

Bat & Ball Centre

(previously known as Sevenoaks Community Centre)

Background

The Sevenoaks Community Centre although used extensively as a community hub was more than 30 years old and the fabric of the building required costly maintenance and was uneconomic to operate. Public feedback also indicated that it was no longer a venue where they would want to hold a special family occasion e.g. wedding. Also, a larger venue had been requested by businesses and public for events with a sit-down capacity for 250. Currently people requiring such a venue need to go out of town.

Sevenoaks Town Council had made a commitment to the regeneration of Bat & Ball area and believed that a new community centre was a key component to this.

Initially the Town Council considered selling its office site and combining capital income to build a two-storey community centre which would have its offices on the first floor. Unfortunately, there were planning problems relating to this idea on both sites. At the same time the Red Cross relinquished its building, and this provided an opportunity for its development.

Bearing all of this in mind the Town Council reconsidered its original plan and decided to retain its office site and refurbish the old Red Cross building and to keep the current community centre site for its original purposes which had benefits of the car parking not being so restrictive.

This proposal provides several advantages:

- Less pressure on car parking at the Bat & Ball Centre
- Less pressure on car parking at STC Office site, also enabling nearby residents to use some car parking spaces during non-office hours.
- Retains community assets
- Enables Sevenoaks Day Nursery to continue with its original plans (on community centre site)
- Enables a new Business Hub to be created on the STC office site.

Plan for new centre

The driving vision for the new Bat & Ball Centre is to replace the tired and no longer fit for purpose thirty year old community centre with a facility that will be characterised by being a high quality contemporary building, within accessible and vibrant public realm

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enabling a lively and eclectic mix of daytime and evening activities. It is intended to complement and be interactive with the refurbished adjoining Bat & Ball Station building.

The new Bat & Ball Centre will be far more economical to operate and have improved aesthetics and extended community space.

Once the new building is constructed the external areas of the building will be landscaped to enable the exterior to also be a valuable community space.

What will the new centre provide?

The plans have been considered to ensure that current usage can continue and provide more flexible accommodation to enable additional usages.

- Large main hall -Extended in size to current with sliding doors to enable link to smaller hall
- Smaller hall for multi-use including play schools (meeting Ofsted requirements)
- Catering kitchen
- Meeting room

How will it cost and how will it be funded?

- Project Budget £2,775,208 & contingency £303,597 = £3,078,805
- Funded by £1,200,000 CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Grant, £57,815 CIL Reserve, £420,990 Capital Reserves & £1,400,000 Public Works Loan Board (25 years fixed rate, annual repayment £74,202)

Progress to Date (June 2019)

- Extensive consultation taken place regarding provision of new community centre including articles in the press, Town Crier magazine, public meetings, Community Investment Plan, social media.
- Consultations taking place with users of the facility, residents
- Planning permission obtained
- £1.2m Community Infrastructure Levy grant obtained.
- Public Works Loan Board request submitted for £1.4m and approved
- Tender process completed via Government Contract Finder
- Tenders being reviewed and analysed.
- Hirers relocated from building from 1st June 2019 to enable construction works to commence.

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- References for contractor and due diligence on contractor finances being reviewed.
- Items previously value engineered out of the project being reviewed.