

Proposed Paddock Wood Community Centre
This is the site of the proposed Community Centre for Paddock Wood.
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 and now underway, Paddock Wood is looking to the future to provide a community resource for a growing population. Since the loss of the parochial hall this demand has only increased further and adds to the urgency of delivering the community centre.

How much will it cost?

The total budget is currently estimated at about £3.2m but this is prior to seeking firmed up costs from a developer. 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 following input from the local community which has led to the size and specification of the facility being increased. New energy efficient solutions and green technology have also been included.

How will it be paid for?

Development contributions generated by the new housing developments are predicted to pay up to c£1M towards the development while TWBC have offered up to £400k with the remainder coming from other income sources including a loan through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Town Council has agreed, in principle to apply for a £1.5 m loan. In the past PWTC have used PWLB loans to buy Foal Hurst Wood and to build the workshops on the Memorial Field. Borrowing money at currently very low interest rates for community facilities is seen as a prudent investment for the common good. Subject to timelines around the delivery of the new housing development and income from the community centre being secured, it is not anticipated that the Town Council will need to increase its precept by more than £3.70pa for a Band D property to cover costs for the community centre. Once completed the centre is anticipated to generate revenue through a number of ways including income from leases and hourly lettings.

When will it be built?

Planning permission will be sought in late 2019 and, if granted, it is hoped building will commence in 2020.

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. Further information on these consultations can be seen on the website.

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 currently underway or being proposed for Paddock Wood 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 will not be affected. It will continue to be used as a changing room for sport on the fields.

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 in the past for local authorities to not have land registered. The land was transferred to Paddock Wood Parish Council on 22 March 1957 prior to the rules on compulsory registration being implemented for Tunbridge Wells (1 October 1958). Therefore, unless there was a transfer, or the land was mortgaged, there was no requirement for the land to be registered. The land was registered in 2018 following a voluntary application by Paddock Wood Town Council.

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

The Borough Council is supportive of the current scheme which is one of the key projects in its Five-Year Plan and they are offering to contribute up to £400k in capital along with additional help and advice to see the scheme delivered. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as the planning authority will need to approve the planning application.

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. 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. Under the terms of the agreements the funding needs to be spent within 5 years of receipt.

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 the designs on these trees. The current proposals result in no negative impact on the trees with some positive impacts from removing hard standing around the root protection zones of some trees.

Why are there only two tennis courts?

The three existing tennis courts are not compliant with LTA standards as they have insufficient space around them. They will be replaced in due course 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?

A full-size football pitch can be marked out and will still allow for a further pitch or other activity in the green space to be easily accommodated.

Can you still play cricket?

Yes

How much has been spent to so far?

£87,000 has been spent on architect & professional fees, surveys & publicity

Will young people still be able to meet on the Memorial Field and use the Community Centre facilities?

Yes, access to everyone will remain as it is with the additional provision of the Community Centre facilities.

Will it be possible to stage larger events encompassing the inside facilities and the outside space?

Yes, the plans have been designed to facilitate this.

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