

TUR LANGTON VILLAGE Hall

INFORMATION PACK

SUBMITTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF
MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD
2010
(revised 2012)

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INTRODUCTION

The small Leicestershire village of Tur Langton (pop.190) is faced with the permanent loss of its village hall in favour of what is perceived as an opportunist financial gain by the owners of the land on which it stands.

A previous hall had been on the land since 1920 but in 1936 it was acquired at agricultural land value by Merton College, Oxford.

The continued use of the village hall site was on the basis of a unwritten understanding between the previous owner and the college bursar.

In 1956 a lease was drawn up to regularize the situation to facilitate fund raising. A new lease was granted in 1970 for a further 40 years and the present hall was built at that time.

In 1977 the College agreed to an extension of the car park, thereby transferring an additional area of land from agricultural use to potential building land at no cost to the College.

In 2004 the Parish Council was told by the College that it was unlikely to renew the lease but no decision would be given until nearer the time.

Although the present lease expired in March 2010 the hall still continues to be used for regular activities and one off events.

Naturally with this uncertainty over its future the hall has had little money spent on it in the past few years and is now in urgent need of considerable renovation and upgrading of facilities.

In 2008 the College offered an alternative site on which to build a new hall but this was on condition the Parish Council supported the College's application for planning permission on the present site.

Unfortunately the alternative site offered presents a number of problems not least of which being in the current economic climate it is extremely unlikely that a small village of just 80 households could find the necessary funds to build a brand new hall.

There is dismay in the village at losing its hall. There is a large groundswell of support for renovating the existing hall to modern standards and an Action Group has been formed to try and achieve this.

MISSION STATEMENT FROM THE VILLAGE HALL ACTION GROUP

“We passionately believe in the time-honoured value that individuals can derive from an active, cohesive and fully engaged community, spanning all walks of life and within all age groups.

We view with ever-growing concern, the steady decline of those community institutions in various guises, which have traditionally served to bind communities together, with such beneficial results in the past.

The village of Tur Langton itself has been no exception to this process, with the result that its current number of community-reinforcing amenities has now dwindled to three centres of focus, one such ‘centre’ being our long established village hall.

Because the lease expires in March 2010 and because of the continuing uncertainty about its renewal, there has naturally been some decline in the level of village hall activity of late, coupled with a growing sense of the inevitability of its closure.

We consider it to be of paramount importance that this should not occur and that the village hall should continue on its existing site for a further extended period, as we are convinced that this is by far and away the most financially and practically viable location for it to occupy.

We believe the present building can and should be upgraded to a standard consistent with modern day needs and that this can be done at affordable cost. We also remain confident that with the current site and modernized building, those user-groups that have temporarily moved to other venues or ceased their activities altogether, will return and contribute to a much more vibrant village amenity – a village hall which we can all take pride in and which will benefit the whole community.”.

PETITION TO THE WARDEN AND FELLOWS OF MERTON COLLEGE

From 2003 to date the Parish Council has been wrestling with the problem of how to secure a future for the village hall after 31st March 2010.

In September and October 2009 it became evident that there was no support from the villagers for building a new hall on the site offered by the College. The alternative location outside the village was considered unsuitable and the cost likely to be prohibitive for a village like ours comprising 80 houses.

A group of concerned villagers was therefore formed to collect signatures for a petition to the College and to produce an information pack to present to the College authorities. Also an appeal was made for emergency funds to pay for insurance and other essential overheads which produced an enthusiastic response.

The petition states as follows:-

“WE THE UNDERSIGNED VILLAGERS OF TUR LANGTON DO HEREBY PETITION THE WARDEN AND FELLOWS OF MERTON COLLEGE OXFORD TO GRANT A CONTINUATION OF THE LEASE ON THE SITE OF OUR VILLAGE HALL”

The concerns of the petitioners are as follows:-

- 1. Until relatively recently it had been the long held understanding on the part of the villagers that the hall would remain on its present site for the benefit of the village as long as it was required**
- 2. The termination date of the lease in March 2010 has deterred any attempt by the management committee to modernize the building and maintain its fabric**
- 3. The building of a new village hall on the alternative site offered by the College is unlikely to be financially achievable**
- 4. The sale of the present site for development would be a “once and for all” windfall for the College**
- 5. To lose the village hall would permanently deprive the village of this valuable amenity and be a serious blow to the life of the community**

PRESENT USES OF THE HALL [as at Jan 2012]

The uncertain future for the present hall means there has been minimal maintenance in recent years. The existing facilities can only be described as "basic" and are in dire need of total overhaul.

In spite of this state of affairs the hall continues to be in regular use.

Regular users include

- Tai Boxing – weekly classes ongoing
- Circuit Fitness Training – weekly classes ongoing
- Parish council meetings (minimum 6 per year)
- Polling Station for Local Council Elections
- Table Top Sales
- Cycling Club (twice yearly using hall and car park as a base for local rides)

The Church Band still occasionally hire the hall but due to the commitments of its members now meet less frequently than they did.

The existence of a small hall in our own village is a potential source of encouragement to musical groups if the hall can be made more inviting.

The hall's stock of tables, chairs and crockery are all hired out for functions in the neighbourhood such as private parties, barbeques, fetes etc. This is a valued facility and generates income for the hall as well as goodwill in the neighbourhood.

Other uses for the hall include

- Church Harvest Lunch
- Village Christmas Party
- private parties – birthdays, engagements, weddings, anniversaries etc
- cookery courses
- visiting drama productions by Centre Stage and others
- quiz evenings, race nights etc

With the high cost of travelling the hall is popular because of its location within the village and for the sense of community engendered.

There are many other potential users from elsewhere which the hall would attract if it was brought up to modern standards. This would enhance the life of the village as well as adding to the hall's viability.

Tur Langton Village Hall

Condition Statement and Recommendations

Whilst the Village Hall looks and indeed is in a poor state the basic fabric is reasonably sound. The Steering Group have identified the primary elements that need to be addressed to make the Village Hall more inviting, useable to potential users and give this valuable facility a viable future. We have split these into essential items which are as follows:

1. A primary concern to enable us to apply for various funding grants that may be available and in order to comply with the latest DDA requirements will be the provision of disabled access and WC facilities. Apart from complying with our legal obligations the provision of these facilities will make the Village Hall more attractive to all the community and will be a vast improvement.

The Steering Group have identified that a considerable majority of existing users park on the rear car park and access the hall through the existing kitchen door, hence we propose as indicated on the sketch plan attached to this document to create a new Main Entrance directly from the car park. The existing car park ground levels are eminently suitable and will result in minimal works and cost in forming disabled access facilities, hand-railing, etc. Also identified on the plan is the location of the proposed Disabled Unisex WC facilities in the position of the existing front entrance. The proposed situation of the Disabled WC would still allow provision for hat and coat hooks and would result in a more secure environment for users hanging their hats and coats there.

The Architects who have prepared the plan have advised that the proposed layout will comply with fire escape provisions.

2. The existing timber windows are single glazed, prone to condensation in cold weather and externally the cills have seriously rotted away. The proposal is to replace all the windows with White UPVC double glazed windows which will improve heat loss, reduce the risk of condensation and will be virtually maintenance free. The new doors from the car park will also be constructed in UPVC along with the replacement fire escape doors.
3. The existing vinyl tiled floor is in a poor state and over the years has cracked due to settlement and been repaired on a number of occasions. There is also a serious issue of condensation in cold weather which can be both dangerous and unwelcoming to users. The proposal is to carry out a check on the existing concrete floor slab by a qualified Structural Engineer to confirm that there is little likelihood of any further settlement and then take up the existing floor tiles and overlay with a vapour barrier and insulated floating floor.

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The final finish on the floating floor will be a hard wearing sports sheet vinyl cushion floor type material that would be suitable for a number of uses. Final selection of the floor finish will be carefully carried out as the material will need to be resistant to heel marks, scuffing, etc. The final finished element however will be easier to maintain, warmer and therefore more energy efficient and most importantly will not condensate resulting in a safe environment for users. This proposal will involve slightly adjusting door heights to accommodate the floating floor, but due to the existing timber framed construction of the Village Hall will be easily achieved at minimal cost.

4. The existing electric heaters are very ineffective, expensive to run and we are proposing to replace them with a more effective energy efficient form of electric heaters along with a thorough overhaul of the electrical installation/lighting to ensure compliance with the latest electric safety standards and generally improve the building.
5. The external cedar cladding, fascias and barge boards are in dire need of redecoration, although there is minimal rotted timber to replace.
6. There are further recommendations which will vastly improve the fabric and energy efficiency of the Village Hall which subject to funding could be carried out after the essential items have been done which are as follows:
 - The existing roofs whilst watertight will soon require serious re-covering. The proposal is to overlay the existing roofs with lightweight insulation along with new appropriately guaranteed roof coverings.
 - The internal faces of the external walls could also be easily clad with an insulated plasterboard lining, replacement skirting boards, etc.

These measures would add greatly to the energy efficiency and comfort and so make the Village Hall more attractive to potential users.

There are a number of other improvements that could be made such as new kitchen units, new sanitary-ware, etc but we feel that we have set out within this statement the essential items that need to be carried out to make the Village Hall viable and a continuing useful facility for the residents of Tur Langton and other potential users.

J HALLAM
Dec 2009

Tur Langton Village Hall

Suggested Budget Cost for Improvement Works

Essential Costs:	£
Replace existing windows and doors with uPVC	7,500.00
Install ramp to new Main Entrance Door located at rear of building	500.00
Install Disabled WC etc	4,000.00
Provide floating insulated floor throughout covered in sheet vinyl finish to avoid condensation	8,000.00
Install improved heating and lighting and general upgrade electrics	6,000.00
External redecorations	1,500.00
	—————
	27,500.00
	Say: £30,000.00

Further Recommended Costs:	
Insulated Roof to all areas including scaffold costs etc	12,000.00
Insulated Wall Lining including altering skirting boards etc and redecoration	6,000.00
	—————
	18,000.00
	Say: £20,000.00

VAT not included as this is recoverable by the Parish Council

“WHY WE NEED OUR VILLAGE HALL “

A FINAL WORD FROM MARTIN CORRY MBE
(ENGLAND RUGBY CAPTAIN 2005 – 2007)

“My wife and I moved to Tur Langton to bring up our family in an environment with a sense of community. In my view, the village revolves around three focal points: the pub, the church and the village hall. The pub has its value but is a commercial enterprise; the church is a house of religion and is of limited use for community events; the village hall has been under utilised due to the state it is in.

“The village hall in a small village such as ours should be the centre of the community. We, as villagers, and me as a father of three young children are at a loss for a venue where we can host functions and events which bring the community together. I want a village hall which can play host to my children’s parties, where we can stage charity events for local causes and have functions there just for fun, where the only objective is to bring the village together.

“There are many young children in the village but they only socialise together at each others’ houses. In a village like ours there should be a provision for the community where the youngsters can play in a safe environment.

“There is a lot of good will in Tur Langton with no real outlet or sense of purpose. I for one want to get behind the scheme to develop the village hall on its existing site in order to provide a better life for my children in the years to come.”

MARTIN CORRY
Crox Farmhouse
Tur Langton

APPENDIX I

HISTORICAL NOTES

The first Village Hall (1920s)

The land on which the village hall stands was originally part of Spring Farm. The farm had been bought by Mr J W S Watts from a Captain Warner of West Langton Hall in 1912.

In 1920 two Army huts were brought from Tugby on farm wagons and Mr Watts allowed these to be sited in the corner of the paddock roughly where the present hall now stands.

The 1936 sale to Merton College

In 1936 when farming was in dire straits Mr Watts sold Spring Farm to Merton College, Oxford. The bursar, Mr Holland Hibbert, told Mr Watts the huts could remain there to be used as a village hall and there was every expectation that this situation would continue as long as the village residents wanted it. This is confirmed in a letter dated 2 Dec 2009 from the daughters of Mr Watts who still live next door to the village hall.

The 1956 lease

In 1956 the Parish Council applied for a grant of £200 from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust towards the cost of furniture, equipment and some minor repairs. This grant was agreed subject to formalisation of the village hall's legal status. As part of this process a lease was drawn up between Merton College and the Parish Council for 21 years from 1st February 1958 to 31st January 1979 at an annual rent of £1.

The present hall and the 1970 lease

In 1964 first early consideration was given to the possibility of a new purpose-built village hall in view of the deterioration of the first hall's structure.

Fund-raising proceeded in earnest and by 1970 the plans were advanced sufficiently to apply to the Ministry of Education and Science for a grant towards the construction of the present village hall which it was estimated would cost £4,800.

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The Ministry agreed to make a grant of £2,150 but they required that the lease be extended beyond its then remaining term of 9 years. A further grant was received from the Carnegie Trust.

Merton College agreed to a new lease on a slightly larger area of land for a period of 40 years from 1st April 1970 to 31st March 2010 at the same rent of £1 p.a.

The new hall was opened by Colonel Pen Lloyd (High Sheriff of Leicestershire) on 22nd April 1972.

In 1977 the College gave some extra land for an extension of the car park.

In 1979 the store room was constructed at the rear of the hall at a cost of approximately £1,000, the funds being raised by members of the village.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the hall continued to be a popular and well used venue for a wide range of community and private activities. However as time went on it became clear that the standard of facilities was falling behind the times and money needed to be spent on repairs and improvements.

APPENDIX II

SOME LEGAL POINTS

1. The College's power to grant the lease for less than the best rent (i.e. at a nominal rent) derives from Section 15 of the Universities and College Estates Act 1925.

2. The hall is held upon trust by the Parish Council "for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Tur Langton ... without distinction of political religious or other opinions including use for meetings lectures and classes and for other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants".

The Parish Council's power to hold the village hall in trust in this way derives from Section 139 of the Local Government Act 1972.