

Leintwardine Community Project

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Design Statement

The aim is to achieve two efficiently functional, warmer and more welcoming community buildings by upgrading the existing ones; a converted Victorian school and an adjacent village Reading Room [1887], and their various later extensions. New built alternatives have been considered and ruled out for various reasons.

The meeting rooms are well used, housing many community activities, including drama and film shows, a lively Local History group, and events booked by local organisations.. There are also facilities used by Age Concern, the Parish Clerk and a local vet, an Archive Room, kitchens and toilets.

The converted school, which originally included the schoolmaster's house, and the Reading Room, are of stone and brick construction with high ceilings, once heated with coal burning stoves. The original chimneys have all been reduced to below roof height, and the buildings now have electric heating. Twentieth century single storey brick built extensions have been added to house toilets and a kitchen.

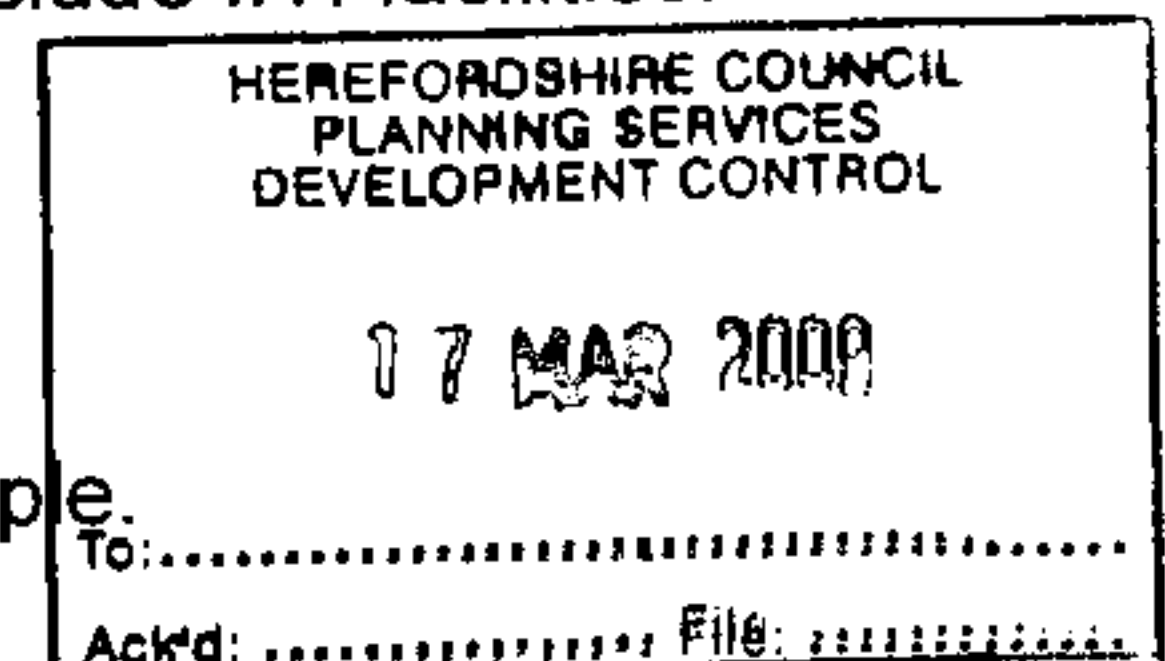
It is necessary to refurbish the buildings to achieve adequate disabled access, improved toilets etc., better kitchen arrangements and a larger library to include I.T. facilities.

In the **Community Centre** the new plans provide:-

- A new glazed entrance foyer and a ramp for disabled people.
- New ground floor rooms to act as bases for the History Society Visitor Centre, Village Museum, the Consulting Room for the local Vet, and lettable rooms.
- Retention of the toilets in the existing locations, with improvements to enlarge and update the disabled facility.
- A central new kitchen with a serving counters to the main hall and direct access to the courtyard.
- A new heating system for the whole building.
- Improvement of the main hall. The existing windows onto the courtyard will be replaced by glazed doors, specially detailed to match the remaining east windows. The existing door onto the north alleyway will be blocked up.

In the **Village Hall** it is proposed to

- Bring the existing library in from the Community Centre, which will use part of the main room, and make a glazed division across it so that the other part can be used as an I.T. facility. This will reinstate the old purpose of the hall, which was built to be a Reading Room for the village.
- Provide a new foyer and safer steps to the main entrance, together with a new corridor allowing more light and ventilation to the lean-to area at the back.



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- An improved disabled access ramp will lead to a new entrance at the back, where a coffee making facility and cloakroom will be available.
- New toilets will be provided, including a new unisex disabled facility.

It is hoped that the new foyers will act as a signal that an improved more welcoming pair of buildings are ready for local residents.

Access Statement

Number of occupiers and usage:

The Reading Room is expected to be used weekly, fortnightly or monthly by several local groups and organisations. The Library within it will probably attract 15-20 visitors at each opening (currently twice a week, possibly increasing to three sessions a week following refurbishment). The new Meeting Room is expected to draw both more and larger user groups. So the present twice-weekly meetings of Leintwardine CAP might grow from 5-8 to 8-10 people of all ages and prompt the planned homework club catering for 6-10 secondary pupils; once- or twice-weekly courses by Ludlow College, attended by 8-12 adults of all ages, might attract 12-15; the fortnightly Age Concern day centre of 15-20 elderly adults might increase to 25; monthly Women's Institute meetings drawing 12-15 women of all ages might grow towards 20; and the monthly Evergreens group of 25-30 elderly people might rise towards 35. There are likely to be other occasional meetings held by the Parish Council, the Village Hall and Community Centre Committee and other users, each involving about 12-15 people.

The Community Centre is expected to be used by a variety of groups, both large and small. A total of five rooms are intended to be let out to small businesses, involving one, two or three occupiers each, together with occasional visitors. The Leintwardine History Society Visitor Centre will probably involve five to ten volunteers and visitors at each opening session, once or twice a week. Similarly, the Village Museum or Heritage Centre should attract 10-15 visitors a week. The vet's office will be staffed by one or two, and visited by perhaps 5-10 customers per week in two sessions. The public conveniences are used by a trickle of visitors throughout the week, perhaps up to ten each per day in the ladies' and gents'. The Community Hall is used for wedding receptions, birthday parties, anniversary celebrations and other landmark occasions (attended by 50-100); bring-and-buy sales and similar fundraising events (attended by 100 or more spread over some hours); and film shows, live music or theatre productions (each attended by 50-100).

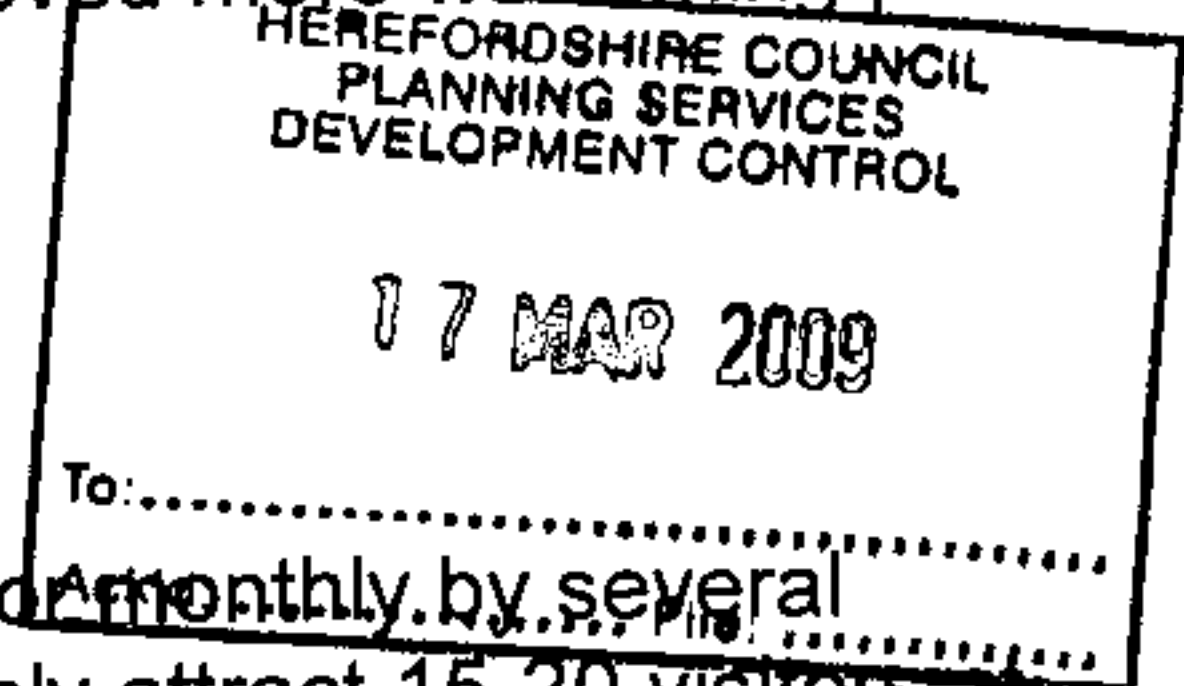
Design Standards

The design standard has generally been Approved Document Part M (2004) together with the CAE publication 'Designing for Accessibility'.

Key Access Issues

The key issues are seen as

- the provision of acceptable ramps for disabled access into the Reading Room and Community Hall, together with ramped access to external doors. This has been achieved.
- up to date standards of provision for disabled toilets. New disabled toilets are provided.



Key Access Issues

- A further issue is the dangerous exit from the Village Hall/ Reading Room, where the steps lead directly from the porch into the main road. A modification is to be made, which means newly built steps will turn at a landing and descend to road level, running alongside the building. Unfortunately the gradient is such that joint access for both able and disabled people is not possible, so a separate access with new ramp is to be made at the side, leading to a new door, cloakroom and coffee making facility.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with Philip Mullineux, Planning Officer, and Colin Davies and Colin Lewis, Building Control Officers.

Consultation with existing/planned users:

In the beginning, a Parish Council referendum of December 1996 led to public meetings..... when a Steering Group was formed to create and circulate a questionnaire about..... community needs. Every household was surveyed in the group parish of Leintwardine and neighbouring villages of Downton and Burrington. There was a high response rate, resulting in a preliminary report followed by detailed statistical analysis, published in July 1998 as *A Community Appraisal*.

There followed an inclusive survey into the future of the village hall and community centre in November 2000. The findings of this second consultation were published in a report called *What Next?* It showed that over 50% supported 'substantial upgrade', after 'improved heating', and top priorities were 'better access and facilities for the disabled', and 'a more attractive reception area'. Meetings were then held with every user group: their comments were all included in the final collation.

Following these two Parish Council consultations, in September 2001 a £4,200 grant from Awards for All funded the first feasibility study. The final report was issued in January 2003. There followed public meetings, a week-long display of plans, and the collation of written and verbal feedback. The plan was to move the facilities and services of Leintwardine Village Hall and Community Centre to a new building 'costing £950K (not including land purchase), sited on the eastern edge of the village in a field adjacent to the 'new' village primary school, where sports facilities could be shared. The scheme fell at the first hurdle when the land owner refused to sell.

The scheme was adapted for relocation purposes – a scaled-down and slightly cheaper version to be constructed in a field adjacent to an area of social housing on the south-eastern edge of the village, where there would be space for sports use. At the same time, an alternative option was also considered, to totally refurbish the existing premises. This again involved an ambitious plan to extensively remodel the village hall and community centre, joining them together with a corridor and lift, at a cost of £700K. However, both options came to nothing because of the difficulty of raising such a huge sum in a small community, and because – when they were consulted – local inhabitants made it clear they didn't support such extravagance, and preferred a more modest scheme of improvement.

This led to a simpler scheme, which was developed from 2004. It was enabled by a February 2005 grant of £3,650 from Awards for All for an exhaustive and detailed feasibility study: the final report was published in February 2006. A new Steering Group appointed new architects and concentrated on the modernisation of the village hall and community centre, involving the rearrangement of internal spaces, moving the public conveniences and demolishing the redundant changing rooms to make way for a larger Library with an adjacent IT and Resources Centre.

The resulting scheme was put to consultation in March 2005, with public meetings and a week-long exhibition of plans inviting written and verbal feedback. This scheme was to cost £398,413, and had committed community support. Following minor modifications suggested during public consultation, outline plans and elevations were submitted to Herefordshire Council for planning permission, which was granted in May 2006. However, during 2006 grant applications to the Herefordshire Community Buildings Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Awards for All failed for various reasons; and so, in the second half of 2006, the more modest current scheme evolved.

So, this project has involved four public consultations (in 1998, 2000, 2005 and 2007), in the course of which all existing and many potential users were consulted.

Input from groups reflecting the views of disabled people:

During the consultations described above, such groups as Age Concern and the Evergreens were involved – either through attendance at public meetings and making contributions from the floor, or through their representatives who met directly with the Steering Group to give their views. Their input has therefore been extensive; and given that members of the Evergreens and of the Age Concern day centre are among the most elderly and least mobile in the community, full account has been taken of the views of disabled people.

