

Melksham Project Board update – February 2016

Introduction

A joint project group was formed in September 2015 in partnership between the Town Council and the Melksham Area Board, following on from the work of the Melksham Community Operations Board (COB). The aim of the project board was as follows:

To work with council officers, residents, clubs, groups and partners to put forward recommendations to the Area Board within a timely manner, which delivers a campus for the Melksham community area within the agreed budget.

The Melksham Campus Project Board has been working with Wiltshire Council to review the original campus scheme to deliver on its established aim.

A total of £23m was approved to deliver the project which includes the facilities for the football and rugby clubs at Woolmore Farm.

Work began in August 2015 at Woolmore Farm and is now well underway to deliver the new state of the art pavilion and 18 pitches. This will cost £7.3m, the budget being agreed prior to the new Project Group being formed. The remaining budget is allocated to the health and wellbeing centre and the Market Place improvements.

The project board has looked at the community's needs, using evidence from the former COB, Wiltshire Leisure Services and representations made to the council by members of the public, and has developed a revised accommodation schedule to reflect these needs within the budget and to deliver a centre that is sustainable for the future.

This has meant some difficult decisions and whilst the new centre will provide an excellent facility with a wide range of leisure and wellbeing services, some facilities cannot be included in the new centre. This report provides the basis for the recommendations to the area board.

Master site plan

Architects commissioned to redesign the centre will also provide a proposal for the use of the land on the site excluding the new facility. This will include Melksham House, the vacated Blue Pool and potentially the Assembly Hall site.

The following clubs will be allocated space and appropriate facilities on the site; tennis, cricket and outdoor bowls.

Recommendations

1. The Melksham Campus Project Board recommends to the area board members;
 - a. A new facility with a revised accommodation schedule that reflects community need and is sustainable for the future
 - b. A facility that is within the budget allocated
 - c. The options to reduce and/or remove space based on need and sustainability

New accommodation schedule

Accommodation	Reasons
Café	There will be a café at the heart of the centre. The café will provide a great meeting point for the community and also encourage people to stay and use multiple facilities.
Community space	There will be community space available for clubs, groups and organisations, however, the volume and layout of this space is to be confirmed and subject to ongoing discussions with the Town Council over the relocation of the assembly hall and use of the Town Hall.
Office Space	Office space will be available for all users of the building. The office space will be made up of hot desks to ensure the maximum utilisation of space. The office could potentially accommodate up to 40 people.
Squash Courts x 2	The construction of these two courts will allow both club and social squash.
Studio	This studio will house a diversity of fitness classes; this will include space to host the popular spinning classes.
Swimming Pool 6 lane 25 meter	The scheme will include a 25m 6 lane pool with spectator seating. It will be regional competition standard. Melksham has a very active swimming club. This forms a crucial part of the Sport England Bid; Sports England is supporting the scheme by providing a £1.6 million grant funding.
Learner Pool	The learner pool will be 13mx7m. It will have a depth of between 0.6-0.9m. There is a high demand for swimming lessons; classes are currently oversubscribed. A learner pool maximises the number of lessons that can be provided. The income generated will help the centre's sustainability in the long-term.
GP Surgery	The St Damiens GP practice has signed the agreement to relocate to the centre. This will bring services together in one place in the centre of Melksham and encourage the health and wellbeing offer to local residents.
Sports Hall	The sports hall will be multi-sport benefiting a cross section of the community. The project group is proposing an increase from 4 to 6 courts to meet the identified need.

How has the budget been balanced – what’s been reduced or moved?

Accommodation		Reasons
Community display space	Removed	The original scheme included 70m ² of dedicated exhibition space; however, displays can be accommodated on walls throughout the building, and in the café.
ICT touchdown space	Removed	This has been taken out in favour of community PC’s located in the library. The library scheme already included sufficient IT provision; which has enabled this to be removed.
Circulation space	Reduced	The circulation space has been reduced to provide a cost saving. There will be appropriate circulation space.
Library	Reduced	New technology and approaches to delivery are changing the way libraries operate. Consequently, it is possible to reduce the library footprint without negatively impacting on the offer or provision. The library has reduced from 443m ² to 350m ² .
Meeting rooms	Reduced	The new scheme will include one large meeting room (instead of three) and two one 2 one rooms (rather than three). The facilities available at the Town Hall have been taken into account when considering the amount of meeting room space required as this will remain available to groups whether the Town Council decide to participate in the Campus or not. Additional community space will be included but cannot be confirmed until the discussions with Melksham Town Council have been concluded and an agreement is (or is not) agreed regarding bringing the Assembly Hall and Town Council functions into the Campus facility.
Police accommodation	Reduced	Improvements in mobile technology mean the police no longer require the same level of fixed accommodation; this has therefore been reduced in the new scheme.
Indoor Bowls	Removed	A difficult decision has been taken to remove the indoor bowls provision from the scheme. The indoor bowls rink was an expensive part of the scheme; a footprint of 1505m ² would cost circa £2.5 - 3million to build. The ongoing revenue costs to run this space was not sustainable based on the projected usage and the complexities of using this space for other purposes. Wiltshire Council is working with the indoor bowls club to look at other possibilities to retain indoor bowls. Feasibility on the existing premises is underway to look at how long this could host the club. The new centre includes a larger sports hall; the hall will accommodate portable bowls mats. We understand there are disadvantages to operating a portable long mat bowls green, but it provides the best value of money for the whole community.
Climbing wall	Removed	Climbing walls are costly to operate and maintain. The income generated use does not cover the associated costs; they are not value for money. Wiltshire Council has invested in a moveable climbing wall, which could be located in Melksham for events or holiday programmes. This has reduced the need for the council to build fixed climbing walls across the county.