



## **Hello! Here is an update from the Oldhamstocks Community Association Committee about plans for the new village hall.**

One of the key objectives of the Community Association is to provide and maintain a meeting place for the community. Successive Community Association committees have been working for several years to plan the development of a new hall. We are trying to do the best thing for everyone in relation to replacing our ageing village hall, and, not surprisingly, it is hard to get to a consensus about the best way forward.

We've done our best to understand the wishes of the whole community through a number of door to door surveys and consultation sessions. Working with our chosen architects, Simpson & Brown, we have come up with what we believe to be a very good design for a new hall to serve our current community and many future generations. In our last survey, in October 2017, roughly two thirds of people agreed that we should get on with the process of making this design a reality.

Late last summer, a leaflet was delivered around the parish with some pictures and thoughts about what was called an 'alternative plan'. At our Annual General Meeting in November last year, some people asked us to look into those ideas whilst others just wanted us to proceed with the previously agreed design. We have looked into the ideas on the leaflet, as far as we understand them. Unfortunately, it appears that the ideas are not suitable, for two reasons:

- 1) all of the designs shown are either lower quality or more expensive than the existing design;
- 2) there are concerns that none of the designs on the leaflet is likely to be given planning permission in the conservation village of Oldhamstocks.

For these reasons, the committee cannot proceed further with the ideas shown on the leaflet. We need to ensure we spend time, community funding and energy on a design that has the best chance of delivering the best new hall for current and future generations. We are concerned that this news will be a disappointment to some people who liked the ideas in the leaflet - but we know that the majority of people preferred the revised design that had already emerged from the consultation exercises, so we feel we should now continue to work to make that happen.

We will soon be ready to put the design forward for planning permission. We have been advised in writing (March 2018) by an officer of East Lothian Council planning department that, in his opinion, our preferred design does not appear incongruous, nor would it be harmful to the character and appearance of the Oldhamstocks Conservation Area, so we are off to a good start. If you would like to look at the up-to-date revised design, there is a new display board in the village hall and you can go to see it at any time.

We have tried to provide a summary update on this page, but for further detail please read on.

Our local Community Council (ELCC) is an organisation that exists to represent, nurture and support cohesive communities in the East Lammernmuir area. Following a visit to a recent ELCC meeting from a delegation of four concerned residents and friends of OCA, the ELCC has written expressing concern at its perception of a lack of community spirit necessary to progress this project, and has offered support in the form of facilitated, evidence-based mediation for the parish community. The current committee is very happy to take part in such a process and, in recognition of this, we plan to pause our application for planning until we have engaged in mediation. Simpson & Brown would be happy to meet with a neutral representative from ELCC to provide an honest appraisal of costs of the 'alternative plan' etc. More information about this will be provided to the community as soon as possible.

## **THE NEW HALL PLANNING JOURNEY – PROGRESS SO FAR**

Planning a new hall obviously takes time and is a journey towards realising a vision for the community. We are still on this journey. Lots of people have already offered support and ideas and raised questions along the way. We probably all began with our own individual ambition for the new hall which has inevitably led to compromise as we've moved through the process. The current plan reflects the views of many members of our community including 148 people who responded to the community consultation in October 2017, together with the skills and expertise of professional architects, surveyors, and planners.

### **Listening to the community**

---

As a Community Association it is critical that we listen to, and consider views from across our whole community in shaping our plans for the new hall. We are committed to giving due consideration to everyone's ideas and suggestions in our efforts to come up with a plan and design that has the backing of the largest possible majority of the community.

Over the past few years the Committee has undertaken significant consultation to determine the needs and wishes of the community concerning the hall plans, and at all times has tried to make this as inclusive and open a process as possible through surveys, consultation events and open discussions at several Annual General Meetings. We have tried our very best to understand what might be possible, in line with what people want.

At our AGM in November 2017, some people asked us to look into the ideas described in the leaflet headed the 'alternative plan' whilst others just wanted us to proceed with the previously agreed design. We noted the issues raised and have described our efforts to respond to these in this update.

### **Design of the New Hall**

---

#### ***Our proposed design option***

We have carried out a range of consultations to inform and shape our specification for the new hall. On behalf of the community we have engaged high quality professional advice from quantity surveyors and our selected architects - Simpson & Brown (S&B) – working with the experts to inform options for hall design based on, and adapted (both in plan and elevation) in response to community feedback. We think the current design shapes up to what we heard the community ask for through these consultations, as shown in the table below.

<b>Finding from consultation</b>	<b>Proposed design</b>
Demolish and replace the current hall	We plan to do this – it is also likely to be a condition of planning approval
Wider range of uses for whole community, including young people and children	The flexible design and slightly enlarged footprint of the proposed new hall allows for many different future uses, as well as current activities
Affordable	We are confident that the capital cost can be found from available community and grant funding, and a quality build will help keep maintenance costs to a minimum. The cost of keeping the building in good condition will be about the same as for the existing hall, even though the new building would be larger. The cost of heating the new building would be considerably less because, although a larger building, it will be significantly better insulated.
Attractive	Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The current design has been amended in its appearance as a result of community consultation and is intended to represent the best compromise, appealing to the majority of local residents.
Fit for the future	Flexibility, energy efficiency and sustainability are key to the proposed design. We are planning a building that will last for at least 100 years.

### **Alternative design options**

At the AGM the Committee agreed to explore the 'alternative plan' options in further detail, with the additional help of Simpson & Brown. We have since carried out research into the quotes provided and the possibility of getting planning permission for options of this type, and the Committee has discussed the findings of this review.

Fjordhus provided an 'instant quote' for a 'turn-key' operation, making initial assumptions on items such as utilities, site and ground conditions, and were then requested to give a second quote based on the S&B drawings. This quote, at £372k, was for a building with a lower specification and also did not include costs for elements such as external works, demolition of the current hall, extra storage space, design fees, a contingency element or inflation. Taken purely on build costs, their quote would appear to be similar to the cost plan for the S&B design, but given that the quote was fixed for only 12 months, total costs could eventually be higher.

Homelodge, based near Winchester, gave an estimated cost of £2-2.2k per square metre (subject to consideration of utilities and site constraints). This is a little less than the cost per square metre given by the quantity surveyor for the S&B design, at £2.3k, but the Homelodge quote did not factor in full project costs. In December 2017 the Homelodge website noted that they were unable to supply to Scotland and, when contacted, their representative expressed concern about the "logistics of providing a turn-key supply and service so far away". As the building control process in Scotland is different from that in England we need to exercise caution about working with a company with little experience of working here.

Fleming Homes' response, when given S&B drawings, was to quote for just one element – the 'superstructure components'. Their figure of £52,400 for a timber kit was viewed by the quantity surveyor as far higher than his own estimate for this element. (Any contractor would be required to bid for and deliver all works, including project management - something the committee believes would be best done by an experienced building contractor.) Simpson & Brown have worked with

Fleming Homes successfully on various projects in the past. The work of Fleming Homes is very good but it has not been considered to be a way of achieving a radical reduction in costs.

It should be noted that once planning approval has been received there will be a tender process for the build by invitation. The committee has no objection to inviting Fleming Homes and/or Fjordhus to tender at this later stage in the process, in relation to the Simpson & Brown design.

The 'alternative plan' leaflet suggested that other sites could be considered, but we believe that alternative sites for a new hall would result in higher costs for purchasing land and provision of services.

In summary, these thorough investigations found that the various buildings cited in the leaflet are not suitable. They do not offer the quality and sustainability of the proposed design - there is inevitably an element of 'getting what you pay for' and on a cost per square metre basis, the alternative options have not proved to be significantly cheaper.

Very importantly, at this pre-planning stage there are concerns that the style and finish of buildings shown on the leaflet would be unlikely to achieve planning permission for any site within the Conservation Village Area of Oldhamstocks.

For these reasons, the committee cannot proceed further with the design ideas shown on the leaflet. We need to ensure we spend the community's money and energy on a design that has the best chance of delivering the best new hall for current and future generations.

We therefore propose to continue to work towards the scaled down version of the design that has been developed and shown at the public consultations in early summer 2017 and that the majority of the community has asked us to get on with taking forward.

### ***Other design issues***

We have also heard questions raised about car parking and/or a road across the green. East Lothian Council (ELC) planners have indicated that current parking arrangements are satisfactory. You will see from the proposed plan that neither a car park nor road is planned, and the character of the Green will not be impacted.

### **Size of the New Hall**

---

Recent events held at the hall, including coffee mornings and the recent 'Curryoke' night have been oversubscribed. It is clear that the main hall is not large enough to accommodate demand for larger community and fundraising events such as dinners and dancing. Nor does it allow for safe access and comfortable circulation at any event with stalls such as a coffee morning. Therefore, our proposed design incorporates a main hall that is 13m x 7m (compared to the current 12.5m x 5.5m).

The size and design introduces the flexibility of being able to open or close a partition between the main hall and a smaller room (4.7m x 4.5m), allowing for meetings and events of different sizes. It also includes a more adequate kitchen area, better toilet facilities and increased storage – all in line with ELC planning regulations.

The visual impact of the size of the proposed building can be seen from the design drawings provided by the architect. We think it is a good fit with the village and this is also the advice we have received from the planners.

As a reminder, you can view the design in detail on the board available in the hall and also on the website: [www.oldhamstocksvillagehall.com](http://www.oldhamstocksvillagehall.com)

## **Cost of the New Hall**

---

We are all committed to ensuring that spend on the new hall is appropriate and is balanced against need, function, quality, energy efficiency and sustainability. We are clear that we want to make the best use of windfarm benefits funds – which are available for us to use in our local community, for the benefit of our residents. Our first community consultation confirmed that the majority of people wanted to see the available funds spent on a new hall as an investment in the future of our community. In light of this, we are delighted to confirm that over the last 12 months we have negotiated and signed agreements for additional funds to come to Oldhamstocks Community Association from both the Ferneylea and Hoprigshiels turbines. This is for a sum of approximately £30,000 per annum for the next 25 years.

In response to concerns and questions about costs, we are clear that we need to plan costs for both the initial build of the hall, and for its on-going maintenance and running costs. The design will have solar tiles, double glazing, an air-source heat pump and excellent insulation so it will provide a comfortable and energy efficient environment. We hope to provide a factual statement about the likely running costs later in 2018.

We can of course only confirm a figure for final build costs when we proceed to tender for the build. We can only proceed to tender once planning consent has been given and all matters of regulations, building control approval and Conservation Area consent have been confirmed. We can reassure the community that we will not sign any contracts or make any financial commitments until costs have been fully calculated, and we have the required funds to meet the full cost. We have been informed by our professional advisors that these final costs are unlikely to be confirmed until approximately 6 months before the start of construction.

In order to satisfy planning requirements we need our design and plans to be properly thought out, with professionally prepared drawings. Our costs need to include architects' fees, costs for a quantity surveyor and structural engineer, land purchase, safe demolition of the existing hall and reinstatement of any ground following construction.

We have worked very closely with the architects and quantity surveyors to revise the design and specifications to bring down costs wherever possible. These negotiations and adjustments have led to a reduction in the estimated cost of the build from £764k to nearer £577k<sup>1</sup>.

## **NEXT STEPS IN THE JOURNEY**

In order for us to pull together a formal business plan and to move closer towards making the new hall a reality, the next stage is to seek planning approval for our proposal. We can then move on to actually purchasing the land, which will allow us to enter the final phase of fundraising, from grant giving bodies, and the local community or anyone who supports its wellbeing. Each step gets us nearer, but we can't start any actual building work until we complete the following chain of actions:

---

<sup>1</sup> Estimated costs which include contingency, inflation, professional fees and VAT on fees, reduced from £833k to £674k

1) submit a formal planning application – ELC planners have indicated in a pre-planning meeting that they are favourably supportive of the Simpson & Brown proposal on a range of criteria, commenting positively on the use of traditional materials and the visual design of the hall;

2) purchase the land - the Dunglass Estate has indicated that the land the current hall sits on, and adjacent land for building a new hall, can be purchased, at a very reasonable price, for this community use, with a proposed entry date of November 2019 - the end of the current lease. This means the earliest date we can begin construction is the end of 2019;

3) secure funding for both the build and ongoing costs of the hall - the community benefits from local wind farm developments will give us a very good start in raising the money we need. Other local villages have drawn down funds for their own halls, using the current windfall to set them ready for the next 70 - 100 years.

Our local Community Council (ELCC) is an organisation that exists to represent, nurture and support cohesive communities in the East Lammernuir area. Following a visit to a recent ELCC meeting from a delegation of four concerned residents and friends of OCA, the ELCC has written expressing concern at its perception of a lack of community spirit necessary to progress this project, and has offered support in the form of facilitated, evidence-based mediation for the parish community. The current committee is very happy to take part in such a process and, in recognition of this, we plan to pause our application for planning until we have engaged in mediation. Simpson & Brown would be happy to meet with a neutral representative from ELCC to provide an honest appraisal of costs of the 'alternative plan' etc. More information about this will be provided to the community as soon as possible.

### **A note about Your Community Association**

---

The Community Association has now been working since 2015 to develop the very best plan for a hall that will meet the needs of our community now and long into the future.

For any community events to happen, and for any significant development like a new hall, we need people who will dedicate time and energy to make things happen.

The Constitution of the Oldhamstocks Community Association declares that membership of the Oldhamstocks Community Association shall be open to all residents within the Parish and to friends from outwith the area. Each year, at the AGM, all committee members step down and the committee is reconstituted for another year. Anyone can put themselves forward, and an appeal is always made to ensure that all parts of the community are represented on the committee.

At the AGM in November 2017 we constituted a new committee and confirmed our willingness to step forward and take responsibility for this project.

Please address any enquiries to the Chair of the Community Association Committee, Neil Richerby [contact: [neil@lammernuirpipeorgans.co.uk](mailto:neil@lammernuirpipeorgans.co.uk)]. Neil will share all correspondence with the Committee for discussion.

June 2018

