

# NEW HAREGATE COMMUNITY CENTRE

**HORSECROFT CRESCENT  
LEEK  
ST13 6QL**



## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**REV A**

In support of a Full Planning Application  
Submitted in March 2013



*Fig 1. View across to Horsecroft Crescent*



*Fig 2. View across to Ramshaw View*



*Fig 3. View across to Queen's Drive*

## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Ascent Housing Limited to support a Full Planning Application of a proposal to develop a new Community Centre on Horsecroft Crescent, Road, Leek. Ascent Housing is a joint venture company formed between Harvest housing Group known locally as Moorlands Housing and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). Moorlands Housing are a key local housing provider and manage over 800 properties in the local and surrounding area. Ascent have been formed as the delivery company with SMDC and aspires to develop approximately 400 new affordable homes over the next 3 years on sites across Leek, Biddulph and rural North Staffordshire. The proposed development on Haregate, forms part of the Haregate master plan which looks at 4 sites for affordable housing with a new community centre, public realm and improved play space provision.

As part of the whole project Ascent are assisting the community centre in constructing a new Community Centre to replace the existing building.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the detailed planning application drawings and its accompanying documents including the:-

#### **Ecological Assessment**

prepared by TEP

#### **Tree Survey**

prepared by TEP

#### **Flood Risk Assessment**

Prepared by Sutcliffes

#### **Ground Investigation and Risk Report**

prepared by Sutcliffes

#### **Open Space Statement**

prepared by Mosaic Planning Consultants

## BACKGROUND



*Fig 4 Location of Existing Haregate Community Centre*

The existing Haregate Community Centre is located on Haregate Road, Haregate Leek and has been operating since 1999 approx.

The Community Centre currently utilizes an old Health Centre building which was constructed in 1966 and which previously shared the overall site with the ambulance station which has since been demolished.

The existing community centre provides space for a wide ranging groups of users both from the immediate Haregate Area and also from further afield such as Stoke on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme and user groups have access from morning till evening as well as 7 days a week use.

Users groups currently utilizing the facilities include :-

- Adult and Community learning
- Antenatal Classes
- Residents Associations
- Breakfast Clubs
- Youth Club
- Friendship Groups

## BACKGROUND



Fig 5 Existing Haregate Community Centre plan 180m<sup>2</sup> Approx

- Toddlers Groups
- Community Events
- St John's
- Adult Education
- Mother and Baby

Given the buildings previous history as a Health Centre, the building itself as such was not specifically designed for its current community Centre role and as such the Community Centre layout is restrictive in a number of ways :-

- overall size 180m<sup>2</sup> Approx
- Lack of multiple usage options due to layout of building
- Does not meet general changes in legislation regarding Disabled access / facilities.
- Lack of parking on site
- Individual Room sizes inadequate

Added to all the above, is the general deterioration of the existing building fabric itself which requires a substantial amount of money spending immediately in order to rectify issues.

Taking into account all of the above, it has become increasingly obvious to all, that the existing building no longer meets the current requirements of this valued Community Centre resource

## ACCESS



*Fig 6 Aerial map of Haregate showing sites considered for Re-development in Blue.*

and is in fact hampering efforts to expand the diverse range of groups that it currently serves.

As part of the overall Ascent Haregate master plan proposals, 4 sites are being considered for redevelopment including the existing site (Site 45) which contains the Existing Community Centre. As part of these redevelopment proposals, it is recognised that the existing location of the current community centre was only as a result of the vacant availability of the building at the time, hence these new proposals offer the opportunity for a general review as to where any new future 'Community centre' should be located, if the opportunities arose.

## LOCATION

The town of Leek has a population of approximately 19,000 inhabitants and is located approximately 10kms north east of Stock on Trent and around 21Kms east of the M6 Motorway. The town is served by both the A53 and A523 which offer links to and from towns and cities in the wider region. The various sites included within the Haregate area itself are located around the Haregate Estate as shown above which is located approximately 1Km to the North East of Leek town centre.

## OPTIONS

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Due to the sites close proximity to the town centre the site benefits from excellent public transport links with services running through the estate with Bus routes running through and around the estate providing excellent connections to the town centre and wider area.

### ACCESS AROUND LOCAL AREA

There are a number of local facilities around the estate such as shops, schools, medical centres, churches, community facilities and play facilities all within walking distance of each other and, as can be seen from the attached photos, the area surrounding the site area is generally flat and easily accessible. Leek town centre provides a wide range of retail facilities for the town and its residents.

### FUTURE LOCATION OPTIONS

As part of the development proposals for the area, a couple of consultation events were held at Haregate Community Centre to discuss the aims of the Ascent Strategy and how it could respond to the issues of providing more local housing, as well as developing a new community centre proposals for all of the sites as well as future options for the location of the Community Centre itself.

During these consultations, Local residents suggested a number of possible sites for a new community centre including, the existing site, Horsecroft Crescent, Haregate Hall Barns and also the area known locally as the 'Rec'.

The general preference stated by all was that there should be a continuity in the running of the Community Centre and that a space for uninterrupted operation of the Community Centre should be provided throughout. This will either be in the form of a temporary community centre or an alternate premises and these options are currently being investigated by the Ascent and the Community Centre.

Of the alternative options mentioned by Local Residents, 3 of



## OPTIONS

the sites — The existing community centre site, Horsecroft Crescent and the land to the Side of Haregate Hall have all been considered in the Ascent Master Plan strategy for the Haregate area and therefore have been considered as possible locations for the Community Centre.

On review of these sites there is the potential for either refurbishment of existing structures on two of the sites or the provision of a complete new build solutions on all.

These sites were then reviewed against a range of criteria such as:-

- Location
- New Build or Existing Alteration
- User Needs
- Overall Cost
- Added Value
- Affect on Housing Opportunity
- Future Opportunity

### SITE 44—HAREGATE HALL BARN— HAREGATE ROAD



*Fig 7 Aerial map of Haregate Road—Site 44. Barns highlighted in yellow*

## OPTIONS

- **Location** - Fairly central Haregate location with access by foot, bus and with no current parking available at present on site.
- **New Build or Existing Alteration** — Any use of these barns as a community centre would require alterations to the existing barns which have 'listed' status and therefore will require Listed Building Consent which will likely to be contentious given the size required. Demolition would not be acceptable.
- **User Needs**— These could be difficult to achieve because of the listed building status of the barns and possible restrictions placed on the changes that could be made to existing building. Areas at first floor would need adaption to be brought into use and or servicing through lifts etc. Parking provision would be limited.
- **Overall Cost**— Due to the works required as a result of its listed status, the cost of redevelopment of the barns is likely to be higher than a new build facility according to base costing's completed.
- **Added Value**— There would be limited add on value as the site / scheme is separated from other community facilities unless future schemes led to redevelopment of the Haregate Hall itself for community use etc.
- **Affect on Housing Opportunity**— The conversion of the barns would is unlikely to have any significant effect of the proposals for housing on the adjacent site.
- **Future Opportunity**— Any potential opportunity for this centre would be severely affected by the potential development of housing on this site and vica—versa.

### SITE 45—EXISTING SITE- HAREGATE ROAD

- **Location** - Fairly central Haregate location with access by foot, bus and with limited current parking available at



## OPTIONS

present on site.



*Fig 8 Aerial map of Haregate Road—Site 45.*

- **New Build or Existing Alteration** — Either a new build or refurbishment option would be possible on this site, although as previously highlighted the existing building is inadequate for a number of reasons
- **User Needs**— Would be satisfy if building could be extended and reorganised to suit requirements for space and latest standards.
- **Overall Cost**— Extending the existing building would be fairly cost effective but would require alternate premises within the local area whilst works were carried out.
- **Added Value**— There would be limited add on value as the site / scheme is separated from other community facilities.
- **Affect on Housing Opportunity**— Retaining use of this site for the community centre would affect the number of houses that could be built on this site and therefore potentially within the Haregate area as a whole.

## OPTIONS

- **Future Opportunity—** Any potential opportunity for this centre would be severely affected by the potential development of housing on this site and vice—versa.



Fig 9 Aerial map of Horsecroft Crescent—Site 61.

## SITE 61— HORSECROFT CRESCENT

- **Location** - Central Haregate location with easy access by foot, bus and with parking potential available. The site is shown on the councils plan as being designated 'open space' and as such this will need to be addressed against overall open space available in the Haregate Area if this were to be pursued any further.
- **New Build or Existing Alteration** — There are no existing buildings on site, therefore any scheme on this site would be a new build solution. The siting of the community centre on the site should be nearer the shops than the houses and without effecting the existing line of trees along Queen's Drive.
- **User Needs** — Any new build option would be

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

designed to meeting required user needs and therefore would satisfy requirements.

- **Overall Cost—** Scheme would cost more than a straight refurbishment but less than conversion of the listed barns etc.
- **Added Value—** The scheme would be located close to other community facilities such as shops/ pub and therefore could lead to mutual benefit in terms of footfall traffic / visitors etc
- **Affect on Housing Opportunity—** This site is not a preferred location for housing from a planning perspective and as such would have limited effect on the proposed master plan in terms of overall housing numbers.
- **Future Opportunity—** there is potential opportunity for use of the surrounding open space for community use which could benefit the local community.

Following the initial consultation and reviews, the potential of the 3 sites for the community centre where reviewed by the design team using the criteria above, as well as development of the Ascent programme master plan of providing new affordable housing to the area.

The issue of the listed Barns on Site 44 as a whole, was seen as a major uncertainty in the deliverability of a suitable community centre for Haregate for several reasons such as Time, Cost and Design or rather potential impact on design of the scheme. As such, on review against the 2 other sites, it was considered that whilst reuse of the barns would be to the communities benefit, it was the weaker of the 3 options.

On review of the 2 other sites, both Site 45 (Haregate Road) and Site 61 (Horsecroft Crescent) allowed for New Build options but only Site 45 allowed for Refurbishment of an existing building.

Whilst refurbishment / extension of the existing community centre on Site 45 was probably most cost effective option overall it did have several disadvantages in that the community

## PROPOSED PLAN

centre would have to relocate / suspend operations for a period of time and it would also restrict the possible development of houses on this site and therefore the housing programme as a whole.

Site 61 in comparison, whilst only affording a new build option, does offer a more central estate location, close to other community facilities and it would also mean that the existing Community Centre could remain operational whilst the new centre was constructed. Using this potential site would also have the additional side benefits of improving the poor quality of the overall open space through drainage and landscaping as well benefiting the other community facilities such as the shops and would not impact on the prospective housing numbers of the Ascent Programme.

Taking into consideration all of the above and having discussed the potential options available, the site at Horsecroft Crescent is viewed as offering the most potential in terms of cost / timescale as being the preferred development site for the New Community Centre.

## AMBITIONS

John McCall Architects have produced these proposals based on specific requirements of the Ascent programme, who as part of the general Housing Masterplan for the Haregate area, have agreed to separately contribute to fund proposals for the provision and enhancement of existing Community facilities in Haregate.

Following the establishment of a preferred location for development, a brief was established to look at the shortcomings of the existing facility and develop alternate proposals which would look at providing a similar sized, although more efficiently designed community centre, which would allow improved access and facilities for the local community.

Following a series of discussions with Community centre manager, it was established that the main issues affecting the

## PROPOSED PLAN

current community centre were:-

- Inefficient layout - smaller meeting rooms were only accessible via the main hall space.
- Existing building is 50 years old and in need of major improvement works.
- Layout does not meet disabled requirements in terms of both access and facilities in toilet / kitchen etc.
- Existing on site parking for just 6 cars when a significant proportion of the existing users come from beyond Haregate.
- Insufficient space to cover bigger indoor events such as social events/ groups etc.

On review of the previous items listed, the new proposed layout has been developed to take account of the issues raised and produce a layout which addresses the issues of :-

- Current users groups
- Space and Demand
- Design
- Layout
- Future Sustainability and Community involvement



## SITE ANALYSIS

As shown over, the new layout now has :-

- Improved parking including disabled spaces
- Use of open space adjacent for Outdoor activities
- Larger main space for activities / Events
- Improved toilet facilities
- Specialist adult change area
- Improved plan to allow several groups to use various spaces at the same time
- Improved central location near other community facilities such as the shops etc

## SITE ANALYSIS

Having reviewed the options and coming to a preference for Horsecroft Crescent as location for the Community Centre for the reasons previously described, the exact location on the site still needed to be decided on

The site itself is a large area of open space within Haregate which has in the past, been used for sports pitches etc.

Approximately 20 years ago a development of 10 bungalows where built roughly in the middle of the space and the area ceased be used for the purposes of sports etc.



Fig 11 Site Analysis of Site 61.



Whilst lined along Queens Drive with an avenue of trees, the green space does suffer from extremely poor drainage and is often unusable in areas for large parts of the year and is described in various council documents as being of 'poor quality' space.

As can be seen from the plan over, the site is bounded on two sides by houses and along the third, which is the main route (Queens Drive) through the estate, the site is lined by Shops and a Public House.



*Fig 12 Axo View of Proposed Location on Site 61.*

Within the estate itself, these form the main centre shopping parade for Haregate and bus stops are conveniently located close by. Having spoken to the planning officers regarding options any proposals needs to respect and retain all the trees along Queens Drive and also minimise disruption to neighbouring houses.

As such the North corner of the site in general offers the best location for the proposed Community Centre in that it faces onto the other community facilities in terms of the PH and shops and is at the main junction of approach to the site, thereby enhancing the Centres ability to promote itself to the local community as a community resource, which is available for the enhancement of the whole community.



## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The plan of the centre itself has been arranged such that the main activity space of the centre is as far from neighbouring housing as it can be and means that the community centre can use the outdoor space for its primary purpose of amenity space.

The increased potential for a wider variety of user groups should have a positive knock on effect of an increase in footfall traffic to the local shops and pub, as well increasing use of the surrounding green space. The issue of Open Space is a majority concern within council plans but so is the issue of Housing shortage. The overall Ascent programme seeks to take a balanced view of this issue and seeks to create both housing opportunities as well as as providing enhancements to any open space in respect of Landscaping / drainage which should further improve the quality of the space on this particular site.



*Fig 13 View of Front of Community Centre*

As part of the overall proposal and application a separate supporting Planning and Open Space Document has been prepared by Mosaic Town Planning and accompanies this application in relation to this issue.

## MATERIALS

The proposed Community Centre will be designed so as to be robust, but light and welcoming and incorporate brickwork

masonry facades, tiled roofs and render/ cladding features of high-standard detailing. The aim is to provide a durable and low maintenance Community Building.

The materials proposed have been chosen to be bespoke yet sit comfortably within the location while allowing the scheme to have its own sense of identity and modernity. The selected palette should provides a balance between a contemporary solution and a scheme that is in keeping with its surroundings.

Externally we propose to use 'traditional' materials including:



*Fig 14 View of Access to car park off Queens Drive*

brick facades, render panels and tiled roofs. The roof pitches have been designed with sufficient falls to ensure that any variety of tiles can be used (after agreement of the Planning Officer).

The centre is set back from the footpath and articulated with projecting boxes, which at ground level contain the entrances.

## BOUNDARY TREATMENT

The community centre is to be left as open as possible so as to sit within the existing site. Security and minimising of Noise etc are to be controlled using strategically planted landscaping around the scheme.

## HIGHWAYS

Access will be off Queens Drive View into a small carpark for 12

## LANDSCAPING

[illegible]

The site has been laid out to ensure that the maximum open space will be retained and that the remaining area post development will retain an open and therefore, naturally supervised feel to it.

A series of consultation events were held in the existing Community Centre off Haregate Road in July / August 2012 and Feb 13 prior to the submission of this application and generally in regard to this site, whilst there was a mixed reaction to the proposed Houses / Bungalows which had been previously suggested at an earlier stage, there was generally a more

positive reaction to the suggestion of restricting development to a new improved Local Community Centre. There are still some objectors to these proposals and we have met recently with some of these to discuss their concerns, which primarily relate to the use of the green space at all and the proximity of the centre, to nearby houses. As a result of the last public consultation, further changes were made as regards the community centre layout and access and also its positioning on site, in order to address some of these concerns.

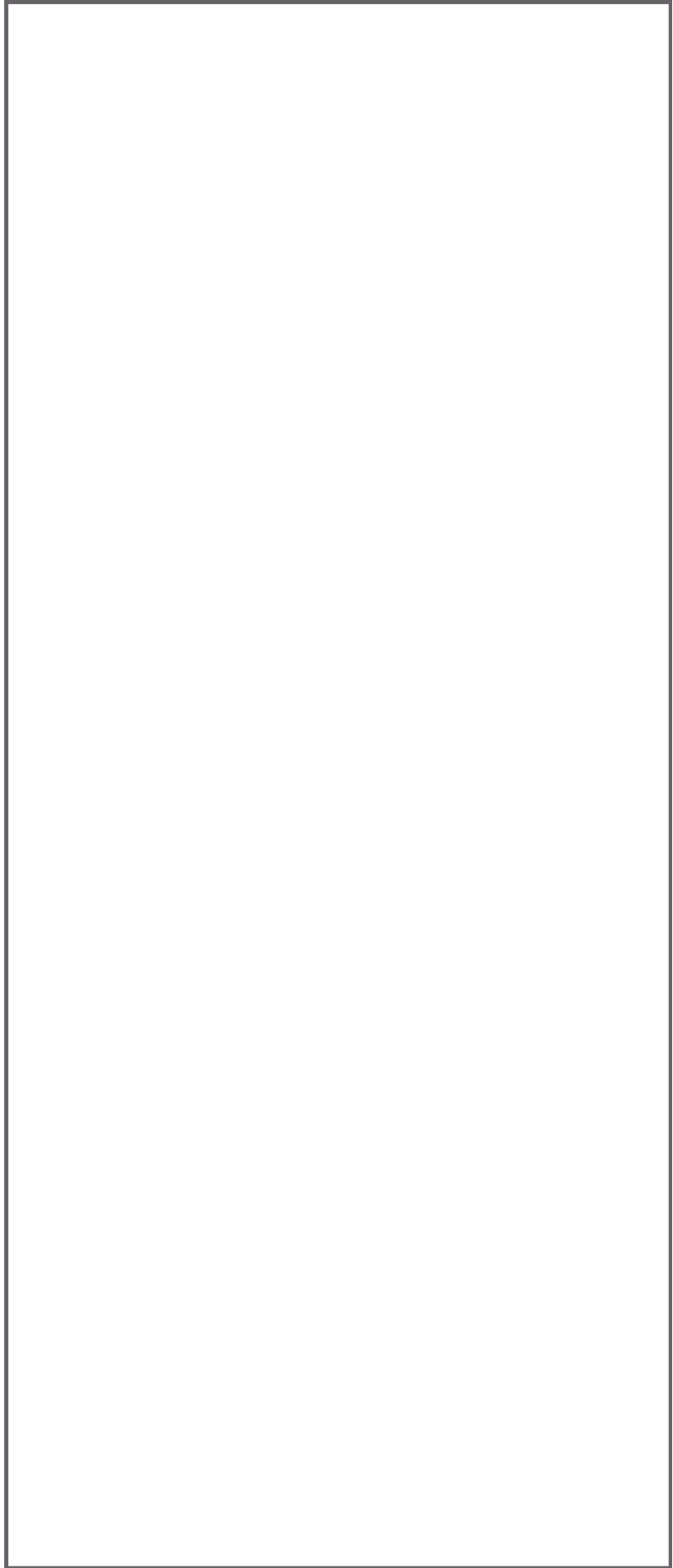
Reference was made by several objectors regarding a recent incident, whereby an Air Ambulance required the open space in order to attend an incident in the area. Following the various amendments to the overall plans made during the consultation process from start to finish, we believe that the remaining green area provides more than sufficient remaining space to accommodate a landing, should an extraordinary event like this occur again in the future.

Whilst I have made reference to those neighbours objecting to the scheme, we think it only fair to point out that there are many people who are actually in favour of this proposal and at the time of this submission, there is an accompanying petition in support of the proposals containing some 350+ names.

## CONCLUSION

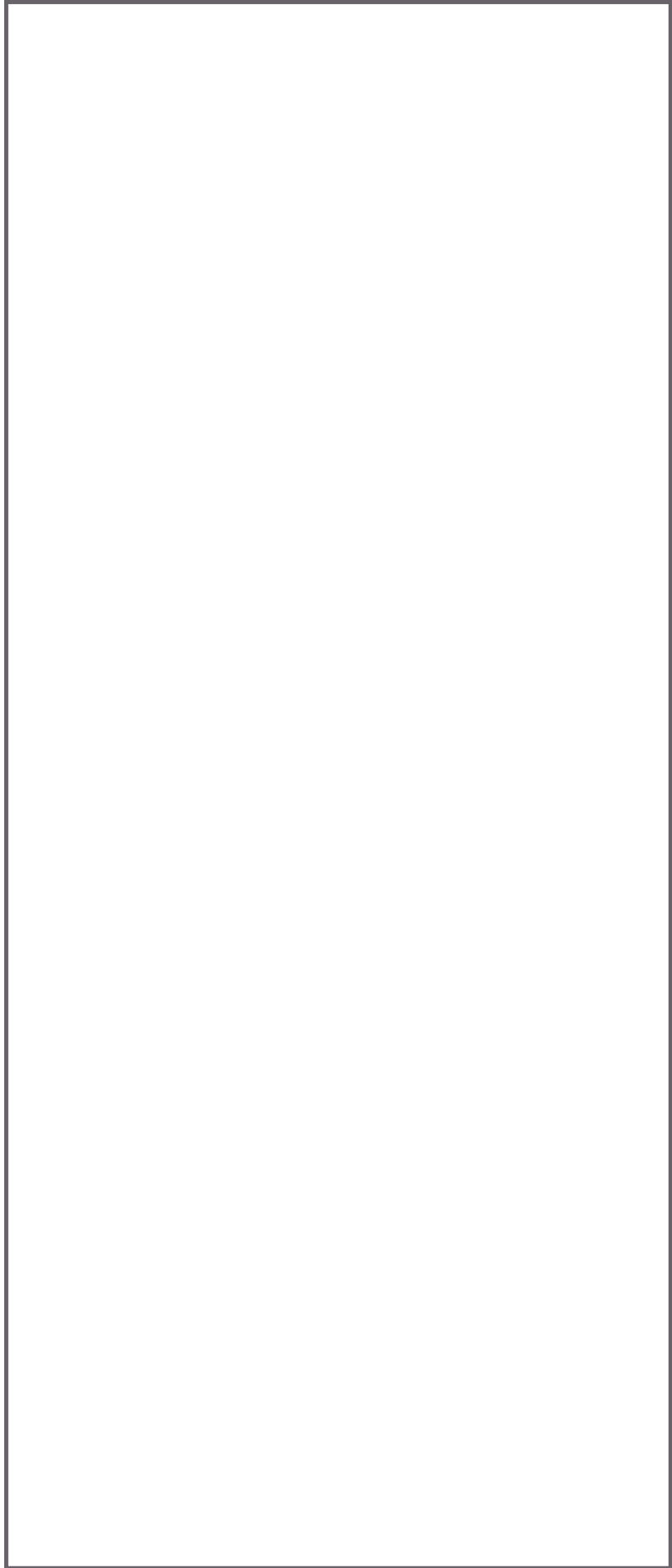
In developing this proposal, we believe that this proposed plan will receive the backing of the Council / Local Community / User Groups in that it resolves many of the current community Centres Problems and that overall, it will significantly improve its ability to serve the local community in the future.

We also believe that the proposed scheme will provide a small scale intervention of high quality, which will enhance the existing surroundings and satisfy a key theme of Staffordshire Moorlands Council in the promotion of a cohesive and sustainable community.



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