

Appendix A

31 JANUARY 2022

HOUGHTON REGIS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHARITY

PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING IN BIDWELL WEST

David Skinner

www.hrcdc.org.uk

david.skinner4@ntlworld.com



**houghtonregiscommunity
developmentcharity**

HEALTHY | VIBRANT | THRIVING | INCLUSIVE

Proposal for Community Building

BIDWELL WEST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

To assist with the development of Bidwell West / HRN2 as a *healthy, vibrant, thriving and inclusive community*, alongside the wider town of Houghton Regis, through a partnership of local churches and other stakeholders.

To provide a financially sustainable community centre, that will be a hub to resource residents and a heart for community activity and the building of social equity.

To provide a paid pioneer community worker on site to engage with new residents as they arrive and help establish and nurture community life.

PROGRESS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT:

We wish to update you on the development of our proposal and request an 'in principle decision' that will support it's further development for:

- the granting to the Charity of the freehold title of the land and the Section 106 monies set aside for the Community Building in Bidwell West.
- Central Bedfordshire Council's continued partnering with the Charity as we work to deliver this plan.

This will support moving negotiations forward to conclude agreements with key partners and financial institutions, whose participation will underpin the design and construction process.

BACKGROUND:

Houghton Regis Community Development Charity was formed specifically to support the aims outlined. Trustees of the Charity have been in discussion with Central Bedfordshire since the initial planning consultations for HRN2. There have been

meetings both with members and officers on a regular basis, especially in recent years and we are grateful for the advice and encouragement that we have received. A formal expression of interest was accepted from the Charity at the end of 2020. The Charity was concerned to engage at an early point to support the development of the new community on Bidwell West and we are pleased with the way the early phases of engagement has proceeded.

MODELS

We have been influenced and inspired in our planning by two buildings.

- The Healthy Living Centre at Bromley by Bow. Built around a Church, it incorporates a GP surgery, café, arts facility and more besides. It has become a national centre for social prescribing.
- The FBC Centre at Finchampstead, which includes specialist youth and sports provision alongside a library, Sure Start Children's Centre and Community Centre.
- We are also excited by the Pioneer Community Work of Ali Boulton at Swindon. Ali Boulton is a Baptist minister who leads and researches engagement in new housing areas and is the New Housing Hub Director for Churches Together in England.
- We are feeding into the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church & Community and are drawing inspiration and advice from a number of other initiatives around the country.

CHRISTIAN ETHOS

The community facility will be designed as an open, welcoming and inclusive community facility available for local groups of all kinds. The initiative for this plan arises from a partnership of local and regional church bodies. While Christian faith and values lie at the heart of the project, the aim is to build a welcoming community open to those of all faiths and none, including in time a home for a worshipping Christian community.

ORGANISATION & GOVERNANCE

The Charity has been established with the name Houghton Regis, Community Development Charity. (HRCDC Charity no. 1186865) The Board members reflect some of the churches and denominations directly involved. To assist the Board, a Development Group has been established, which has the ability to advise and marshal key skills to take the project from idea to delivery and exercise strategic control over the project.

THE BOARD

Stephen Copson	Regional Minister of the Central Baptist Association
David Skinner	Houghton Regis Baptist Church
Tricia Humber	Diocese of St Albans
Debbie Hodgson	Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Methodist District
Patrick Kandeh	Superintendent Minister of South Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit

THE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Mark Spriggs	NHS Business Change/ Programme Manager overseeing the construction of substantial mental health facilities. Formerly the Strategic Community Centres Manager for Oxford City Council, with community centre management and business development expertise.
Graham Seaton	Chartered Surveyor with background in retail and leisure sectors. BSc Est. Man. FRICS
Caroline Fraser	of Fraser Architects

The Company also employs **Chris Beales** as a consultant. A Canon in the Church of England and a social entrepreneur. He is a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community and has a particular interest in new housing areas.

We are also grateful for on-going advice from **Ali Boulton**, consultant, researcher in New Housing Engagement. She is also a part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's

PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

Commission on housing and leads on initiatives with Churches Together in England and Baptist's Together.

We continue to extend our team:

As we submit this proposal the project hopes to secure the services of a **consultant from Craigmyle** to position the Charity appropriately to secure grants later this year, when a design has been prepared. We are also exploring sourcing loans and other forms of funding through denominational channels.

We are also exploring **opportunities for local residents** to become more closely involved in the Charity's team. The potential for this to happen has flowed directly from the skilled community support offered by Tim Haines the Charity's Pioneer Community Worker.

HRCDC and the Development Group provide oversight both for the community work and the community centre development. An Advisory Group will be established to engage other stakeholders and local residents in the planning and management of the community building. A separate company is envisaged for the management of the community centre once it is opened.

We believe the Board, together with the Development Group, have the right skills, background and experience to deliver a vibrant, financially sustainable and exciting community building for the people of Houghton Regis.

RECENT PROGRESS

The project has moved forward substantially since 22.2.20, when we submitted our expression of interest to Central Bedfordshire Council. In that document we outlined 5 steps to deliver the project. Despite the limitations of the pandemic we are now working through stage 3. This is characterised by:

- Work with the growing community to build a response to identified aspirations and needs in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council, local statutory agencies and other stakeholders.
- Engagement with local residents and wider community to influence the design of the proposed community building and facilities.

- Negotiations with developers, Central Bedfordshire Council, architects, partners and potential users to design and fund the initial build and running costs of a sustainable community centre.

a) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On 1st of March 2021 we realised our ambition to appoint a Pioneer Community Worker, to live and work in Bidwell West. Local community engagement moved forward rapidly as lockdown provided great opportunities to engage with new residents and other stake holders. Consequently the Charity has:

- Assisted in establishing the Houghton Regis Together group, working closely with representatives of CBC, HRTC, Community, Volunteer and Faith Sector, collaborating to identify potential benefits for the new community and wider Houghton Regis residents.
- Engaged in forming and facilitating the Bidwell West Community Association, including a management committee formed of local residents. The first inaugural meeting of the Association attracted 70-80 residents. HRTC Clerk and 2 CBC Councilors were present for what proved to be an extremely positive evening.
- Hosted community events and projects to promote social equity and resilience within the community.

For instance: 130 people attended welcome event for all residents in September 2021 - A newsletter has also started to be published and delivered to every household in Bidwell West - Over 500 residents are now part of the Bidwell West Facebook Page.

- Worked closely with house builders, housing associations, developers and consortium to facilitate networking and communication both with residents and where appropriate CBC officers.

The charity feels it has laid down some significant foundations for delivering a community led initiative for the proposed community building.

b) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Our intention remains to gather the community's hopes and aspirations prior to bringing forward any plans or designs. We currently have an active community consultation, to gather these. To date this has been online, being promoted through social media and leaflet distributions around the development. We are hosting an in

person consultation at Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre on Wednesday 16th February, 10am-2pm. The consultation questions can be found at www.hrcdc.org.uk/consultation

c) KEY PARTNERS:

We are keen to ensure that the community centre is sustainable in the long term. We are currently in on-going negotiations with a national housing association for the provision of 14 supported living units and 1 staff accommodation above the centre. We expect that this will provide an income to the building going forward and the mechanisms by which this can be achieved are subject to these negotiations. It is possible that they may also become anchor tenant within the community centre. We see their presence not only as providing an important income stream to the building but supporting and benefitting from innovative practice to foster health and wellbeing. They have access to Homes England funding and have had initial conversations with CBC. Their participation will help attract capital investment into the building and deliver core revenue funding.

Our intention is to seek to secure other key partners to develop a hub of resource for the local community. We are keen to foster discussions with the Primary Care Network and the CCG about the location of staff and / or activity at the centre. Joint visits with the Town Council to key facilities have not been possible to arrange in the last 12 months due to COVID 19 but we have sought to foster their participation and support for the scheme. We are excited by the potential to deliver something that is creative, innovative and different within the centre and remain interested in the potential of a [D-Lab](#) or similar.

Moving forward into our next phase we will be looking to secure the engagement of interested users and partners for the community building, to support the integration of the new and established communities; to envisage shared projects; and to collaborate around the planning process.

BUSINESS PLAN FOR BIDWELL WEST COMMUNITY CENTRE

CAPITAL BUILD FUNDING

As part of the development of Bidwell West and its resulting community, money and land was put aside for the provision, delivery and operation of a community centre for the area, a hub for people and families.

The parcel of land has been identified and given expected timescales a large portacabin has been donated and will go on the site in such a position as to start to build community while being in such a position as to not disrupt design and building work.

The estimated cost for the project is anticipated to be £5.5-£6m prior to design and proper review by a quantity surveyor. These costs anticipate two floors of community centre space (circa 800sqm) and a second floor of supported living accommodation circa (1000sqm).

At this point with the community facility being shaped by the survey/ consultation and an anticipated 15 bedroom supported residential unit being considered for the site the split of these comes out approx. 56/44% and costs attributable accordingly.

Source of funding		Amount
S106	Developer	£1.01 + indexation
Capital funding for Flats	Housing Association	£3m
Charitable Loans	Denominational Institutions	£1.1+
Grants (Capital/ Revenue/ Initial Core Costs)	Multiple sources (This may also be tied into the section above)	£0.5m

We have begun to initiate the necessary conversations to secure agreed positions and to lever different elements of this funding stream, in order to give assurance the MBC as to the clear viability of this project.

On the basis of the above, the top level of the anticipated budget is 75% funded, assuming the agreement is complete with the housing association. We are in early discussions with a denominational institution with a view to securing a loan that will cover any shortfall that may remain after other funding is secured. At this stage we

PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

have received a written response indicating they are ‘happy to receive a loan application from HRCDC’. We anticipate this may encourage capital contributions from other sources, which towards the end of the project will provide for the fitting out of the facility.

Operationally the funding being secured, and the building project being progressed will allow for grant funding to be applied for which will underpin the day-to-day working through ensuring the “full cost recovery” model.

The engagement and “listening” to the community developing in Bidwell West will be key to this work.

It is also essential, and a potential risk worth noting, that legal agreements must be in place to build the relational framework with all parties to ensure the nature of this partnership.

OPERATIONAL

The business plan looks at the ongoing costings for the building, the day-to-day costs and operational revenue.

EXPENDITURE

Cost			Per annum
Business Rates		To be set with D&B	c£4-20k
Utilities	Gas	Depends on mix/ green technologies/ PV & batteries, grey water etc	c£18k
	Electricity		
	Water		
Staffing	Paid (on-site) Based on 3 F/T (c£11p/h) +20% on costs	Depends on hours/ SOP/ other elements	£72k
	Paid (External)	IT, Accounts etc	c£10k
	Volunteers	Support, training, expenses	c£2.5k
Equipment			
Maintenance & Repairs	Contracts, Sanitary, Fire etc		c£15
Marketing	Social Media, Press,		c£2.5
IT (sales/ booking/ Admin etc)			c£6k
Consumables (Café)			?
		Total	£155k+

INCOME – SOURCES YR1

Type			Per annum
Revenue income	From investment of capital injection		£30k
Rental income	Anchor tenant		£8K
Room Hire	Main Hall (£100 per 3hr sessions) 2x Minor Halls (£75 per 3hr session) 4x Conf/ Meeting Rms (£50 per 3hr session) Café (after hours) – same as minor hall	Per week X3 X4 (per room) X2 (per room) X1 (c£1300)	c£71.5k
Service	Conf - provisions		c£4k
Café/ catering (Drinks/ biscuits etc)		Depends on opening hours	c£30k
		Total	£143.5k

QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH OPERATIONALLY

In order to get the best result within this business case there are elements to be clarified in order to be accurate. This will be resolved once the design is complete and the way the building will be used for the community after engagement. Issues such as green technologies will be resolved which will have an impact on utilities within the business plan and budget.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Our outline plan is set out below - timing

- Stage 4** Completion of consultation lead into a design phase as we continue to work closely with residents and statutory authorities Site, outline design and funding identified. Ownership and management model agreed with all stakeholders/ funders.

- Stage 5** Planning application
Further consultation
Build Begins

Stage 6 Opening of a community centre, possibly in phases.

Currently, we are monitoring the planning application for the Kingsland Leisure centre to ensure this building provides for complementary uses

The current health crisis presents challenges to any community building project. We will be monitoring this but hope the time frame for the project mitigates the short-term risks.

The estate continues to grow steadily with over 500 properties now occupied and many more under construction.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE'S VISION

The Councils 'Shared Vision for 2050' sets out a direction for where it wants to be moving forward. It explores how healthy and sustainable communities can be built. It recognises that 'fantastic communities don't happen by accident' but 'because members of these communities have a clear picture of how they want their place to be in the future and take action to make their vision a reality.'

We have sought to facilitate a community led strategy encouraging new residents in Bidwell West to participate in the development of life in the housing area from an early point. We are currently consulting residents and the wider community of Houghton Regis about how the proposed community building might best serve the area so it thrives and is a great place to live.

We are planning for an inclusive building as the local authority's vision states 'where no one is left behind' and envisage a diverse range of activity within the centre. We are mindful of plans for other new buildings in the area such as the new leisure centre on the Kingsland site and would seek to complement these uses but equally would be looking to support the local community's aspirations. The building will be designed to facilitate activities that:

- Enable the building of relationships and friendships. Ensuring every individual is welcome will be central and there will be many opportunities for joining and volunteering in a wide range of groups.
- Facilitate inclusion. We are conscious that the development will be home to a diverse community and include at least 30% social and affordable housing. We plan to that residents living within the supported living above the centre not

only have good access to the building and the activities it supports but will be at the heart of what happens.

- Promote health and wellbeing for all. By designing creative spaces the centre will be able to attract both community and statutory groups that will deliver activity and participation. In particular we hope to develop further our partnership with the local Primary Network Social Prescribing Team around activities that support wellbeing.
- Support sustainable lifestyles. Our intention is that the building will be digitally enabled, offering flexible remote work spaces outside the home, creative spaces where skills can be acquired, or education and training delivered and access to technical equipment and expertise can be readily achieved.
- Deliver a rich cultural focus delivering exciting spaces that foster a range of artistic endeavours.

This is not an exhaustive analysis but we believe that our proposal sits well with the council's own plans and visions for the new community at Bidwell West.

CONCLUSIONS:

If the executive will grant this in principle decision then it would help us to clarify the basis on which we are able to proceed and facilitate us moving forward to make agreements with potential partners and funding bodies.

This will allow the consolidation of our business plan for the building over the coming 9 months when we hope it will be possible to return to the executive with a design and multi-year business plan for a formal approval.