

30th September 2020.

Letter to Richard Cawte, Chairman, Debden Village Hall Trust.

We are writing on behalf of the members of the Debden Residents Community Group (DRCG) to express our concern at the possible loss of the generous grant provided to the community of Debden in 2015 due to the inability to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant/ covenant. Sadly, this remains the case even with the numerous extensions of deadlines, which is sadly tarnishing the reputation of the village and the long-established relationship with the local Barracks. Indeed, some have expressed embarrassment.

Whilst it is incumbent on the VHT to meet their primary objectives to ‘provide and maintain suitable village hall facilities to Debden and Debden Green’, we appeal to you to reconsider the alternative option of the ***Purkiss Plan***, a replacement hall on the existing site which has detailed full planning permission granted and is not subject to legal challenge, particularly in respect of the land exchange. This would also have the additional advantage of not having to demolish and rebuild the sports pavilion at an approximate cost of £250,000 to be met by the Parish Council/ a loan funded by the Council Tax Precept. Unfortunately, despite the Football Club previously offering to refurbish the current pavilion to a high standard, it appears that their offer has been refused. This option would also enhance and secure the long-term future of the Post Office and Village Shop and would not reduce the car parking which is a much-needed facility.

We fully appreciate all your hard work and efforts over the last 5 years since receiving the match funded grant, however, sadly in spite of all your efforts you have not been able to raise any significant funds to take the project forward. The ***Purkiss Plan*** has significant financial pledges from many of the residents in the village which would mean that there would be no reason to impose such a large loan on a small community, the sports pavilion would not need to be demolished and rebuilt at substantial unnecessary cost particularly with many older residents in the village and the harsh economic climate that we are facing at this current time.

We urge you to act in the best interests of not only Debden residents, but also your respective charities/trusts while considering the project objectively, in order to retain the grant and provide a suitable new village hall at the best possible value to Debden residents. To this end, should you reconsider your position and agree to this more suitable option, we confirm that we would employ our best endeavours to work alongside you to finally bring this long outstanding project to a satisfactory conclusion and, hopefully, restore the ‘*entente cordiale*’ that the village used to enjoy.

Debden Residents Community Group