

A COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR PETERSFIELD



For 20 years, since the loss of the Howard Mallett centre, Petersfield residents have sought a replacement shared community facility which would be inclusive for all residents and answer key needs created by this high density, city centre location. Its focus should be on needs not met by the various rented spaces offered by commercial and faith groups for reasons of cost, suitability or simply very high demand.

A new building today would need to focus on youth provision due to the explosion of children in the local area and loss of other local spaces providing such provision (at the Sturton Street Chapel and Box Café, for example). The heavily used Cherry Trees Club provides a focus for provision for older people.

This brief document is concerned with the requirements for a building or part of a building to fulfill this role, both for the Mill Road Depot site and for the wider community. We lean heavily on knowledge of community centres from local experts as well as the excellent 2004 Charity Commission report "Village Halls and Community Centres".

A new community centre in Petersfield must:

- Have spaces which meet the needs which are unmet by private room hire
 - Have at least two spaces including one large and robust hall with a substantial unobstructed rectangular area
 - Have access to outside safe areas from the two spaces to support learning and the range of activities by groups such as guides and scouts;
- Be clearly welcoming to all;
- Support more than one simultaneous activity both (a) to avoid "capture" by particular users and (b) to allow users of different activities to meet;
- Be able to be financially sustainable and innovative, able to be independent of shrinking city council funding by mixing regular community activities with:
 - Free activities such as toddler groups and older people's coffee mornings which answer basic need and issues of deprivation and isolation
 - Unfunded and innovative new projects;
 - More commercial use which is also relevant to the local community (e.g. adult tango classes or art tuition).
- Meet all legislative requirements for the range of activities targeted.

Space and Use

We see three main options for such a centre:

1. An independent community centre
2. A community centre combined with space used by CWRC (the Cambridge Women's Resource Centre, currently based on the Depot site)
3. A community centre combined with CWRC and Nursery provision

Primary use for community groups is evenings and weekends. Weekday use could be as low as one morning per week - in particular, a toddler group (preferably in the larger space) and a coffee morning for older residents. Other weekday use of space is possible but can also be provided by local church halls etc.

Moving towards option #3 would enable more financial independence and permanent reception staffing, and better use of space.

CWRC would require its own space for offices and would also be able to use perhaps the smaller hall during the day – but note layout has to be very carefully considered. The space requirements for a nursery would be perhaps an additional 40 square metres extra internally (kitchen, toilets, storage) and would share use of the large hall during the day. CWRC has previously run a nursery.

The nursery would require storage space into which equipment could easily be wheeled, plus kitchen, children's toilet and office space. This option also requires some dedicated, secure outdoor space into which children can freely flow.

We would not propose to support car use by users of this facility. However organizers of activities are likely to have equipment which cannot be stored on-site. We suggest a minimum of 3 parking spaces are required for evening and weekend use, with one being next to access doors to the building. These can potentially be shared with some nearby daytime commercial use. Cycle storage is also required and needs to be CCTV monitored or otherwise secure since the pattern of use provides huge opportunity for theft.

Centre Minimum Space / m ²	
25	Toilets
8	Reception office
100	Hall 1
50	Hall 2
8	Stores
12	Entrance foyer
20	Kitchen
223	Total

Position

The centre would ideally be placed as close as possible to the main area of need, in the conservation area heart of North Petersfield around Gwydir, Sturton and York Streets.

Funding

In addition to s.106 requirements from the Mill Road Depot, there is potential for funding from the Cromwell Road Ridgeons Development, likely to be underway in the same timescale, and

the Travis Perkins development just across Mill Road. Both have no planned community facilities.

PACT has twice done full business plans for new community centres and became a registered charity to support one, and set up a special legal entity for the other. Our 8 trustees have varied expertise including in commercial buildings and fund raising and we have an extensive community network. We are willing to consider arrangements which would enable us to raise grant or other funding.

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