

Save Our Shop

A Community Shop for Hughenden Valley

Update and Summary of Public Meeting

Dear Resident,

January 2008

We would like to thank residents who came along to the meeting on January 18th and all the offers of support and finance that were pledged.

The results of the Householder Questionnaire circulated last year indicated considerable support for a village shop. As a result of this a steering committee was formed and, as detailed in the last Residents Update, various sites were considered.

Investigations have been ongoing into the viability of these sites:

- **Land opposite *The Harrow*** – We are awaiting further response from the Highways Authority whom own the land and discussions with WDC.
- **Land outside the Village Hall grounds, on the grass verge** – Maybe a safety issue and not recommended by WDC Planning Department. Planning also think it unlikely that Highways would agree. Awaiting formal response from Highways Authority.
- **The former *Coombe Lane Corner Stores*** - Current owners contacted on two occasions and declined to rent or lease to a Community Shop facility. After planning appeals the premises still retain their retail status.
- **Warehouse next to *Buildbase*** - Currently being rented to a client and in tenancy agreement for a minimum of five years.
- **The Village Hall area** - The Village Hall was the location indicated by residents as the most popular choice so investigations took place into the suitability of this area. WDC Planning Department were approached with details of all the sites under consideration and they advised that the Village Hall would seem to be the most suitable place in the village. Visits and research into other community shops was undertaken and it was clear that many of the most successful community shops were located next to village halls.

With the Village Hall area indicated by Planning and residents as potentially the favoured position the Shop Committee made contact with the Village Hall Committee to see whether a temporary shop could be placed inside the Village Hall grounds.

Numerous formal meetings took place to discuss the proposal and as part of the discussions with the Village Hall Committee immediate neighbours were approached to get their reaction. Concerns voiced by those living near the Village Hall and the Village Hall committee were:

- Parking
- Pedestrian Access
- Security
- Noise and litter

The shop committee took these concerns away with them to consider and address. The shop committee has responded as follows:

Parking

It is likely that most trade for the shop will be from residents on foot. It is hoped that the shop will attract passing trade, however it is anticipated that it may attract a maximum of 2/3 cars at any one time. It is also likely that many of the visitors with cars will be existing users of the hall who may use the shop whilst collecting a child from pre-school, for example.

Parking would be for approximately 5-6 minutes while customers buy their groceries and would be within the Village Hall car park. Significantly, the former *Coombe Lane Stores* only had parking for 2 cars on the road, which was considered adequate.

We will be working with the Village Hall Committee to assist with their parking concerns, which we believe only to be an issue between 10 – 2pm on Sundays during the football season.

The likely impact on the football club is minimal. There are no restrictions on hiring the village hall on Sundays. It is available for booking when a match is on and is often used for art exhibitions and parties at the same time as football. As Sunday is the day when passing trade is likely to be at its lowest level, it is not considered that the presence of a couple of extra cars that may visit the shop on a Sunday will impact noticeably on the level of parking required.

The Shop Committee has offered to assist with white line marking of bays to increase capacity by up to 15%.

Pedestrian Access

There is currently pedestrian access up to the hall. However, there are some concerns that already exist with regard to pedestrians using the main vehicular access. We have been advised that the Village Hall Committee have plans to address these concerns by installing an additional path from the corner verge area up to the village hall.

This new pedestrian access is intended to improve safety for all users of the village hall – particularly the pre-school and negate the need for pedestrians to use the vehicle access to the car park.

Security

We have approached the local police officer who has advised that crime in Hughenden Valley is very low and that no crime in the village hall area has been reported in recent months. The officer's opinion is that a new shop may attract attention initially but that the use of security cameras and lighting would be a significant deterrent.

The Village Hall currently does not use CCTV. The shop committee has already been donated an up-to-date security system. These CCTV cameras and sensor lighting when installed should deter potential intruders at the shop and the Village Hall.

Research by ViRSA (The Village Retail Services Association) has shown that more people visible in an area reduces crime rates and therefore the shop itself may be a potential deterrent to daytime crime.

People being on site for longer hours during the day will limit the time when the Village Hall area is potentially vulnerable.

The shop will only be open up to early evening and it is not anticipated that it will attract youths at night and therefore should not cause any noise or intimidation that can be associated with this.

Refuse disposal

A litterbin will be placed outside the shop for customers and will be taken in each evening with the rubbish being disposed of in appropriate bins along with any packaging/refuse generated by the shop. The shop staff will check for any litter before closing the shop each evening.

Deliveries

There will be no articulated lorries to deliver stock! Typically, stock refilling in community shops is undertaken by its managers and other volunteers. Stock will be purchased from the local cash and carry and delivered by car perhaps once per week. Small vans may be used by the local suppliers such as the milk from Wren Davis.

Following the above responses by the shop committee the Village Hall Committee agreed in principle that a temporary building could be placed in the village hall grounds.

The Village Hall Committee then prepared a draft contract and set up a sub-committee specifically to work with the shop committee to take the project forward.

At this point the shop committee called a public meeting for January 18th 2008 to present to residents details of specific proposals with regards to a shop location and to establish and gain support and commitment from the community.

The Public Meeting January 18th 2008

Objective: To communicate and present the proposal to the community and to establish support and commitment to take the project forward.

The meeting was very well attended and speakers presented were Ian Toye, Business Advisor for ViRSA and Ray Challinor founder of the Hyde Heath and The Lee, at Great Missenden, Community Shops.

A presentation took place by Tony Horton Chair of the shop committee detailing the developments to date and the proposal, briefly summarised as:

Why a Community Shop?

They succeed due to:

- **The commitment from residents**
- **The need to only cover costs.**
- **A shop is good for the community:**
 - A more desirable place to live
 - Non-profit making and any profits go back into community
 - Reduction in daytime crime
 - Create a sense of community, cohesiveness and becomes a community 'hub'
 - Meeting point and support for residents
 - Good for the environment by reducing need for car journeys to carry out top-up shopping

Why the Village Hall area?

- Residents' preferred location
- A proven successful site for other community shops
- Already established community facility and owned by the residents
- Psychological centre of the village
- Safe and ample parking
- Easily accessible and close to other amenities
- Trade from combined visits to Village Hall
- Will promote awareness of Village Hall

A Questions and Answers session took place. One concern was raised along similar lines to those already detailed above and was responded to accordingly. Questions were asked about cost, planning viability and timescales.

A show of hands was asked for, which indicated that the majority of people were in support of the proposal.

The next steps:

- To address the concerns of residents still outstanding
- To agree location
- To reach final agreement with Village Hall Committee
- For the shop steering committee to set up an Industrial Provident Society (IPS). This is a common set up for community enterprise schemes and provides for shares to be bought. This means that the scheme is owned by the residents of the village and that the steering committee becomes the management committee.
- To present our Business Plan and action plan to ViRSA and funding agencies to gain grants and 'match funding'.
- To formally submit planning permission.
- To obtain funding from the community

Support from the Community

From feedback so far it appears that the majority of residents are in support of the Steering Committee continuing with their efforts. However, it would be useful to gauge levels of support in a more quantitative manner before formally approaching funding agencies and planning departments etc.

We would therefore kindly request that you complete the attached Response Form and return in to any of the addresses listed on the reverse of the form.

Funding

Community funding is vital. It is required by ViRSA as evidence of commitment, subsequent viability and may determine how much it is prepared to grant. Therefore it is really important that funding from residents is gained in order to realise this project. Funding can be provided in any of the following ways:

Shareholding. Each adult resident in Hughenden Valley shall be entitled to buy one £10 share in the IPS company formed to run the community shop. Each shareholder will become a member and would have a vote in the running of the company. The share will not carry any right to interest, dividend or bonus or be transferable. The share investment will be non-refundable. (Should the shop have to be wound up for any reason any surplus monies would be donated to local causes as defined by the IPS).

Donations are requested from £5 upwards. These will be used for set up costs to get the project off the ground and will be non-refundable.

Loans up to a maximum of £500 per resident are invited. The loans will pay no interest in the first 2 years. Thereafter interest may be paid at a rate to be decided by the members (shareholders) but not to exceed 5%.

It is hoped that it will be possible to repay the loans when the shop is running at a profit and cash flow permits in years 3 and 4 onwards.

Loans and Donations from other sources. If we are successful in raising funds by the above means we will be in a position to approach various bodies who supply loans/donations for such ventures. These charitable bodies also require us to demonstrate that a certain percentage of the funding is raised within the village community.

This is an illustration of best practice from the experience of similar community shops. Members of the steering committee have already pledged to purchase shares and offer loans and donations to fund this enterprise.

We fully understand that there will be members of the village community who may not be in a position to offer financial support. We are confident that they will support us in other ways – by offering skills and assistance to set up and run the shop or simply by being enthusiastic customers of the shop in years to come.

If you can help in any of the above ways please use the enclosed Pledge Form.

You can return this form along with the Response Form to any of the addresses listed on the reverse. If you would like further details or to speak to us, please contact Tony on 563896 or Louise 564244.

Alternatively you can email us at committee@valleyshop.org

The Shop Committee would again like to sincerely thank all residents for the huge level of support offered so far as well as the specific offers of help indicated.

You can now visit our website at www.valleyshop.org

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