



Consultation Evening Results

General Information:

Number of Attendees:	37 (+Trustees & RHP)
MFPT Representatives:	Gillian McCallum (Chair) John Pickering (Treasurer) Geoff Cumbers (Project Organiser)
Radley House Representatives:	Jeremy Poll (Partner) Richard Codd (Senior Conservation Architect)
Breakout Group Information:	Group A – Jeremy Poll Group B – Geoff Cumbers Group C – Richard Codd Group D – John Pickering Group E – Gillian McCallum

Overall Summary:

The consensus of opinion from the evening was that if the Folly was to be saved, then the proposed community use with different sized spaces was the preferred option compared to residential. Whilst not necessarily perceived as 'true' community elements, it was generally accepted that there would need to be some 'commercial' elements housed within the building as this could provide a regular source of income for future maintenance and running costs etc. There was also support for the re-orientation of entry and access throughout the building, and the flexible use of spaces within the building – although it was noted that ample storage would be required for potential regular users such as clubs and societies etc.

There was no doubt that a consequence of bringing the building back into use, was that it would generate additional traffic in the village – which is already an issue. This led to a suggestion of converting the Folly into retirement flats as it was perceived that the traffic impact would be lower – however, it was also noted that any viable use of the building as a whole would generate traffic so the key issue would be on how it could be managed. Interest was expressed at the second entry/exit to the site as it would be an improvement on the current situation – however, there was doubt as to whether permission would ever be granted for this by the local planning authority, as it was stated that a previous attempt had failed a few years ago (although under different circumstances).

The dominant theme of the evening related to concerns about funding, viability and reality of any 'community' scheme at the Folly – would this just be yet another 'pie in the sky' idea and were the village going to end up with a white elephant with costs coming out of their own pockets? It was briefly explained that viability, funding and finance are key issues for any application to the Heritage Lottery Fund – however, the village remain unclear on the process ahead and where the money is going to come from. The Trustees need to explain the funding process/options and re-assure the village on this matter – as a result the next consultation evening (14th May) will focus more on this side of the process. An improved understanding should also then help to re-generate core support from the village for a future community scheme.

Summaries of the topic responses are on the following pages

Results of Breakout Sessions

TOPIC 1

A series of uses have already been suggested for the Folly. What do you think of these and are there any others you would like to suggest for consideration?

[In summary the suggested uses include – Café/Village Shop; Nursery; Flexible community spaces for local clubs/societies to meet, Village Hall, Church Hall, Educational spaces; Meeting Rooms; Office spaces; Art Studios; Holiday Lets]

Summary of Responses:

On the whole the variety of uses were accepted and it was felt they could be supported if the building was promoted and operated properly – Farringdon needs its Village Hall.

If there are any identical type users could they be combined or share the spaces? However, storage will need to be included for the regular user groups (i.e. clubs, Scouts, WI, Aikido etc.).

Other suggested uses were: a Committee Room; retirement flats; Tea Dances; Wedding Receptions; after-school clubs for local children; low-cost small residential units; Public Toilets; a lunch club; men's cookery classes; a Tourist Information point (Tourism could increase with designation of the South Downs National Park); facilities for Government funding bodies (Connexions, Learn Direct etc.); Learning opportunities could include links with local schools/colleges and 'extramural courses' – however, courses have to be viable and affordable as people will expect a lot for a little; an art-based course may be well received; a Shop & Café (cyber-café and drop-in centre) run as a cooperative with shares in the operation – although concerns were raised over the scale of this operation, food preparations and waste removal.

Concern was raised over the existing Private Nursery as it is too expensive for the local population – so it was queried as to whether it was a true 'Farringdon community use'. If there is to be a Nursery shouldn't it be a more accessible Nursery that it isn't out of the price-range of the 'local community' – but who will then subsidise it?

A commercial venture within the building is acknowledged and an accepted need. A residential flat on the 2nd floor may be a good idea as it would provide regular revenue – but would this be at the cost of the viability of the rest of the building?

There were a few objections to holiday lets on the top floor – how would they be managed and be kept secure etc.?

"I don't believe this scheme can work we have tried for years, is there really any other option than residential" – the viability concern generates other arguments against the scheme, who's going to pay for it etc. The village need to be convinced if this is really going to get off the ground.

TOPIC 2

To improve the future viability of Massey's Folly, many of the options are based around rooms/spaces having flexibility for various uses. Part of which could include the removal of the stage in the Village Hall area – what do you think? Is it regularly used? Would it not be preferable to utilise a temporary/removable staging system that is used as and when required to allow more flexibility for the space as a whole?

Summary of Responses:

The majority agreed that the stage should go – it is not regularly used (only for the Nativity play at Christmas?) and the current layout has access difficulties. Would prefer to use a temporary and removable system which gave more flexibility to the remainder of the space – could this large space then also be used for conferences?

A few commented that Amateur Dramatic Groups use the space – so there may be concerns over the reduction of floor space and loss of stage.

TOPIC 3

If the Folly is to be a success in terms of community use, then there is likely to be an impact on the village through increased traffic/visitors. How do you feel about this and are there any suggestions that could mitigate this?

Facilitator could suggest: traffic calming along Church Road; a secondary access/exit on the north side of the site; a community bus

Summary of Responses:

The current levels of traffic in Farringdon are a problem and residents are very concerned about the potential impact of additional traffic in the village. Concern was expressed about the cost/impact on the village from more traffic just for sustainability and protection of a community building – was this fair?

There is a change in the local demographic and society as a whole, so to survive it will need to attract people from out of Farringdon and they will have no other option than to use vehicles unless another mode of transport could be provided – there is no bus service in the village, so what about the provision of a community bus?

Regardless of use, however the building is used in the future it is going to generate an increase in traffic – thought needs to be given to how this can be managed. If there is a good spread of users then it should disperse the traffic flow throughout the day as opposed to certain peak times which relate to the existing Nursery operation. Also residents should see that there would be benefits of attracting other people to the village.

A second entry/exit was well supported in principle as it is an improvement. However, opinion was divided on how it should function: perhaps the north entrance could be for entry and exit, rather than just one way; or the north should be exit only and south should be entry only. Either way it needs to be safe for all. It was also noted that there had been a previous attempt at adding the second entry/exit point and it was refused – it was felt that EHDC would not permit this change on highway safety grounds.

Traffic calming along Church Road was not supported and should not be pursued. Although a suggestion was made that the 'ring' formed by Crows Lane, Church Road and The Street could become a one-way system.

TOPIC 4

There is an increased awareness about the environment and alternative sources of energy. How do the group feel about including such features with the development of the Folly?

Facilitator could suggest the addition of solar panels on roof slopes; ground-source heat pumps in the external area to the east of the building.

Summary of Responses:

Solar panels and an environmentally friendly energy system has to be the way forward – it should also help to reduce the long-term running costs of the building which is a positive step. However, they shouldn't be prominent and detract from the building. Whatever system is used it needs to provide a quick warm-up facility where spaces are not constantly used. Also consider a multi-fuel stove, a new boiler and double or secondary glazing.

Waste of money! They have a long pay-back so is it really worth it?

TOPIC 5

If a HLF is unsuccessful and the Folly is not developed as a Community resource, how would you feel about this loss and its potential conversion to residential use by a developer? How/where could a replacement community resource be provided for Farringdon?

Summary of Responses:

If selling is the only option, then of course it should be replaced – but only if there is a real demand for a Village Hall! However, there is no real belief that the sale of the hall will provide enough money for the land or construction of a new Village Hall or Community Facility – where is the land and where will the additional funding come from? Perhaps the facilities could be provided in a 'Community-House'?

We want it preserved for the community and for future generations as a community facility. This is its last chance – if we don't save it now we will lose a community facility in Farringdon. Devastating, it would be madness to let it go – the village is dying already; it would die completely if this facility were lost. Reluctantly residential may be the only other option, but can't believe that would ever happen to the Folly. If it doesn't work then maybe it should be residential – what else can it be. Other suggested use was as company offices.

"I don't believe this scheme can work" we have tried for years, is there really any other option than residential – the viability concern generates other arguments against the scheme, who's going to pay for it etc. The village need to be convinced if this is really going to get off the ground.

TOPIC 6

Are there any other comments or areas of support/concern the group would like to raise?

Summary of Responses:

Business plan and proof of viability – where is it? Concerns expressed over the long-term viability of the scheme. Is a community scheme realistic or pie-in-the-sky? **It needs to be credible and believable.** The ideas are great – but is it really possible? A realistic case needs to be made – we don't want to be left with a white elephant. Future management – who pays? What happens if it fails and goes bankrupt – who would be responsible/liable for the building?

[Action on this needs to be brought forward to the next consultation meeting to help overcome the apathy which has spread across the village]

Very concerned about the lack of interest shown by the local population – especially the number of surveys returned. This could be because there has been a loss of belief in the village – this needs to be addressed and there needs to be core village support. At the moment there is apathy “what will be” to the point where some residents have no strong feeling about its loss as they perceive the Village Hall as a liability.

There was strong concern over a proposed mixed use for the Folly – i.e. combining residential and community. This isn't practical as residential use will impact on the other and become so restrictive that it adversely affects the viability of the community facility. The maintenance and access difficulties will also still remain if it is split – bringing the whole building under one owner/use must be the sensible way forward.

VHMC need to be pro-active – more activities need to be organised, the current state of the Village Hall isn't appealing and doesn't appear to be very well advertised. The building has to improve to attract users (both new and old). Whilst this is a community building, the community is not just Farringdon – it is clear that the building is too big for the village to support on its own, so avoid being insular and see the community as the wider community.

Too much building – too little parking. The Folly building is too big for the village to support alone, it needs to have flexibility in its uses and it needs to be accepted that 'outside' users from wider afield are necessary and they should be encouraged to come and use the building.

There was support for the removal of redundant buildings on the site (toilets/stores) – as plenty of parking would be required, however this should not be at the cost of a loss of green-space. Could the track to Manor Farm be used for overflow parking? This received a mixed reaction and would be subject to the support and agreement of the landowner.

Has a mezzanine/split level been considered in the Hall to provide a further mix of space sizes – similar to the Maltings Centre in Alton. Flexible use of the building is the way forward.

The special value and interest of the Folly is inherent in its design/evolution and consequently the connection with Massey. It already exists and doesn't need to be created so make use of it and advertise it more – use it as the catalyst for the future prosperity of the building.