

**Cottenham Village Hall & Nursery project
Planning for Planning?**

Supplement 20th October 2016 – following pre-application and DCLG/PWLB advice

Planning risks and counter-measures

Because the Village Hall is located in the open countryside, the pre-application study (based primarily on drawings and a site visit) has recently identified planning restrictions which are partly mitigated by re-using today's site:

- 1) Justification for adding a nursery and event/function space on the Recreation Ground
- 2) Height and mass of the proposed building may be excessive
- 3) Noise risk, especially from the balcony / upper floor windows

Our Neighbourhood Plan justifies (1) (supported in principle by SCDC Planning Policy team)

- although the chosen site is technically in the countryside, there are no other suitable sites in the village that have the necessary space and provides a "safe cluster" including the Primary School, Ladybird nursery and the new Nursery permitting minimum-distance safe off-road transfers between the facilities when children transfer between Primary School and out-of-school club or parents are dropping off or collecting children from any of these facilities
- the site is immediately adjacent to the existing Development Framework and, from every viewpoint outside the school, the physical building will appear in the immediate foreground of the recently extended and height-increased Primary School rather than countryside.
- the village, over the last 50 years, has outgrown the existing Hall which has itself aged and is neither disabled-friendly nor energy-efficient, necessitating larger spaces for the community; this has been recognised in recent Planning Officer reports on development applications
- today's Hall has safeguarding issues for young children in the out-of-school club and vulnerable adults in the Day Centre as a result of the Hall and Social Club sharing facilities.
- demand for early-years nursery care / education has outstripped the available supply in Cottenham; this has been recognised by both Cambridgeshire County Council who have committed current and future early years s106 contributions for Cottenham to this project and by SCDC Planning Officers in reports on major development applications.

From the Vision Plan and Neighbourhood Plan surveys and exhibitions at various village events, villagers welcome the proposal, including – at exhibitions - raising the precept to finance its cost.

Following the pre-application advice, measures have been taken to modify the design

The proposed design has been modified following (2) in the pre-application advice, to reduce the overall height from over 1 meter above the backdrop Primary School to 1 metre below that height.

The noise assessment of the proposed design indicates no significant increase beyond today's hall. Nevertheless the proposed design has also been modified following (3) pre-application advice to increase the sound-proofing, control sound production and screen off the balcony end nearest residential neighbours.

Finance risks and counter-measures

Apart from the uncertainties around possible cost increases arising from future interest rates and currency weakness, it appears:

- It is likely that we would get permission to borrow £2 million or more, possibly drawn over two years. This would probably have to be on an annuity basis, rather than "interest-only".
- It is unlikely that Cottenham would have to carry out a referendum on any proposed precept increase.

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Extra Ordinary Meeting (possible resolution – may be modified at the meeting)

To proceed to the next stage, the Parish Council needs only to authorise a formal application for Planning Permission, increasing the total project spend to date to around £42,000.

Later this year and early next year decisions need to be made on:

1. when to move to the next design stage costing around £180,000 over 3 months
2. whether to fund the project using a long-term precept-financed loan of around £2,000,000
3. exactly how much to borrow when

Tonight we will discuss and decide at least the first part of the above after discussing the overall process and key decisions necessary to deliver the project.

“Having considered the merits and risks involved, this Parish Council authorises the Village Hall Working Party to apply for planning permission and proceed using “annuity” finance subject to monthly review at Council meetings, CALF and FLAC.”

