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SUPPORTING STATEMENT OF PLANNING APPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY HUB

8 August 2011

11/03721/FUL

Why build a new community facility in Steeton?

Steeton and Eastburn are growing communities. Their joint population in 1991 was 3786; which had grown to 4277 by 2001; and which is projected to grow further with proposed housing development. Steeton with Eastburn Parish Council actively and enthusiastically represents the interests of the residents, having achieved Quality Parish Council status in 2008.

In 2007 the PC sent out a questionnaire to every household in the joint community, and received a remarkable 26% return rate – over 450 responses.

The subsequent analysis identified 15 different subject areas, and these formed the basis of the Parish Plan which was published in 2008.

The Parish Plan identifies that residents concerns in 10 of the 15 subject areas would be addressed by the provision of better community facilities. The parish council currently supports the provision of a youth club in partnership with Youth Services, Bradford Council, but the constraints of the existing building means that this facility can only be offered during the winter months. The Neighbourhood Policing Team fully supports the proposals and the building will be made available to the police for surgeries and as a possible contact point for the community. Library Services, only available for a limited period each week through the mobile service, could also be accommodated within the community hub. The parish council is also committed to providing a wider range of activities and access to services that are currently unavailable for all residents of the parish which will be facilitated by the building of the community hub.

Why build it on the Bowling Green site?

Following a parish-wide evaluation of potential opportunities for the development or improvement of a suitable community facility, the Bowling Green site, equidistant from both the eastern and the western boundaries of the Parish, has been identified. This is currently an under-performing asset, wholly owned by the Parish council, and it is at the heart of the community.

The existing building on this site is over 30 years old; it provides a single inflexible space; it provides a very low standard of energy efficiency; is not DDA compliant; the building offers a dreadful appearance and the fabric requires regular repair. Further investment in the existing building would be economic folly. So the Council appointed an architect to undertake a feasibility study into the potential development of a new community facility on this site.

The feasibility study has shown that the site is ideal for the construction of a new sustainable community building at the same time as enhancing the existing bowling activities and the children's play area. The new building proposes an arrangement with a facility which offers flexible accommodation about twice the activity area of the existing building.

What are we proposing?

The current planning application is for a facility which falls within a construction budget which the council believes to not only deliver a worthwhile project but which is also realistically within its financial reach.

The new building has been deliberately located so that it is visible from the main road – ensuring that passers-by will notice its activities. This location will both enable a visual opening-up of the landscaping of the site and it will provide a defence from the adverse effects of being adjacent to a main road.

Externally the scheme does not impinge upon the bowling green, and indeed the new scheme offers additional spectator terracing overlooking the green. The existing children's play equipment will be renewed and relocated towards the east end of the site, and it will be given a more secure environment. The location of the existing building will provide, after demolition, on-site parking for disabled visitors, delivery vans and others.

Internally, the new building will provide three meeting rooms, with a folding partition between two of them – a very flexible arrangement for a multiple of simultaneous activities. At the core of the new building fully accessible WCs will be provided as well as a tea making room.

The building itself will be designed to provide a high standard of defence against anti-social abuse, at the same time a providing a delightfully attractive appearance.