most welcome.

We are pursuing a few opportunities at the moment concerning grants and one in particular is worthy of note. We have made an application to the Big Lottery and have not been rebuffed, but are at the very first stages of making a formal application. This is a notable change from their previous stance when they were approached specifically a while ago, at which time they declined to engage with us and their policy seemed to be not to support projects such as this. Big Lottery's change of policy is most welcome to us. Graham Parker (who lives in the village) runs a company which specialises in seeking grant funding for various entities and Graham has kindly agreed to assist us in the Big Lottery and any other major applications we make. We are asking the Big Lottery for a grant to fill the entire gap between our current assets and an (as yet assumed) cost of a new hall.

It is our strong recommendation that notwithstanding any possible grants, we need to have as a working assumption that we will be unable to get any meaningful grants and therefore we need to assume that third party funding will need to be put in place. Clearly if we are able to obtain any grants, that will reduce the requirement to borrow. If, on the other hand, we only seek to borrow a lesser sum and assume we get some grants and they then fail to materialise, we will be unable to build the hall.

We are continuing to look at options for a substantial loan and this will be reported in the next update. The amount of the loan will be defined by the design chosen by the community.

For the avoidance of doubt, the VHMC has withdrawn its request to the PC for the PC to seek a PWLB loan. Whether another request is made by the VHMC in the future, will depend on the outcome of the public consultations.

Community Consultation

As proposed in the initial report, it is the intention to hold a series of village-wide consultations as early in 2019 as practical. The timing of these will be defined by the completion and costing of the current plans being prepared after the latest user group discussions. It may be appropriate to prepare a further option which shows a variation on these plans to give people a couple of alternatives. Once these plans have been (a) circulated to those who gave inputs, (b) costed by the Quantity Surveyor and then (c) a series of borrowing profiles prepared, we will then be in a position to plan and undertake the further consultation.

The three different bases on which we are likely to consult the community are for a hall which:

- A. Requires no further funding
- B. Meets the minimum user requirements
- C. Marginally exceeds the minimum user requirements

The reason for the third option (c) is to give some future-proofing over coming decades in anticipation of further growth in the community and changing requirements for the hall.

Comments are specifically encouraged on whether these three options are an appropriate mix for consultation.

Next steps

Instruct Savills as the existing hall site sale agents

Instruct Ashtons to register the title to the existing hall site

Consider any potential improved consent for the existing hall site and pursue with the planners

Make a planning application to remove the "demolition" planning condition

Pursue the Big Lottery grant application

Identify and analyse loan options

Finalise and cost the plans from the recent user group discussions

Undertake a community-wide consultation process on a few alternatives

Bryan Laxton

Steering Group, Chair

APPENDIX A

Options discussed in the Initial Report

Grundisburgh Village Hall – Notes on effects of overall floorspace reductions					
	Existing Hall	Option A (current proposal)	Option B (midway option)	Option C (smallest option)	Notes
Overall floor area in sq metres	212	343	204	163	
Capacity (apprx, subject to licencing)	150 Seated in rows or 180 standing (note inadequate sanitary provision)	170 Seated in rows or 200 standing (all excluding stage)	120 seated in rows or 140 standing	80 to 100 (dependent upon building control view)	Some Building Control Officers will allow disabled wc to double as female priority)
Kitchen size in sq metres	12.9	28	15.1	15.1	Adequacy of kitchen can be assessed comparatively against the kitchen in the existing building.
Storage in sq metres	20.2	62.5	22.1	14.6	Storage in all new options assumes mobile staging
Carpet Bowls to club standards?	Y x 2 mats (assumes level floor)	Y x 2mats	Y x 2mats	No	Option A Scheme depends on stage being formed in mobile units
Sanitary provision	Fem 2 wc Male 1 wc & 2 urinals	Fem 4 wc Male 2 wc & 2 urinals 1 Disabled wc	Fem 3 wc Male 1 wc & 2 urinals 1 Disabled wc	Fem 2 wc Male 1 wc & 2 urinals 1 Disabled wc	No disabled wc in existing hall. Quality higher in new.
Main Hall size	127	124	102	81	
Committee /small meeting Room	N	Y	N	N	

APPENDIX B

Comments received following the Initial report dated 20th October 2018

This is a full and complete compilation of all comments that have been received, where permission to publish the comments has been given. Where there is an initial comment and then response(s), the initial comment is first and the response(s) then follow below

Louisa Davies

Dear Bryan,

Having initially been a great supporter of a new hall, I was totally horrified at the overblown outcome in terms of what was considered needed and the costs. Thankfully that is now being addressed.

I am very much of a mind that just as with one's own house, the village should look to spend what it can afford to purchase and then run. My thoughts are to consult as widely as possible with other village hall committees. For relatively new builds it would be useful to compare purchase budgets, funding methods, design success and failure etc. Also it would be interesting to know what use really does get made of village halls - there being so many there is a lot of competition as event venues. Some may be very successful - perhaps a regular bar combined with a sports hall in a large village. Care should be taken to note the different circumstances. Local demographics and

infrastructure all play a part. There is a Suffolk village halls website and Suffolk Acre to refer to I believe?

Potential users should of course be consulted but do carry the risk of talking up their level of use and needs.

Yours sincerely,
Louisa Davies

Louisa

Many thanks for taking the time to drop me a line. I am keen to get as much feedback as possible because guessing what the "silent majority" want is a tough game to play!

I am not sure if you were at the PC on Monday, but one of my points was that developments like this are always an iterative process. Indeed even people's own small extensions at home start with a wish list, reality then hits when the cost is higher than you hoped and so you go back to the architect and ask if there's any way to trim the cost. Peter Kendall gave the various users what they asked for and the cost (to some people, but not all) seems too high.

My proposal is that I go back to the user groups, ask how much less space they can live with and see where we come out on those costs. It will then be a balancing act between user requirements and cost.

Your suggestion as to comparing our new hall with others is a very good one. I know Peter Kendall has done some work already but there is more we can do.

I am comforted by our Architect who has designed many, many village halls in the area and so knows more than probably anyone else about their designs and successes and failures.

Many thanks
Bryan

Monica Begg

Dear Bryan,

Great to hear that the plans for the new village hall are still ongoing. We were beginning to think that it would never happen.

I feel a village our size should be able to accommodate a decent village hall fit for purpose. The current hall is too old and dated and nobody wants to go there in the Winter months, as it can never be heated properly.

I would be happy with the larger hall, although my only concern is that there should be a smaller room for groups like our bridge club, or the possibility of splitting the main hall into two parts.

If it means having to fund raise to get grants to help towards the costs, then I personally would be happy to help. Maybe, next year's Hidden Gardens' profits could be earmarked for the project! I was happy too with the proposal for a loan from the Parish Council, payable by homeowners through their rates.

Keep up the good work and look forward to hearing more about the proposals in the New Year.

Regards

Monica Begg

Steve Sim

1 Sent: 14 November 2018 18:03

Dear Bryan

I have just read your report on the next steps regarding the new village hall.

I was very encouraged that you have taken this on and are looking for the best option to enable the building of the new hall to proceed.

My family have used the old hall many times over the years and have happy memories of it, but the village really does need a new one.

I very much hope that your studies will show that something along the lines of the initial proposal for the new hall will be affordable.

I am aware that there is a small but very vociferous group of objectors who seem to be doing their best to make it difficult to proceed, but I believe that the "silent majority" in the village really hope that this project will proceed.

Best wishes

Steve Sim

2 Date : 15/11/2018 - 08:51 (GMTST)

Steve

Many thanks for taking the time to drop me a line. I am keen to get as much feedback as possible because guessing what the "silent majority" want is a tough game to play!

I am not sure if you were at the PC on Monday, but one of my points was that developments like this are always an iterative process. Indeed even people's own small extensions at home start with a wish list, reality then hits when the cost is higher than you hoped and so you go back to the architect and ask if there's any way to trim the cost. Peter Kendall gave the various users what they asked for and the cost (to some people, but not all) seems too high.

My proposal is that I go back to the user groups, ask how much less space they can sensibly live with and see where we come out on those costs. It will then be a balancing act between user requirements and cost.

One of my concerns is that building costs are escalating at an alarming rate and so time really is money in this instance.

Anything you can do to get the "silent majority" to make their voice heard would be a very worthwhile exercise and hugely helpful to me. This would include dropping me a line with support/comments/suggestions and indeed constructive criticism.

Many thanks

Bryan

3 Sent: 16 November 2018 20:31.

Hi Bryan

Thanks for your reply.

I have a few comments on the new hall which I hope you will find useful.

My family have been regular users of the existing village hall over the 37 years we have lived in Grundisburgh - so we really appreciate the value of a village hall to the local residents.

We have used it for family parties - christenings, children's birthdays, 40th birthdays, reunions, attended numerous village meetings (parish council, history society, youth club, dancing), and every GADS panto and play since 1981.

For us, and many people in the village, a good hall is an essential village amenity.

GADS is a special case as one of the user groups and their needs should be given high priority. We are not currently members, but over the years my wife, 3 children and several grandchildren have been in plays or pantos. GADS is not just a society for amateur dramatic types, many families in the village have been involved over the years when their children have taken part in the annual pantos. GADS is a village institution and their needs should be given a high priority, eg stage, seating, provision for lighting, storage, changing rooms etc.

MAIN HALL.

The main hall should be at least the size of the current one. losing the existing row of pillars will help. The hall is big enough for most events, family parties, GADS plays (although some panto performances are a squash), but has been inadequate for some events such as important village meetings, and some dances.

STAGE

A permanent stage would be preferable if possible, but if the overall design/budget does not permit it is important that it is easy to install, eg for GADS plays or bands at dances/parties.

KITCHEN.

A good kitchen is important for any events involving catering. The current kitchen is probably big enough for most circumstances. The ability to prepare teas/coffees for large numbers of people is needed (ie plenty of hot water easily provided).

The serving hatch (don't laugh) comes in very useful for handing food/drink through from the kitchen into the hall.

HEATING

The heating in the current hall is hopeless. For winter events someone has to go up to the hall two hours early to turn it on. The gas meter has caused problems at several events in the past couple of years (not working properly despite swallowing coins).

2nd Meeting Room

If savings have to be made, a second meeting room is lower priority than a good main hall and kitchen. After all, we do have the Parish Rooms for smaller meetings.

TOILETS

My wife would suggest that more space is devoted to the ladies. There is often a queue at the ladies in the existing hall when there are a lot of people at the hall.

CAR PARK

If it comes down to a decision about whether we actually need a new hall or not - the parking provision at the current hall is hopelessly inadequate and causes a lot of problems for both users and the residents of Post Mill Gardens.

EXTERIOR DESIGN

The new hall will be in a most prominent position so the exterior design is important.

Best wishes,

Steve Sim

4 Steve

Many thanks for taking the time to drop me a line – all very helpful stuff. I am in the process of speaking to all the main user groups with the aim of pulling together an acceptable design to fit all needs, but perhaps not giving everyone everything they have asked for previously.

It will be interesting to see if we can produce a design acceptable to all, but within a smaller budget.

Regards

Bryan

Anonymous - P

Hello Bryan,

I have taken the time to read your report on our new village hall. I am just writing to thank you for your input & time that you have given. It is great to see someone trying to get all parties moving forward on a positive note. I'm sure that there are many individuals similar to you that have donated their time and efforts for free and they should be commended as well. I believe the whole project is very positive for our village and although I have no wish to have direct involvement with the project I fully support everything that you are proposing. I will look forward to hearing the next progress report early in 2019.

Good luck!

P

Anonymous - R

My wife and I have just read your 15 page initial report which I printed off. For so long despite the V.H.M.C.'s good intentions things seem to have stagnated and sometimes presented contentious things for consideration which prompted some despair and argument. I do hope that all the 'village' reads your report and that you get their support.

Good Luck and looking forward to things moving quicker now, although I realize there are obstacles to overcome .

Regards R

Dear R

Many thanks for your words of support.

If you wanted to help in any way, I would ask if you could assist in getting the "silent majority" to make their voices heard.

Just for my own research, are you in principle in favour of borrowing if we need to and if so, does it depend on the amount or are you against any borrowing of any kind?

Regards Bryan

Bryan,

Thanks for your reply, I would certainly be against borrowing any large sum of money from the PWLB as has been suggested to build Type 'A' VH . This would put an onus on every household, including those who will never use the hall. Regarding the loan and interest, as aging pensioners we like to make our own decisions where our money is spent, not have it spent by possibly an affluent few.

We really do not feel there is a need for the large version, the days of a village needing such a place have gone, even the current hall is not always suitable for smaller clubs and groups. 'B' or 'C' would be our choice, a decision being made when costs and available finances are known, having said that , not really happy with borrowing any large sum.

Hope this is of some help Regards R

Anonymous - B

Dear Mr. Laxton,

Your e-mail placed on the Grundisburgh Village website requested comments and observations on the paper that you presented to the Grundisburgh PCC / NVHMC.

After attending two meetings of the PCC earlier this year I thought your paper was very constructive and provided a way forward. I have the following comments for your consideration :

Gaining Community Engagement and general agreement to the project is vital. You may have seen the article entitled "Village hall project in "full swing" with £75K left to raise by Christmas" that appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times on Thursday November 22, 2018 and relates to Westleton. A goal to raise £240K in a village of approximately 350 people illustrates serious engagement and financial commitment.

Your report articulates the financing options going forward with respect to gaining advanced cash for the existing Village Hall site, valued at approximately £200K. As you discuss neither option is very attractive and would probably result in punitive costs, even if available. An alternative, which would require Community Engagement and an initial financial commitment, would be to offer to the people of Grundisburgh a Debenture type investment as a bridging loan, for say three years, secured on the existing and new site, repayable when that site is sold. I am not sure if a Debenture is the correct name for this type of instrument but as a means of financing it could be fairly low cost, assuming community uptake. If Westleton can raise £240K I would have thought that Grundisburgh, with a population of approximately 1,600, could manage £200K or more.

I trust the above comments are helpful. Yours sincerely B

Dear B

Thank you for your email and positive comments.

I am very keen on getting as much community engagement as possible, but I think we have a few bridges to build before we can expect full support. I am determined we will be open with everyone and I am committed to informing people of where we are at each step.

I hadn't seen the article on Westleton and found it fascinating. I believe we may (before my time) have tried the Big Lottery before, but we will certainly try again.

The idea of a village debenture is interesting, but I suspect our biggest challenge will be the long term gap between what we need (yet to be determined) and the assets we currently hold. I believe there is a way around the issue of the illiquidity for the existing site but we definitely need to find a way to keep any third party borrowing to a minimum.

I will pursue the Westleton example and see what we can learn from that.

Bryan

Bob Crouch

Bryan

Thanks for producing the report on the Village Hall. It was very thorough and professional.

I would like to fully support your approach on the way forward. The current village hall is obviously untenable in the long term so we need to find a solution which finds wide support.

The current proposal may be great if the financial burden was less, but given current conditions, it needs to be re-considered. Your suggested alternative options look promising and I support continuing investigation along the lines of the report. I also agree with giving local contractors and volunteers the opportunity to get involved.

I am happy to allow public use of my comments as necessary.

Regards Bob

Lynda and Hugh Bridges

Dear Bryan

We wish to offer you our full support in carrying forward the New Village Hall plans set out in your thorough and comprehensive email. It is an ambitious project for our village and your proposal for further consultation with the user groups and consideration of alternative ideas and plans for the building is an excellent one that will hopefully bring together an acceptable and cost effective solution.

As we understand from your email, there is inevitably going to be a funding gap between the 'accessible money' and the cost of the final build. We feel that as long as all possible grants, charitable and lottery funding and offers of help from local trades people is sought, then obtaining a loan is in our opinion a sensible option in order to move the project forward. That way everyone would be making a contribution to a building which will benefit us all and will be fit for future generations in this village.

We have lived in Grundisburgh for over forty years and brought up our family here. We have participated in the many activities, groups and clubs that help to make this an amazing village to live in. We do badly need a new hall with modern facilities and a heating system that doesn't gobble up pound coins faster than you can feed it! As costs will only rise year on year we hope that the village will now get behind the VH management committee to move this project forward as quickly as possible. Let's hope that 2019 is the year of The New Grundisburgh Village Hall.

Finally a huge thank you to the steering group for the many many hours of work they have already put into this project. We wish them every success in bringing it to fruition.

Yours sincerely

Lynda and Hugh Bridges

Ian and Lindsay Duckworth

Hi Bryan, further to our discussion I write to confirm our support for a new Village Hall, the current one no longer being fit for purpose in the long term. We both feel that a village of this size with its number of active clubs needs a purpose built community hall.

Regards

Ian and Lindsay Duckworth