

Farringdon Village Hall News No. 1 July 2021

The Village

Has 674 residents, roughly 548 adults 126 children¹. It's popular with walkers, runners, horse riders and cyclists. It is mostly located within the South Downs National Park.

Farringdon is a great place with so much to offer. It has natural rural beauty, a peaceful, unspoiled environment, good road connections, a network of footpaths and bridleways, and proximity to rail services. Children attend schools in Chawton and Alton since the primary school at Massey's Folly closed down in 1987.

Farringdon Village Hall Charitable Trust

The village has a church, two public houses but no village hall since the sale of Massey's Folly for development in July 2015. The structure and facilities at the Folly had become far too expensive to maintain so sadly it had to go.

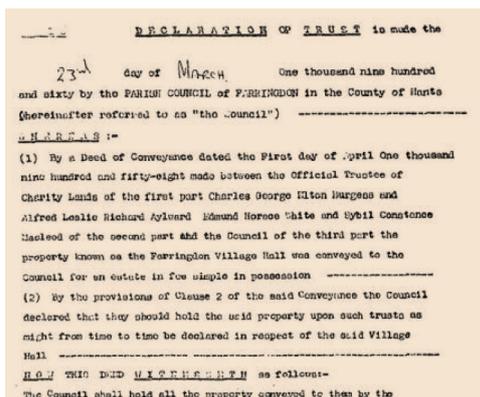


Figure 1 Trust Deed 1960

The proceeds of sale were put into Trust for the provision of a new Village Hall when a suitable location could be found.

The Farringdon Village Hall Charitable Trust was set up to hold the funds that were received on sale and to provide a village hall for the benefit of Farringdon residents. It's a registered Charity (charity number 301824) and Farringdon Parish Council is the Sole Corporate Trustee of the Charity.

How is the Charitable Trust Set up?

The Deeds of Trust specify it is "to provide a Village Hall for the inhabitants of Farringdon and the neighbourhood (the area of benefit) without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said inhabitants".²

Members of Farringdon Parish Council are not Trustees in their own names. Farringdon Parish Council is the Sole Corporate Trustee. The Trust holds meetings to make decisions entirely separately from Parish Council meetings.

¹ 2019 figures.

² Farringdon Village Hall Trust Deed dated 23rd March 1960, amended by a further Deed dated 25th April 2012.



Figure 2 Massey's Folly

Has Farringdon had a Village Hall before?

Farringdon had a Village Hall for over 100 years based in Massey's Folly. Over the years many groups, organisations and individuals used it;

- Office for the Farringdon Parish Council and societies;
- WI, used it for regular meetings;
- Countless activities and festive occasions held in the Folly;
- Farringdon Follies and pantomimes;
- Over-60s Christmas dinner;
- Annual flower shows;
- Harvest suppers;
- Centre for major national and royal celebrations and events;
- Hired for private functions, classes, parties, dances and performances.

The Search for a Site for the New Village Hall

Since 2015 the Farringdon Parish Council have been searching for a new site for the Village Hall. Sites considered include:

- The land above and to the East of Shirnall Meadow;
- The land to the west of Parsonage Close;
- Church Green;
- The playing field between Shirnall Meadow and A32;
- A half-acre plot in the field in the corner by the A32 and New Road;
- Land adjacent to Hall Lane;
- Land on Crows Lane (now Westview)
- Land to the north of Shirnall Hill.



None of these sites was found to be suitable for a variety of reasons that include:

- Ownership by consortia specifically to prevent development;
- Prime agricultural land that would not receive planning consent from SDNP;
- Covenants on the land preventing sale for development;
- Access too narrow or dangerous;
- Within the Farringdon Conservation Area (development barred by English Heritage);

- Parochial Church Council unable to grant development;
- Within the Environment Agency designated flood plain;
- Cost too high;
- Location too far from Village.

After an extensive and exhaustive search, a site was found and the owner was willing to sell MARELANDS FIELD on the west side of the A32 immediately north of the Golden Pheasant public house.



How Best to use Trust Money to Provide a New Village Hall?

Various options have been considered including:

- A mixture of housing development and a village hall
- A mixture of commercial development, housing and a village hall
- A mixture of housing, low-cost housing, and a village hall.

None of these ideas proved commercially viable. The only remaining option was to use the land to construct a village hall and to have facilities for Farrington residents to enjoy that will comply with environmental and planning restrictions.

The Trust is moving ahead to promote discussion of what residents want from a village hall and to provide it. The Trust has received many responses to the Village Meeting held on 17th July 2021 and has issued a questionnaire asking Farrington Residents for ideas for what facilities they would wish to see in the new Village Hall:

Delivery Strategy		
Step	Description	Achieved = ✓
1	Identify a site that is accessible to Farringdon Villagers and that has a reasonable chance of being granted planning consent for a Village Hall. The Trust has acquired an option to purchase a site that has these characteristics; however, these negotiations couldn't be discussed openly because the landowner required a confidentiality agreement until the Option agreement had been signed.	✓
2	Determine the facilities that Farringdon inhabitants would like by means of village meetings, a questionnaire and feedback through various social media.	✓
3	Prepare a concept design and a range of options and cost estimates.	
4	Assess the ecological, hydrological, topographical, social landscape, streetscape and other planning issues to be addressed.	
5	Business case to demonstrate affordability of providing and running the proposed concept.	
6	Referendum to ask the Farringdon inhabitants for their approval or rejection of the proposed plan.	
7	In favour then the next step is to apply for planning permission to South Downs National Park (the planning authority).	
8	Outline planning consent - the FVHCT would exercise its option to buy the site.	
9	Detailed design would then proceed.	
10	Fundraising speeds up mainly by applying for grants. Residents may have the opportunity to buy shares.	
11	Construction begins as soon as funds are in place and the detailed design is agreed.	
12	Opening party	

Where Are We Now?

We are currently in Step 2 of the above strategy. We have publicised what has been achieved to date. We have had an enthusiastic response following the Village Meeting held on 17th June. Of course, there are questions and uncertainties. Many residents appear keen on what we are proposing. So far 80% of responses have been in favour. We await further input from residents from the questionnaire that was circulated to all households in Farringdon on 1st July.



Why not Just Use the Church for Village Activities?

The church is a consecrated building, the activities permitted within it are limited and under the control of the Church Authorities. The Trust did approach the Parochial Church Council with a view of providing a Village Hall at or near the Church. The land available was limited, only enough for a “church room”. Informal advice from the planning authority was that there was insufficient space for a facility, and that parking and other factors would preclude planning consent. The plan was eventually abandoned when the FVHCT was advised that no development of the sort proposed would be permitted with the Conservation Area.

The funds held by the Trust must be used to provide a Village Hall, they can't be used for any other purpose.



We've received a number of questions mainly about building, maintenance and running costs of a Village Hall. The current estimate of cost is based on the standard cost per square metre of a possible facility. It is consistent with similar facilities currently being provided in Ramsdell (nr Basingstoke) and Burghfield Common (near Reading). When we know what Farringdon residents want from the Village Hall, we will be able to prepare a cost plan and a Business Plan to demonstrate that the whole enterprise is affordable and sustainable. This information must be in the public domain so that Farringdon residents can make an informed decision when the Referendum takes place. The Trust will be open in providing this information as supporting evidence to the concept.

Next Steps

A questionnaire that was circulated to all household in Farringdon on 1st July 2021. We are currently waiting for responses to that and will be analysing the information it provides. We will then be preparing a brief for our architects³ to prepare a concept design, options, and cost estimate (Plan Stage 3).

The Trust plans to issue a further News Update in one months' time.

³ The architects appointed to advise the Trust are MorseWebb Architects Ltd