Southborough Hub consultation

General questions and answers – 27/11/2015

1. What is the Southborough Hub?
The Southborough Hub has been a long standing aspiration of Southborough Town Council (STC), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) to provide a mix of improved community facilities including hall (Theatre), library, football pavilion, town council offices, community space, café/bar, medical centre and town square for residents and businesses in Southborough and High Brooms. The project will be largely funded by a residential enabling development and the three partners are committed to working together to deliver the Southborough Hub.

2. What are you consulting on?
Detailed designs are progressing for two options, a new build along with a part refurbish/part new build for the ‘Community Hub’.

The public consultation will cover the Community Hub options whilst also covering the detailed masterplan proposals of which the Community Hub is a part.

For further information on the consultation please visit www.kent.gov.uk/southboroughhub

3. How will you decide which option to go with?
Following the end of the public consultation a full analysis of the results will take place and the results of the consultation will be shared.

Your responses will be presented to the Project Board and will be used to develop the final masterplan.

Project decisions are taken by the Project Board who will have the final say over which option to go with.

4. Why do we need the Community Hub?
Southborough’s much loved community facilities are currently in a poor state of repair and there is a need to ensure that these facilities are enhanced and sustained for the future.

a) The local library is currently located in a separate building on Yew Tree Road. We believe that locating the library in the Community Hub would be really positive as it allows customers to access more services from one building and we hope that this can promote the service to a wider range of customers. Incorporating the service in the Hub will ensure that future generations in Southborough can continue to benefit from a thriving library and access to a range of other services all in the same place.
b) The **Council Offices** are housed in a dated residential building, which is not fit for purpose and many residents with disabilities are unable to access it. It is therefore not compliant with current legislation and is now in a very poor state of disrepair.

c) The **Royal Victoria Hall** (RVH) is in a poor state of repair and in need of significant financial investment. It was closed following scheduled maintenance which identified a requirement for further assessments and surveys as well as an insurance issue. The hall was not re-opened as further work and funds are needed to assess the structure of the building.

d) The **Football Pavilion** is proposed to be adjacent to the main development in order to encourage a vibrant town centre and ensure greater use of the adjacent and expanded Yew Tree Road car park. It is hoped that doing so and working with the football club the scheme will look to alleviate car parking issues at weekends around Yew Tree Road, Ridgewaye road and other surrounding roads. The Ridgeway Football Club currently has access to the former Ridgeway school buildings. As part of meeting its FA chartered status the club is required to show continuous improvement and the current facilities do not allow for this.

e) Southborough has a requirement for a larger **medical centre** with improved facilities to meet the growing needs of the local community. The medical centre maybe included as part of the complex and is anticipated to help contribute to financing the overall scheme. In addition, locating the medical centre nearby means that the Community Hub, including the proposed café, library, hall and community rooms, would benefit from the close proximity of higher footfall levels and ensure more local people would be made aware of what is on offer. This is anticipated to help towards delivering a vibrant centre for Southborough while also looking to ensure long term financially viable facilities. This project has no say over what would happen to any other sites which are not owned by one of the partners.

5. **What is happening with the purchase of Lloyds Bank and Tesco land?**

KCC are in confidential discussions with Tesco and Lloyds Bank over the purchase of their land holdings.

6. **Will retail be included in the development?**

Both schemes out for consultation include a small element of retail. Whether this is included or not in the final planning application will depend upon their viability at the time. By investing in new facilities, creating a town square for farmers market’s, removing the “grot spot” and improving the road junctions, both schemes out for consultation will look to benefit the shops across the Town via increased footfall to the area. The inclusion of a pedestrian crossing opposite the Hub to allow safe access across the A26 will further help link up the High Street. In addition, when any investment of this scale is delivered, many businesses seek to invest in order to improve their offer. Having a mixed use town centre offer that attracts people in will hopefully restore the heart of the town and ensure that people no longer just drive through Southborough, but actually stop and spend their money.
7. Will there be an impact on any other community facilities?
   The project will look to work closely with other similar venues to ensure that partners work together to limit any impact.

8. What will happen to the existing library site if the development goes ahead?
   No decision has been made on what will happen to the old library site should the development progress. The library will only move to the Southborough hub building when this is complete meaning the current library will stay open until it is time to move.

9. Does the scheme include the Water Margin?
   The Water Margin (Chinese Restaurant and Takeaway) does not form part of the overall development. The structure is listed and the master plan will take this into consideration.

10. Is Southborough getting a good deal?
   All three partners have invested up front capital to fund the coordination of the project. The partners hope to re-coupe these costs as part of the development but it is considered unlikely that there will be any capital returned other than these initial upfront investments. Southborough will benefit from enhanced facilities for the community which should bring in revenue to the town.

11. What will happen to the old library site?
   The old library site remains separate from the deal and no decision has yet been made on what would happen to this facility but it is allocated for up to ten residential units.

12. Can we have a say in what the naming of the Community Hub?
   The Southborough Hub is a project name and no decision has been taken on what the final facility will be called. Southborough Town Council is not fixed on a name, but the project has been referred to over the years as the Southborough Hub while the community facility is referenced as the Southborough Community Hub. If the project progresses then there will be community involvement with the naming of the facility.

13. Are you applying for any grant funding?
   Various grant application routes have been considered however the up front costs and long timescales associated with applying for these in terms of large grants has been discounted. The project is however hopeful that it will be successful in applying for smaller grants particularly towards energy efficiency and possibly sporting activities.

14. Will STC be protecting the remaining fields?
   Southborough Town Council has confirmed that the remaining fields will remain for sporting and public use.
15. How will the site be accessed?
Both schemes out for consultation have two similar points of access onto the site. The Ridgewaye road is proposed as the main point of access with a secondary access via the A26. These proposals are still under discussion with Kent Highway Services.

Following road improvements to the A26, Yew Tree road and Speldhurst road junctions anticipated to take place in early 2016, proposals could be revised.

16. What is the traffic impact?
A Traffic Impact Assessment is being undertaken that sets out the impact of the development on the road network and in particular the Yew Tree Road junction.

The report is based on surveys undertaken prior to the road improvements taking place in 2015 and as such these proposals are still under discussion with Kent Highway Services.

17. Will on site parking be improved?
Both schemes out for consultation have increased the size of the Yew Tree Road Car Park in order to try and accommodate the need for increased parking provision on the site. Surveys have been undertaken to establish parking provision particularly at peak periods of use by the football club. The final outcome will look to ensure that the increased parking provision will cover the day to day needs of the development and look to relieve current pressures where possible.

STC has requested that TWBC consider its parking policy for the site to ensure that the car park is used effectively and looks to remove cars parked on the highway for long periods of time. In addition, discussions have taken place with the football club to encourage their users to park in the facilities provided.

Final parking layout and management will be subject to change following agreement with Kent Highway Services and planners.

18. Will pedestrian access be improved?
The current proposals to improve the A26, Yew Tree Road Speldhurst Road junctions will improve pedestrian crossing facilities. In addition a further pedestrian crossing will be put in adjacent to the Community Hub in order to link up both sides of the High Street. Pedestrian access in and around the site will ensure a safe environment for users and ensure current public rights of way are maintained.

19. Will there be an impact on wider services?
KCC is confident that the funds generated from the site will adequately cover the schooling needs for new residents.

Utility surveys have suggested that there is sufficient capacity within the current system to accommodate the new development.
20. How will the Community Hub operate?
Partners are continuing to investigate options for the operational delivery of the facility, with the intention of bringing forward a model that is effective.

21. What are the opening hours of the facility going to be?
The operational detail of the new facility is yet to be agreed but will be progressed as the project moves forward.

22. Why is the seating capacity of the halls different in each scheme?
The new build option has a target capacity of 360 while the Royal Victoria Hall has a target capacity of 250. The main reason for the difference is due to the constraints of working within an existing building.

23. Who will run the football pavilion?
Partners are in discussion with the Ridgewaye Football Club about taking on a lease for the use of the facility after the works are complete. The club would lease the facility from STC.

24. Can the designs change before the planning application is made?
Following the feedback from the consultation the designs will be amended to take account of the feedback received. We hope the final application will reflects the needs of the Community.

25. How long will the development take to build?
The projected construction period for both development options has been estimated at 15 months a more detailed time line will be available once a decision has been made on which option to progress.

26. How much of the Fields will be used in the development.
The current plans for the site require a loss of around 0.5 hectares of the Ridgewaye Field area for residential purposes.

27. Further questions?
Further information on the proposals can be found at www.kent.gov.uk/southboroughhub
If you have any other questions that you believe have not been answered and which you would like a response to, please email southboroughhub@kent.gov.uk