

# ASHDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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## view of Ashdon Indoor Community Spaces Summary

**March 2021 - updated August 2021**

There are several indoor community spaces in Ashdon village which serve the community socially, culturally and spiritually. However, most have use and access which is limited by their physical size or layout, and/or by constitutional issues.

The Trustees or management committee of the various venues were asked to complete a



short consultation questionnaire (December 2020). **This information was updated in August 2021.**

**See Policy ASH12.**

*The Village Hall*

**The Village Hall**

The largest and most used community space is the village hall which originally had a capacity of 140 people (now reduced to 100 to comply with Health and Safety regulation), has a kitchen and two men's toilets and two ladies' and one disabled (used regularly by a disabled member of a village group). There are parish plans relating to the development of a shop/café which may result in the capacity being reduced further. This will be a serious problem for village events such as Open Gardens, Auction of Promises, Quizzes and Safari Supper as these are often very well attended (previously there have also been art and craft weekends). The numbers' limit will also be particularly difficult for wakes after funerals as there is no way of regulating the number of people attending.

The village hall car park, including the extension, is used (with permission) by Marpa House and Duke of Edinburgh award organisers.

The history of the hall is that the building was donated to the village by Mr Pelly to be "used for the village", originally it was the home of the Conservative Club. The car park had to be purchased separately, and the new extension was built and opened in 1997 (funded by a loan, now repaid).

The administrative relationship between the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council (PC) is clouded by historic leases and agreements and lacks clarity. The Hall building is owned by the PC but the space is run by the Village Hall Committee. Currently the hire of the Hall supports the Village Hall Committee expenditure, including insurance costs of more than £6k per annum. The White Horse section of the building is let to a business and contributes to the insurance and the finances of the whole building. The lease for this business has just been renewed, however this is only for three years.

The Hall is very well used and not all enquiries could be satisfied up to the end 2019. However, since the viral pandemic struck bookings are difficult and the drinks licence was lost due to the closure of the pub.

There are several issues which will significantly affect the use of the Hall by the community in the future – potential loss of capacity and ongoing serious problems with storage.

**August 2021 update:** The Parish Council have forged ahead with their plans for the shop/cafe/village hub in the Village Hall and have found some potential tenants to run the hub.

There has been more contact between the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee regarding the potential of working together.

Regarding alcohol licensing for Village Hall events, the pub, now under new ownership, may be able to help in this matter.

## **All Saints' Church**

This is another large community building in Ashdon, however, it is still very much operated and used as a religious building. It is available for use by community groups and is current-

ly used for scent dog training but not for general public booking. Its wider use is limited due to the fixed pews which leave relatively little open floor space; there are no toilets in the building. The neighbouring **church rooms** are modern and have a main room, small committee room, small kitchen, and toilets. Use of the church rooms by the community is limited as there was an agreement when it was built that it should not take bookings from the village hall and should be used by Church Parishioners. It must be kept largely vacant to allow for use by funerals and christenings when needed, also church events and meetings. Storage is again a major issue – Helen Eyles holds in her cellar/barn (ie off site) 120 settings of plates and cutlery etc., and saucepans, tablecloths and the Open Garden ticket selling trolley. This cannot go on forever. The committee room is used for table and chair storage.

Parking for a lot of vehicles at the church is a problem as the access road is single track, off a difficult bend, and the parking is on the grass verge (especially problematic in winter).

### **Ashdon Baptist Church and Hall,**

Another significant community building is Ashdon Baptist Church and Hall, but again this is mainly used for religious services and functions. A village bacon and coffee morning takes place on Mondays, and there is also Ashdon lunch club, held monthly for the elderly. The church does not actively seek other bookings as these should use the village hall in preference, however, all organisations are potentially welcome.

The Baptist church is willing to invest more in the community and encourage more connections within the village, using the spaces we have in different and more creative ways.

Fundraising, donations and bequests have allowed another building in the village to be developed as a community resource. **Ashdon Village Museum** was at first initiated as a private collection, but by 1995 it gained charitable status and by 1999 the old Labour Hall was purchased as its permanent premises. Its curator, and one of the founding members, is Glenn Miller whose family have lived in the village for generations. In normal times the museum is open twice weekly from Easter to Christmas and has a café serving teas on Wednesday and Sunday. Through the pandemic lockdowns the exchange of books, CDs and jigsaws for free or a small amount has been a wonderful service for the village. More recently, a substantial bequest from Rodney Heath has allowed major improvements and expansion of the building (2016) and secured the future of the museum, despite the closure for all of 2020.

### **Marpa House**

Another establishment which is used for a spiritual function is Marpa House, a Buddhist Retreat and Meditation Centre. It has operated as a small Buddhist community offering retreat to the wider public since its foundation in 1973. This is a self-contained facility which does not offer any space for hire. In the past the centre had closer links with the village but now the resident staff rotate and only stay a year making long lasting links difficult to establish. The Trustees would welcome more contact with the village community. The principal comments of the administrative staff relate to the absence of any useful public transport, meaning that both staff and visitors need their own transport.

There is a lack of parking for visitors, which is particularly difficult when events are run at the House. Visitors have made use of the school and nursery parking spaces and Marpa House are grateful for their help.

### **Ashdon Village School**

There is also Ashdon Village School – this is a self-contained, Local Authority school (Essex) which is currently a feeder school for Linton Village College (this can change without notice). The school does not currently provide space for community use, or for hire, but fundraising events are held on the premises for school funds.

### **The Rose and Crown pub**

**August 2021 update:** Having been closed for some time the Rose and Crown pub is under new ownership and will be under new management with a proposed opening date of October 2021. In the past it served as a meeting place for various groups and societies, as well as hosting quizzes and fund-raising evenings. Currently it consists of two public



rooms and bar, neither very large.

*Rose and Crown “introduction gathering” before the opening of the pub - Sept 2021.*

### **Summary**

In summary, although it might appear there are a number of significant indoor community spaces already in Ashdon, some historic and others much newer, most are in fact quite constrained in the service that can be offered to the village. A major issue which was highlighted was the absence of adequate, fit for purpose storage space, mainly for sports equipment and catering needs (furniture and tableware). There is scope, and some willingness among the current management teams, to improve and expand the provision of community space. However, if the number of households were to increase significantly, particularly if these are mainly families and younger people, there would be a requirement for a new building that could fully serve the community. This need should be an important consideration for Planning Officers if development of more than a handful of properties is proposed.

**Annex – Questionnaire for Survey of Indoor community spaces**

PUBLIC SPACES

NAME OF SPACE

GOVERNANCE

HOW MANY PEOPLE USE YOUR SPACE IN NORMAL TIMES

HOW HAS THE VIRUS AFFECTED YOUR SPACE

DO YOU ADVERTISE

DO YOU WANT MORE PEOPLE TO USE YOUR SPACE

IF SO, DO YOU HAVE SUFFICIENT SPACE/FACILITIES TO ENABLE THIS

IF SPACE AND FACILITIES ARE LACKING, DO YOU HAVE IDEAS OF HOW TO SOLVE THIS

ARE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN USE YOUR SPACE IN 'A BETTER WAY'

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LINK UP WITH OTHER VILLAGE FACILITIES IF APPLICABLE

ARE THERE ANY WAYS IN WHICH YOU THINK THAT THE NP CAN HELP YOU

ANY OTHER COMMENTS