

Statement from Preston Parish Council on Proposed Community Facilities - December 2023

Parish Council Survey

The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who participated in the recent survey which indicated that the majority of residents were not in favour of any facilities on Altham's Field. This is no longer being considered. It is important to note, however, that this was not a vote for no development anywhere in the parish as this was not offered as an option.

New Proposals

The Working Group

At its meeting on Thursday 7 December, the Working Group informed the Parish Council that Russell Prince, the owner of PHC, was willing to make land available for a shop, café and village hall on the old tennis courts near The Dower House. The Parish Council was also informed that NHDC was supportive of this site for the proposed facilities. Pedestrian access would be via the gate from the pond and a new vehicular access would be created on to Hitchin Road. A planning application would be submitted with that for the PHC development.

The Working Group listed various grant opportunities which could be used to source funding for this project. The Parish Council is aware that the Working Group would like to obtain some of the section 106 funding from the PHC development and would like to point out at this early stage that it is the Parish Council who negotiates with the Planning Officer and the developer on the projects to be funded. The Parish Council has already been advised by NHDC to have a wish list of a range of projects in preparation for these negotiations. This is already in hand and the Parish Council will consult the community at the appropriate time.

With regard to the Neighbourhood Plan Survey, the Parish Council notes that of the 212 people who answered the question: "If money was available, what would you like to see introduced or improved?" 30%, 64 people, suggested a village shop and 12%, 25 people, suggested a larger or new village hall. No-one suggested a café.

The Red Lion Board

Preston residents will be aware that the Red Lion Board of Directors has indicated that they are actively looking at options for bringing back to life some of the unused buildings within the grounds of the pub, to provide additional modest facilities for the community.

Parish Council Plans

The next steps are:

- To ensure due diligence for the community, the Parish Council will discuss the Working Group's proposals with Russell Prince and planning officers at NHDC.
- The Working Group has been asked to provide a detailed, realistic and viable business plan for its proposals for the Parish Council meeting on Thursday 7 March.
- The Red Lion Board has been invited to present its proposals at the same meeting.
- At this meeting, the Parish Council will consider the information available and decide on its next actions.
- If deemed appropriate, the Parish Council may decide to undertake another Parish Council survey so that everyone in the community is able to have their say on the options available.
- One of the options will be for no new facilities anywhere in the parish.
- While the Parish Council doesn't want residents to suffer from "survey fatigue," if another one takes place it hopes that residents will participate in it to ensure that the Parish Council is able to support the option which the majority of the community wants.
- Should another survey be undertaken, the outcome will be the end of the debate, whatever the result.

The Parish Council will update residents whenever it has something to report.

Anyone who would like to discuss the content of this statement should contact:

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