

Proposed Paddock Wood Community Centre, Memorial Playing Field

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 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.

Is there a need for a new pre-school? A 1000 new houses are currently being built in Paddock Wood.

How much will it cost?

The total budget is currently estimated at about £3.2m. 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?

Developer contributions generated by the new housing developments will pay up to c£1M towards the development. While TWBC had offered up to £400k this was conditional on the Town Council re-negotiating the lease to the Day Centre, to which the borough owns the freehold to. Town Councillors were unwilling to do this and have therefore decided to increase the loan from the Public Works Loan Board to £1.9 m rather than the £1.5 m previously agreed.

In the past PWTC have used PWLB loans to buy Foal Hurst Wood and to build the workshops on the Memorial Playing Field. Borrowing money at currently very low interest rates for community facilities is seen as a prudent investment for the common good.

The Town Council has been slowly been building up its funds to allow for the design & planning costs and the loan repayments. Currently £60,000 a year is allowed for in the budget. Due to a recent reduction in interest rates the town council will not have to increase the precept any further. Repayments, at current rates will be £59,408.

An application for planning permission will be submitted shortly. Subject to permission being granted and funds in place it is hoped to start work in late Spring 2021.

What consultation has been carried out?

PWTC has been consulting for several years and has previously 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?

11% of the field will be built on – earlier designs showed 15% but that has now been reduced.

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. The Town Council is looking to upgrade the pavilion in 2021.

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 location of the community centre was a decision taken by Paddock Wood Town Council. The Borough Council is supportive of the current scheme. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as the planning authority will need to approve the planning application. It is also funding the services of the project manager.

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 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. The funds from the Mascalls Court Farm Development have already been received by the Town Council.

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 are also in need of extensive refurbishment. The Town Council has agreed that the tennis courts can be re-orientated to allow the centre to be located further back on the field. It will also allow for a larger play area for the nursery. Two new LTA compliant tennis courts will be built. These will be funded separately.

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. Additional pitches have been drawn on the plans to show what the field could accommodate. However, it is not intended to mark out those pitches for use, at the moment.

Can you still play cricket?

Yes – space for a new wicket has been allowed for in the layout.

How much has been spent to so far?

£244,081 has been spent on architects & 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.

How will the community centre add to sport being played on the field?

There will be ancillary facilities such as a café and toilets, with an outside area where residents can sit and watch sports being played. The community centre is not intended to be a sports facility.

What are the proposed hire costs?

These will be determined by the management committee.

More information and the plans can be found on our website www.paddockwood-tc.gov.uk