

CHAPTER FIFTEEN – COMMUNITY AND LEISURE

Each chapter in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan is under constant review and refinement. Not all of the Appendices are yet available but they will be posted on the website as and when they are ready. The text in the chapters should be sufficient, however, to enable you to respond to the questions which are in the leaflet and repeated at the end of the section for your convenience.

Objectives

- To develop a multi-purpose centre to encourage and enable a wider range of community facilities for activities and interests to be provided. Preferably this should be centrally located.
- To develop a community facility and a shop on Foresthall Park to provide a focal point for activities on this relatively new development and to help reduce social isolation.
- To consult and determine on the best use to be made of the sites, and possibly buildings, at Crafton Green, Peter Kirk and The Youth Centre.

The current position

- *There are a number of halls and community buildings* which vary in size and facilities with three in the ownership of the Parish Council. The venues are listed below: (see Appendix ** for map of locations)
 - **The Mountfitchet Exchange** – Opened in 2020 this building houses the library, Parish Council offices, meeting rooms and a fully accessible public toilet. The Citizens' Advice Bureau is hoping to use some of the accommodation and the Essex Police PCSO uses it as her base. Tourist information is available and consultation events/training sessions can be accommodated.
 - **Day Centre building** – Completed in 1984 it adjoins The Mountfitchet Exchange. The longterm future of the Day Centre function – the provision of lunches to more senior residents – is open to question so a discussion is required as to the best future community use of the building which can, in its present form, accommodate up to 80 people.
 - **Crafton Green House** - Now unoccupied following relocation of various health services and the Parish Council. The future use is, following a very low response to a public consultation, being evaluated along with options for the whole site (see below).
 - **Other facilities are available as part of our churches or schools:**
 - St John's Church Hall – capacity
 - St Theresa's Church Hall – capacity
 - Free Church Hall – capacity
 - Friends' Meeting House – capacity
 - Forest Hall School Hall – capacity
 - St Mary's School Hall – capacity
 - Magna Carta School Hall – capacity

There are varying restrictions on the use of these facilities.

- *Community Life is active but could be better*

The parish is fortunate in having a large range of organisations covering a wide range of interests (see Appendix **).

The village has a number of churches and religious groups:

Church of England	-	St John's Church	Parish Church will host social, music and art events
	-	St Mary's Church	Closed but looked after by Churches Conservation Trust. Hosts occasional events.
Roman Catholic	-	St Teresa	New Church, Presbytery and hall
United Reform/Methodist	-	Free Church	Meetings can be held in the chapel
Society of Friends	-	Quaker Meeting House	Meetings can be held
Community Church	-	Crafton Green	

The Link magazine which was established by Churches together, keeps all households in touch both in print and online.

However, this active picture needs to be qualified given that the majority of these organisations are run by, and attended by, retirees. Younger age groups appear to be less well served. After consultation it would appear that their needs would be better met if the following interests and activities could be accommodated:

TEXT NEEDED POST-CONSULTATION

It is perhaps worth noting that there are few village occasions apart from the Annual Fireworks. The annual Arts Exhibition and Carnival failed either from a lack of volunteer organisers or in reaction to increasing health and safety regulation.

What will be needed in the next fifteen years?

The availability of suitable community spaces is an important factor in encouraging the organisation of a wide range of activities. In the Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Pitch Strategy (2012) an adequate level of provision for community centres was identified as at least one centre per 1500 residents. In terms of the population of Stansted Mountfitchet, this implies 6-7 community centres.

How adequate is the existing provision in Stansted Mountfitchet? The available halls vary in facility, size and activities permitted. Looking forward there would be a considerable gain to the community if a number of new facilities could be developed.

- *The provision of a multi-use community centre capable of meeting the following needs (see Appendix **)*

ADD TEXT POST-CONSULTATION

It would be preferable for this facility to be located towards the centre of the village to make access on foot easy for as many users as possible. However, given that the site, including necessary parking, may be XXXXXXX there are hardly any possible central sites.

- *Construction of a community facility on Foresthall Park.* This development of around 715 homes, with approximately 2000 residents, has no community facilities. A centre incorporating including a multi-purpose hall possibly incorporating a pre-school would provide a focal point to bring together this substantial new community.

There is a vacant site which in terms of land is XXXXX (see Appendix ** for location map). This represents the only opportunity to develop a centre on Foresthall Park and, as a matter of urgency, this land needs to be reserved for community use as the developer has requested an amendment to the Section 106 agreement. Should the land be brought into public ownership then pre-school provision could be pursued as a joint venture. A number of attempts by the Parish Council to open a dialogue with the owner (Taylor Wimpey) have been ignored.

- *Provision of a shop on Foresthall Park* – One attempt was made to gain planning permission for a retail unit of XXsqm but consent was refused. A small neighbourhood shop is needed not only for convenience (and to help reduce car use) but for community.
- *Maximising use of sites in public ownership.*
- *Crafton Green – House, Day Centre and The Mountfitchet Exchange.*
This site, which is centrally situated, is owned by the Parish Council and has an adjoining carpark. With relatively modest investment the two older buildings could be upgraded and the three buildings linked (see Appendix ** for a plan). If further research confirms these proposals then the connected entity could provide a central Community Hub which would offer the following facilities for all age groups:

Foodbank

Debt advice
 Meal provision
 Employment advice/education – CV writing, job applications etc
 Support with benefit applications
 Accredited training schemes
 Opportunities for volunteering and social support
 Mental health support
 Short-term office space

- Peter Kirk Site – This centrally located site (see Appendix ** for map of location and uses) may offer possibilities in providing some community facilities although one caveat is that access is along a private street albeit that it is a public highway. To maximise community use of this centrally located site consideration is being given to expanding the size of the pre-school and to relocating youth services from Lower Street.
- *Support and expand youth services*
 For many years the funding for youth services has been provided by Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council and Uttlesford District Council with the Youth Club operating from premises in Lower Street owned by Essex County Council. The club, in normal times, is open ** nights a week and for ** weeks per year thus covering part of the school holidays. The attendance varies depending on the night with a range of . There should be ways of appealing to more young people but, if successful, this service would require additional funding. Further the site could be more effectively used
 Spangles – in the same building Essex County Council funds services for babies young children and mothers
 ECC has put forward the site on Lower Street, which is used by Spangles and the Youth Club, in the Call for Sites issued by UDC as part of work towards a new Local Plan. Consideration is being given to redeveloping this site for assisted housing with the services for children and young people being relocated to the Peter Kirk site on St John’s Road. These proposals, if achievable, would make better use of both sites.
- Using existing community facilities to better effect
 The halls owned and managed by the churches need to be taken into account (see above) but lie outside the scope of the Plan’s influence.
 Publicly financed assests should be viewed from a different perspective. Three schools in particular should be able to offer a contribution.
 - St Mary’s Primary School – At the planning stage of this new school a firm commitment was made to enable a community use after hours. This has not been followed through, a position which needs to be corrected.
 - Magna Carta – A new build in the centre of the village should be able to offer some out of hours use.
 - Forest Hall School – Facilities have been used in the past but this is now not the case. Negotiations should seek to find a community friendly solution particularly as the school is set for expansion.

POLICIES

- SMCSL1 To develop a multi-use community facility to serve the village.
- SMCSL2 To develop a community facility on Foresthall Park on land which should be brought into public ownership for this purpose.
- SMCSL3 To encourage and facilitate the provision of a convenience shop on Foresthall Park.
- SMCSL4 To explore the feasibility of creating and running a Heritage Centre, possibly in an enlarged Crafton Green Project.

- SMCSL5 To seek to retain existing community facilities unless they are no longer in active use, are no longer viable or have no other community use.
- SMCSL6 Major new developments adding 1500 or more residents will require a new community centre to be provided as part of the development.
Smaller developments will be required to extend or improve existing community facilities or to pay into a ring-fenced general fund for the creation of new facilities as required and when funding is available.
- SMCSL7 To pursue the feasibility of developing the Lower Street site for assisted housing and relocating youth services to the Peter Kirk site on St John's Road.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 1 **What do you consider to be the most important factors that make you feel part of a community?**
- 2 **Is there a variety of clubs and activities to meet your needs? If no, please specify what activities are missing which, if available, you would take up.**
- 3 **What do you think about the range of halls available for rent? What is lacking to meet your needs?**
- 4 **Do you ever hire or use community facilities away from the village? If so, why did you do this and where did you hire?**
- 5 **If a new housing development is built, what community services should be included?**
- 6 **We are hoping to use the community facilities at Crafton Green to provide (or signpost towards) improved community benefits such as debt advice/employment training/CV writing/meal provision for all age-groups. What services would you like to see offered?**