

## **Wormington Village Society: Restated objectives for a village hall / facility and proposed way forward. October 2024 [DRAFT 2]**

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**History:** The land to the north west of the church was gifted to the village by Barbara and Alan Smith in 2000. At that time, due to the absence of a suitable legal entity in the village, the land was transferred to Dumbleton Parish Council (DPC) to be held on the village's behalf. Wormington Village Society (WVS) was formed as a charity in 2013 and was an appropriate legal entity to which the land could be transferred to. WVS had secured full planning permission from Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) for a permanent village hall on the land and had been awarded a number of significant grants. However, DPC was unwilling to transfer the land back to the village and also raised a number of issues (disputed by WVS and its lawyers) around the village's ability to own and build on the land. An unrelated borough-wide governance review by Tewkesbury Borough Council in 2021 acknowledged that Wormington was not being governed appropriately and should run its own affairs. A Parish Meeting was formed in 2023. As part of this new arrangement it was required that DPC return the land to the village.

### ***Objectives of a village hall / facility:***

- Promote activities in the village for all to **engage, entertain and educate** (see WVS 'objects' on Charity Commission website for more details)
- Create a facility that is suitable for **year-round use** with sufficient security for assets / stock and with a dedicated electricity and water supply.
- A facility that can be **managed realistically**, noting the size of our community and our experience of volunteer numbers. A facility to increase enjoyment – **not become a millstone**.
- A facility that has **a sustainable business plan**

### ***What has happened since the project was initiated?***

- The passing of ~15 years and a declining congregation means the church is unlikely to operate in its current format for many more years. This could mean addressing a potentially vacant building (or one with only occasional use). A future option for the church is for it to become a 'Festival Church', which would open for the key religious events of the year, plus weddings, funerals, christenings etc. A final decision on the village facility should take into account this likely outcome for the church, and how they might support each other, and not duplicate.
- The original cost estimate for the hall was £200k (2016). This is likely to have escalated significantly to nearer £400k, perhaps higher given market conditions. [TBC by Esmond / Highgate]

- We have 10+ years of experience running WVS events in the marquee. This should be reflected in any future plan. Activities, resources, lessons learnt. The original business plan needs to be updated.
- A potential switch from a permanent building to a semi-permanent structure raises a number of issues:

|                                 | Pros  | Cons   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Permanent building</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much higher quality building with all facilities (kitchen, toilets, better security, storage, more attractive for external hire etc.)</li> <li>• Ability to offer more activities and events (particularly to outside hirers of the hall)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely high cost (can funds be raised?)</li> <li>• Raised levels of traffic / parking (although this was never considered material)</li> <li>• Greater requirement for volunteer effort to manage</li> </ul> |
| <b>Semi-permanent structure</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much lower cost (up to 10 times lower?)</li> <li>• 'Lite-Touch' footprint on the land and can be removed relatively easily</li> <li>• Retains marquee 'spirit'</li> <li>• Lower levels of traffic / parking</li> <li>• Lower levels of resourcing</li> <li>• Business plan less demanding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few additional facilities compared to current marquee (apart from dedicated electricity and water supplies and secure storage for bar stock etc.)</li> </ul>  |

### ***The land ('Open Space')***

As part of next steps, we will revisit the legal acceptability of placing a structure on the land. Previously, WVS, with support from its lawyers, was confident this is possible, but we have to be certain. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) does, under certain circumstances, allow building on Open Space land. We plan to find an adviser who has undertaken this type of work before, as well as liaise with the local planners / TBC.

### ***Proposed next steps***

- Re-introduce topic at next WPM (2 December)
- Secure updated cost estimate to build a permanent village hall
- Agree a process to progress the project (WVS / WPM etc.)

- Debate, discuss and generate ideas from across the village to ensure full involvement in developing a successful solution. This is likely to be a phased process to help us all arrive at the best solution.
- Secure informal planning permission opinion from council
- The land ('Open Space'). Test WVS opinion that we can build on the land (and get electricity and water to the site). This will require experienced legal input.