

**PROJECT TO EXTEND AND REFURBISH
RAMSDEN VILLAGE HALL,
REPLACEMENT OF THE PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT
AND WORK TO THE KING GEORGE V1 FIELD
AT
OLD BOLINGBROKE**

Some Frequently Asked Questions

All of the information in this document has been made widely available to residents at Parish Council and other public meetings, through its website and via Village Newsletters. However, there may be a number of residents who are still not fully aware of the background to the decision to extend and refurbish Ramsden Village Hall, move and extend the play area and carry out maintenance to the King George V1 field. It was, therefore, thought helpful to summarise some of the issues involved through this list of "Frequently Asked Questions".

Why is the Parish Council proposing to extend and refurbish Ramsden Village Hall?

The current village hall was built nearly 70 years ago on land gifted to the Parish by the Ramsden family. As part of the Deed of Transfer, the Parish Council is required to maintain the building for use as a village hall and to keep it in a good state of repair for the benefit of the whole community.

The existing building suffers from a number of significant problems and defects not least of which is that kitchen is far too small to meet current needs and there is little storage room. It is also extremely thermally inefficient with consequently high running costs.

Why doesn't the Parish Council just refurbish and repair the existing building?

After a consultation with representatives of village organisations, users of the hall and residents, the possibility of carrying out a complete refurbishment was considered, but this would not have solved the problem of the kitchen being too small and the lack of storage space.

Why doesn't the Parish Council leave things as they are for the time being?

Should it fail to carry out an extension and refurbishment, the Hall may eventually become unusable. There is no other building within the village which is suitable or capable of being used for the various activities which regularly take place within the existing building. Doing nothing is, therefore,

not an option if Old Bolingbroke and Hareby is to benefit from having a viable Village Hall in the medium to longer term. Building and other costs will only increase over time if action is delayed.

What is being proposed is no more than a basic structure, sufficient to meet the Conservation Area requirements, and contains no more facilities, etc than those deemed to be absolutely necessary for an effective village hall.

What evidence is there that residents want an improved Village Hall with better facilities, etc than we now have?

In 2018 the Village Plan Group carried out a detailed survey of all households in the village asking for their views on how best to proceed, more than 59% of whom chose to respond. Of those 74% expressed the view that we should provide a Hall with better facilities than are now available. Using this information, the Parish Council prepared a design brief which was put out to tender and which resulted in the plans we now have.

In addition, and following various presentations, etc to residents on the proposed layout and design of the new building, no significant adverse comments were subsequently received. The Parish Council was, therefore, entitled to assume that the plans generally accorded with the majority of residents' wishes.

What evidence is there that residents want an improved Play area with better facilities, etc than we now have?

In 2018 the Village Plan Group carried out a detailed survey of the children in the villages. It showed that 85% of the children who responded wanted improved facilities. Of the adult responders who had completed the adult questionnaire 88% also supported the children's viewpoint.

A further children's survey held in August 2020 confirmed this position with 91% of the children responding asking for more age appropriate equipment.

Why are we including the King George V1 field in the project?

The Parish Council has consulted a number of experts in land management and conservation specialists. It is clear that the field needs extensive work to be carried out including fence repairs, hedge laying and ground improvement works. Funding for this will come from the Parish Council Field account, reserves and from savings made in the precept for 2021/22.

How have residents been kept informed of what is going on?

The Parish Council has been entirely open and transparent about its plans to extend and refurbish Ramsden Village Hall, including the means of funding it, consulting with and informing residents at each step of the process through numerous public meetings etc. It is also a regular item on the agenda for

each meeting of the Parish Council when there is ample opportunity for interested and/or concerned residents to make their views known.

Similarly there has been consultation regarding the play area.

How does the Parish Council know about how the current Hall is used?

The Parish Council is well aware of the use made of the current Hall as it appoints representatives to serve on the VHMC, which manages the Hall on the Parish Council's behalf and who report back to each meeting of the Parish Council.

Why does the Parish Council expect residents to pay for the new building through the precept rather than from grants?

The Parish Council is researching all possible grants, which will reduce the need for a loan and the cost to residents. However, because of the current situation many of the funding streams are not currently available. Together with the VHMC, £12,000 has already been put aside in a joint account towards the costs involved. The Parish Council has no option but to seek a Public Works Board Loan for the amount not covered by grants.

Why should residents who do not use the Village Hall be expected to contribute towards the cost of a new one?

The Parish Council is firmly of the opinion that the Village Hall is crucial to the well-being of the community in general. Indeed, and for many years, it has been an essential feature of village life. From the 2018 household survey, it was clear that many residents do not use the current Hall because they do not feel it to be an attractive or welcoming place with poor quality facilities, etc. It is expected that a better Hall will result in higher levels of use.

It is not unusual in public funding terms for tax payers to contribute to services they do not choose to use or want.

In some villages, the Parish Councils have sold land and other assets to help pay for similar projects. Why don't we do the same?

Apart from the field next to the hall (which is protected from development) the Parish Council owns no other land or assets which might be sold to help offset the rebuilding costs.

What is the estimated cost of the project?

The estimated cost of the new Play Area is £50,000 and the Village Hall extension and refurbishment is £300,000. Final figures are awaited.

It is anticipated that all the cost of the Play Area will be met by grants. The cost of the Village Hall will be met by a combination of grants and a Public Works Board Loan.

What happens if the final cost of the combined project exceeds £350,000?

If the final cost should prove to be higher and the Parish Council cannot identify any cost savings, then unless the additional costs can be met from grant-aid, the project as currently envisaged will not proceed. The Parish Council will then have to review its options.

It is being proposed that the additional cost to Council Tax payers will be £43 per year (Band D). Why won't this amount increase each year?

If the Parish Council received no grants, the repayments on a £300,000 Public Works Board Loan (a loan from the Government) are fixed for the duration of the borrowing period and as such will not involve an increase in the precept above a maximum of £43 p.a. for a Band D Council Tax payer, which is less than £1 per week. The interest rate on such loans is considerably lower than that which is available through normal borrowing channels. This is the worst case scenario.

It should also be noted that based on 2018 data from ELDC, 52% of dwellings in Old Bolingbroke and Hareby are banded A to C for Council Tax purposes and as such the cost to these households would be less than the £43 quoted for Band D properties (which, incidentally, comprise 21% of the total). In other words, the majority of households in the village would actually pay £43 p.a. or less. Over time, and given the effects of inflation and the additional precepts paid by the limited number of new houses which will be built in the village, the money raised through the fixed £43 additional cost of repaying the Loan will become a smaller and smaller proportion of the Parish Council's budget.

Will the precept have to increase to meet the maintenance and running costs of the building?

No. These costs are already met by the VHMC from hire charges and fundraising events and this situation will continue and improve with the new building. The running and maintenance costs will also be significantly less with a new and more thermally efficient structure.

How important is taking part in the current Household Survey?

Very! The Parish Council is anxious that as many households as possible let it know their views. Although the outcome is only one factor which the Government will take into account in determining whether or not to grant the Loan, it is probably the most important.

What happens if the Loan is not approved?

The Parish Council will have to review its options. As mentioned elsewhere, however, this may well involve significant and open-ended costs and result in a building which will not be significantly different from the one we now have in terms of size and facilities. It may also not result in a lower precept requirement.

If the Loan is approved, when will the project start?

If all goes according to plan, it is currently envisaged that work will begin some time in the New Year. The Parish Council is committed to keeping all residents, particularly local groups and other users of the Hall, fully informed of progress in this regard in order to ensure they have the opportunity to make temporary arrangements for their activities until the new building becomes available.

Where can I get more information from about this project?

From the Parish Council website, the Parish Clerk, individual Parish Councillors or by attending Parish Council meetings.

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