**WIHFCIO – Proposals for the development of the Commemoration Hall and Football Field**

SLIDE 1

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am chairman of the WIHF, a charitable organisation which owns and runs this building, the institute next door and the field behind the hall. I’ll show you plans of the site and explain the outline proposals in a moment. You may have seen the drawings on the board at the back of the Hall, and you may also have already read about these plans in the circular sent to all houses through the mail, or heard some talk about them, but first I’d like to give you some background.

The proposed redevelopment project for the Commemoration Hall started about 3½ years ago when the chairman at the annual Parish meeting suggested it was time that the village had a new Commemoration Hall. Although he was giving a personal opinion the issue was taken up and a steering group of Parish Councillors and Trustees was establish to look into the proposal.

My objective is to explain the steering group’s proposal and seek your support.

Almost 100 years ago this building was built using the proceeds of a public subscription following the end of WWI. Actually it was initially intended to build a cottage hospital, but insufficient funds were raised so this Hall of Commemoration was built instead. The building has served the community of Wadhurst well for a nearly a century, but I’m afraid that it is now rather showing its age, and it is more expensive to run and maintain than the modest income it generates, which sadly means that sooner or later it will be unsustainable. Users of the Hall have told me and my fellow trustees that it is a less than perfect space for modern needs, but upgrading it is not easy and at best it would only be a patch-up job.

Consequently we have considered other possibilities and I believe we have identified something that would bring considerable benefits to the village that would last for many decades into the future – maybe a century!

So what I am talking to you about is a conceptual vision. Much further time and expense will be required to turn these outline ideas into reality, including getting detailed planning and raising the necessary finance, but we have to start somewhere, and we are therefore seeking, through a public vote, the agreement of the electors in the village to these outline proposals so that we can go on to the next stage. If the village votes in favour, as I hope, we shall try to take these ideas, and any others presented to us, forward, but if there is insufficient support, the concept will be dropped and I regret that the opportunity will be lost.

We fully recognise that there will be some, who for whatever reason, will not favour our plans, however, in my view, opponents would be doing the village and themselves a disservice if objections are based on some of the myths that are abroad about the project such as for example plans to build houses on the cricket field or bowls green, this untrue.

Nor is this a cunning plan by Wealden District Council but a genuine attempt by the Trustees to look to the future, as we are obliged to do.

Nor can we put a new hall anywhere else - as a trust we cannot consider placing a new hall anywhere other than on our own land.

There are two words in Commemoration Hall and the first is overwhelmingly more important than the latter. Like towns and villages up and down the country our village owes a debt of gratitude to those who gave their lives not only in the WW1 but also all those who fell in the conflicts that followed. Far from being an act of disrespect, building a new Commemoration Hall will be a reaffirmation of this debt of honour which we hope will stand for another 100 years or more.

SLIDE 2

We believe that there are three major benefits to the community in these proposals.

Firstly the creation of an All-weather football pitch at Uplands

Secondly the provision of a new Commemoration Hall and car parking

And thirdly a new community health centre.

The full size All-weather pitch will meet FA standards it will be used both by the football club, the junior football teams, and by the school during the school day. This will enhance the quality of the pitch available, and has the support of the Sussex FA, the Football Foundation, Wadhurst United and the junior football club (which has 21 teams, I believe). Discussions between Uplands and the football authorities are progressing favourably – but I must say that getting this agreed is a pre-condition to the other plans.

I should add that the existing sports facilities of the Wadhurst Cricket Club and the Wadhurst Bowls Club are fully protected and retained in this proposal.

SLIDE 3 4 5 6

1. The New Commemoration Hall facility will provide a hall (the same size as this space) and stage, the Orchard Room, a new library, ample toilet facilities, a bar/kitchen and a Parish Council Office. It will be built to modern standards with excellent energy conservation properties and modern equipment.
2. The new facility will be sited with views over the cricket pitch to the valley beyond providing a more pleasant aspect than the present hall and a much more attractive venue for social functions.
3. The main hall will have a dividing partition and the stage apron will be removable, providing greater flexibility of use.
4. We also intend to provide removable tiered seating
5. The library will be for dual use. When not in use as a library, the area can be used for group meetings.
6. The new Orchard Room will be for stage changing, rehearsals, dance and other activities.
7. Parking for about 50 cars

SLIDE 7

3. On the site of the present hall, and with the same basic footprint, there will be a new Community Health Centre, providing a new Doctors’ surgery and pharmacy designed to provide a purpose-built medical facility for current needs and for the foreseeable future. I can say that this proposal is fully supported by the doctors and very importantly the NHS.

SLIDE 8 & 9

On the top floor it is intended to provide two affordable homes.

SLIDE 10 11 12

The existing entrance to the old Hall will be retained to respect the sentiment of the building and the new Community Health Centre respects the original ambition for a cottage hospital

SLIDE 13

Additionally there will be a new building, which may be called Snape House, for the Wadhurst History Society, which will improve their facilities and access and help secure their future.

SLIDE 14

The additional parking of approximately 50 spaces should help to alleviate the present parking problems in the village and, hopefully, will directly help the traders in our High St shops and businesses. The car park is shown attached to the existing Greyhound car park, an historical covenant, which could have prevented this, was discussed with WDC, who, having taken legal advice concluded that the covenant no longer exists.

And to help with funding for these proposals, there will be a development which currently envisages 22 units and associated parking.

SLIDE 15

Finally it is proposed to provide a ‘village square’ in place of the existing car park it will be possible to see the new hall from the High Street and with an information wall incorporating CCTV it should be possible to see from the High Street any public event taking place in the hall.

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3D views

This is a Golden opportunity for the village because at this time the Football Foundation have funds which they are keen to invest in the All-weather pitch and the Health Service are very keen to support a new surgery in the village. This opportunity may not last long.

These are the benefits for the village which, I hope you agree, will make a big difference to our community for the long term. Given the constraints of the site we own and operate, it is difficult to see what else we could do. We have considered options and believe this is a viable concept that will help ensure the future but we would welcome constructive comments to help us to ensure that the village has the best possible outcome.

Financial considerations.

Funding for the All-weather pitch will come from the new development and the Football Foundation.

The New Hall, Snape House and car park will be funded with a mix of capital from the housing development, grants and donations.

The community health centre will be funded with a loan from the Public Works Loan Board secured against the guaranteed NHS rent. After repayment of the loan there will be a six figure annual income for the village which should secure the financial stability of the trust for the future.

Following this meeting, the overall plans will go to a public vote on 15th November. This will be a Parish Poll, administered by Wealden District Council, which will be held in accordance with the rules of The Parish and Community Meeting (Polls) rules 1987. All electors in the Parish of Wadhurst are invited to vote on this proposal. Voting will be in person only at the Sparrows Green Pavilion and Mark Cross Church, normal polling stations, for the limited period of 4-9pm on that day. The time and venue are laid down by law.

A great deal of thought has gone into the overall scheme which I’m sure will bring a lot of benefit to the village. I do hope that you will vote in support.

The ballot paper question will be:-

**ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMEMORATION HALL AND FOOTBALL FIELD AS PROPOSED BY THE WADHURST INSTITUTE HALL & FIELD CIO YES/NO**

I would now be happy to take any questions.

Transport [I know that the timing of the vote will not be convenient for some people, but we are considering arranging transport from the village to Sparrows Green, and if you are interested please let me know.]

Postal vote & Proxy vote are not available for a Parish Poll.

P McFarlan

25th October 2018