

Proposed Paddock Wood Community Centre

This is the site of the proposed Community Centre for Paddock Wood. Detailed plans are still being considered to accommodate the different groups who will use the facilities.

Frequently asked questions

Why does the town need it?

In 2008 the Town health Check identified the need for a community centre as many groups struggled to find suitable, regular accommodation and are restricted in their use of some facilities. With further housing developments in the pipeline, Paddock Wood is looking to the future to provide a community resource for a growing population. Since the loss of the parochial hall residents have wanted a proper community centre.

How much will it cost?

The total budget is currently estimated at about £2.8m. Costs have increased since the initial estimates in 2016, which were based on broad outline plans. Since that time more detailed plans have been developed and in order to meet the community's aspirations the size has been increased. Energy efficient and green technology has also been included.

How will it be paid for?

The specific Section106 money for a community centre generated by the new housing developments and a loan through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) by the Town Council to cover costs. In the past PWTC have used PWLB loans to buy Foalhurst Wood and to build the workshops on the Memorial Field. Borrowing money for community facilities is seen as a prudent investment for the common good. A slight increase in the Town Council's proportion of Council tax will go towards funding the community centre. Once completed the income from lettings of the venue and different spaces will generate revenue.

When will it be built?

Planning permission will be sought in 2019 and, if granted, it is hoped building will commence later this year.

What consultation has been carried out?

PWTC has been consulting for several years and has recently attended a range of community events to encourage discussion on the planned centre.

How much of the field will be built on?

Around 15% or 1/6th of the current green space will be used to accommodate the building and car park. Rather than detract from the park it will offer a focal point for greater use around the building and surrounding sports areas.

Can the town afford to lose this amount of green space?

The new developments will provide a large amount of accessible green space. Mascalls Court Farm will provide 20 acres, at Mascalls Farm 28 acres and Church Farm 26.5 acres.

Will the pavilion be knocked down?

The Pavilion is on the other side of the field from the proposed site and offers a different use, as it remains a sports facility and is used by football teams as a changing room. It will remain so.

Is there any legal covenant on the field?

No- the land was purchased in 1953 and conveyed to Paddock Wood Town Council in 1957 *'for the purpose of exercise and recreation'* The council's solicitor has advised that a community centre is considered recreational use.

Why was the land not registered until 2018?

It was not unusual at that time for local authorities to not have land registered. The Council has been advised by their solicitors to check that all their land is registered.

Is the location of the community centre a matter for Paddock Wood Town Council only or does TWBC have a say?

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as the planning authority will need to approve the planning application. However, as it is being built on land owned by the Town Council then it is up to the Town Council. The

Borough Council is supportive of the scheme at this location which is one of the key projects in its Five-Year Plan.

Why was Memorial Ground identified as the best location for the centre when other sites scored higher on the feasibility study and why was Putlands excluded with the highest score?

After reviewing the feasibility matrix, the town council considered four sites it owns at a meeting in January 2014. Three were dismissed for the following reasons:

Green Lane - A Highways assessment recommended access from Green Lane as access from Church Road was poor. TWBC planners advised that planning permission was unlikely to be granted due to the poor access and the fact that the community centre would be on raised ground and too obtrusive in the landscape.

St Andrews park - Central, but in a cul-de-sac. Would mean building on large areas of green space to provide a building and parking, unless existing Town Council and Scallywags buildings were removed, adding to the cost. There is a covenant on the field restricting building and the site is surrounded by residential properties. Parking would be limited, and access would be via the narrow residential St Andrew's Road or onto a corner on Church Road.

Putlands – The centre is close to capacity and will need to extend its services as a sports centre.

(Update: The Neighbourhood Plan now proposes an expansion of the sports centre using agreed developer contributions allocated for indoor sport)

Can the Developer Section 106 Contributions be applied to another site?

The permissions for Mascalls Farm and Mascalls Court Farm granted under a year ago are clear that the contribution is for the building of a community centre on the Memorial Field. To meet the legal tests for a variation there would have to be a costed and deliverable project on another site. No alternative has been put forward. Both the developers and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council would have to agree voluntarily to discuss a variation. If the funding is not spent within 5 years it is lost.

Will the trees be cut down?

The mature trees along Maidstone Road have a great identity and significance within Paddock Wood. As the plans for the access and parking arrangements are being worked up, we are carefully considering the impact of these designs on the trees. The architects looking at access solutions that will not involve the loss of any trees.

Why are there only two tennis courts?

The three existing tennis courts have insufficient space around them to meet current LTA standards so they will be replaced with two up to date courts of the correct size.

Can I still walk my dog?

Yes. There is ample green space for continued recreational use and for dog walkers.

Can you still play football?

The last POTS Charity event demonstrated how a full-size football pitch can be marked out and still allow for a further pitch or other activity in the green space to be easily accommodated.

Can you still play cricket?

No one has requested the cricket pitch in recent years but there is still room for its' reinstatement if necessary.

More information can be found on our website www.paddockwoodtc.kentparishes.gov.uk