

## Ashwell Pavilion Village Consultation September/October 2024



*Fig. 1 Ashwell Pavilion - owned and managed by the Parish Council on behalf of the village*

### Contents

Summary and purpose of the document .....	1
Existing sport and recreation facilities and future goals for Ashwell .....	1
Demand for facilities at the Recreation Ground: .....	2
The Pavilion.....	2
Background.....	2
Users.....	2
Major issues .....	3
Responding to problems with the Pavilion and to demand for facilities.....	3
Options.....	3
Fees and charges for the pavilion .....	3
Approach to evaluating the options .....	3
Funding available.....	4
Option 1 ‘do nothing’ .....	4
Option 2 renovate existing space.....	5
Option 3 replace the existing Pavilion.....	5
Next steps .....	6
Appendix A .....	7
Information sources.....	7

## Summary and purpose of the document

The Pavilion on the Recreation Ground was built in the 1960s and has reached the end of its effective life. The Parish Council foresaw this as early as 2015 when it set up a working group of principal users to look at a replacement. It has since been trying to accumulate funds for the project.

This document looks at sport and recreation available in Ashwell and considers what to do about the Pavilion, including the attached public toilets. It does not assume that replacing it is the only way forward. There are potentially many options but the Parish Council makes three initial suggestions:

- Closure and removal of the structure with no replacement. This is effectively the 'no change' option because at some point soon its state of repair will mean it cannot be used.
- Renovate the Pavilion to extend its life by a further 15-20 years, meeting current minimum building standards but with no further interior or exterior improvements.
- Replace or totally refurbish the Pavilion so it is energy efficient and cost effective for the Parish Council to maintain, provides facilities that are appropriate and comfortable for users and meets accessibility standards.

This document makes no recommendation of a preferred option. Its aim is to provide approximate costs and benefits of three options to form the basis of a village wide consultation. The consultation will then be taken into account when considering the next steps.

## Existing sport and recreation facilities and future goals for Ashwell

Sport and recreation are not essential to the survival of parishioners but are an important contributor to their health and well-being. Given that Ashwell is a relatively prosperous village, it seems reasonable to expect the level of provision to be at least what it is now, if not better.

Note that the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (Dec 2021) sets the following goal for sport and recreation, "*With an ever-increasing number of Ashwell residents engaging in sport, it is apparent from the 2016 general survey, and from local engagement, that improved facilities are required in the village.*" Further growth will add to the demand.

Its comment on the suitability of the Pavilion is, "*Situated at one end of the recreation ground is a wooden pavilion built originally for the cricket club. This facility is now not fit for the range of clubs which use it and will need replacing. At each end of the wooden pavilion there are brick toilets that are open to the public all year round. These are out of date and are unsuitable for those with mobility issues.*"

There are other venues in the village but, Small Gains changing aside, they have limited use for pitch sports. There are two outdoor-only sports facilities managed by village clubs on private land: the Tennis Club and Cycle Club, that have tenancies on land at Small Gains.

There are allotments and a car park at Small Gains (owned and managed by the Parish Council) and additional allotments between Back Street and Ashwell Street (owned and managed by the Foresters Friendly Society). The Springs area is a public open space and includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest (owned and managed by the Parish Council in conjunction with volunteer groups).

Indoor facilities include the Village Hall (owned and managed by a charitable trust) and the United Reformed Church Hall (owned and managed by the URC) and the Parish Room (managed by St Mary's Church). The School Hall is also used when a larger capacity is required, e.g. the Annual Parish Meeting, Horticultural Shows, 'At Home', etc.

### **Demand for facilities at the Recreation Ground:**

Capacity is increasingly an issue for community facilities in Ashwell and there are occasions when all are fully booked. The use of the Recreation Ground is increasing in line with the growth in population of the village. There is increased demand for this type of outside space, particularly by families with children. Club memberships, particularly of the junior football club, 'The Accies', have seen a significant rise. The Pavilion is increasingly in demand for pitch sports and because it has indoor space with adjacent outdoor space for leisure/play/sporting activities that other community facilities in the village do not have.

## **The Pavilion**

### **Background**

While most parishioners will know of the existing Pavilion building, it is worth providing a few details:

- Location - The Recreation Ground, Lucas Lane, Ashwell, SG7 5LN
- Size - floor space is 147m<sup>2</sup>
- History - the Pavilion was erected in the 1960s following a community fundraising effort with much practical input from parishioners. The brick-built extensions on either end of the original wooden building were added in the late 1970s to provide ladies and gents public toilets. These were funded and managed by NHC until handed over to the Parish Council in 2012.
- Layout - the main building comprises a central hall area, with a kitchen to the rear and two changing rooms with showers, one on either side, for home and away teams. The public toilets can only be accessed externally, i.e. not via the main building.
- Availability - the main Pavilion building is only open as required by users but the public toilets are opened daily for public use.

### **Users**

Sports clubs including the Cricket Club, the Ashwell Academicals junior football club and the adult football club are key regular users. A User Group was formed with representatives from these clubs to coordinate the use of the space, guide the day-to-day management, and inform the development of the facilities.

Village groups including the Scouts and Cubs, the Playgroup and the Church Youth increasingly use the Pavilion. Access to the adjacent outdoor space of the Recreation Ground is a key factor for them as other facilities in the village cannot provide this.

Other groups' use continues to increase. Outdoor fitness classes take place weekly as well as other ad hoc sessions. In the past, various children's activities have been hosted including the NHC Festival of Fun, Pre-school Learning Alliance mini-sports, holiday play schemes and a music event.

Village events regularly using the Pavilion include the annual 'At Home' and the Village Sports Day. It is also the venue for one-off village events including Jubilee celebrations, 'Revels on the Rec', Village Picnic and charity/music events.

## Major issues

There are several issues, not least that the interior state is unwelcoming and uncomfortable, but the ones that affect the future viability of the building are:

- Significant areas of the wooden structure (walls and roof) are rotten and need replacement.
- The plumbing system is not fit for purpose. It requires to be completely drained down during periods of freezing weather. Frost-proof heating of the open structure in the roof-space has been investigated but is not practical. Lagging has been installed but this is insufficient.
- The electrical system needs upgrading.
- There are no adaptations or provision for reduced mobility or disabled access or use.

Parish Council staff spend considerable time dealing with emergencies that arise owing to the Pavilion's poor state. Rectifying problems frequently entails finding a contractor and paying for repairs. This situation will only worsen over time if there is no further action.

## Responding to problems with the Pavilion and to demand for facilities

### Options

There are many possible options. However, the Parish Council considers that they fall into three broad categories:

- Option 1 – 'do nothing'.
- Option 2 – renovate existing space
- Option 3 – replace the Pavilion

### Fees and charges for the pavilion

Options 2 and 3 will improve the quality of the facilities, although this will be modest in the case of option 2. Normally fees and charges are reviewed annually as part of the budget process. However, a one-off review of the fees and charges for the pavilion to take account of improvements would be advisable if either of these options go ahead.

### Approach to evaluating the options

Benefits for each option are largely qualitative: that is, they cannot be readily converted into a monetary value for comparison against costs. Attempting to do this would be appropriate for a commercial concern or for large public works but the Pavilion does not fall into either category. Therefore the evaluations below do not do so.

Each option has associated costs which occur over different time periods. Because this paper is intended to help parishioners form a view, using techniques such as Net Present Value have been ruled out for the following reasons:

- They are technical exercises and sometimes the implications are hard to assess
- the Parish Council considers that most parishioners would be more interested in an indication of how costs might impact them personally.

Bearing in mind these points, this document estimates an approximate value for the annual change to Council Tax payments over a 10 year period required by each option. This is intended to help parishioners make a value for money judgement. Once a preferred option has been identified, detailed costings will be necessary. Possible alternative (cheaper) methods or specifications may be investigated as well as the original approach assumed in the costings.

Note that, for both options 2 and 3, there would be Parish Council staff time savings. These have not been built into costings. While the savings would free up staff to do other work of benefit to the Parish there would be no impact on Council Tax. The Parish Council is not proposing to reduce staff hours in either of those options.

Appendix A lists other assumptions made and how calculations arrived at the estimates for each option.

### Funding available

There are funds available in Parish Council reserves and in funds from housebuilding levies held by North Herts for use by Ashwell Parish Council. The proposed total is £160,000, all of which is expected to come from s106 Contributions and Unilateral Undertakings already obtained for community centres, informal open space, leisure facilities, pitch sports and play space.

An Ashwell Fundraising Campaign was mounted by the Parish Council under the title 'Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Pavilion 2022'. Major donors were invited to be credited by name on a plaque in the upgraded pavilion. Unfortunately no donations were received. Potential grant sources have been investigated, but none has been identified so far that Ashwell would qualify for.

When donations or grants are unavailable, additional funds could be raised with a temporary increase in the Parish Precept, which would increase Council Tax. This has been a choice made by several parishes when replacing pavilions.

For each £1,000 spent on any project, the Council Tax increase (using the 2024/25 tax base) would be in the region of:

Band A	£0.73	Band E	£1.34
Band B	£0.85	Band F	£1.59
Band C	£0.98	Band G	£1.83
Band D	£1.10	Band H	£2.20

Note that the Parish tax base will increase due to growth in dwelling numbers and that will reduce the impact. Owing to uncertainties, there is no allowance for this growth.

### Option 1 'do nothing'

Doing absolutely nothing is not possible: the Parish Council must keep the site safe. This option will provide essential maintenance to keep the structure sound until the point where it is no longer possible to do so on a 'maintenance' basis. At that point the Pavilion and public toilets will have to be closed, fenced off and eventually demolished. The cost will be low compared with other options, but at the expense of losing the facility.

Pavilion removal cost of an estimated £10,000 could be funded from available balances but not the sum from housebuilding levies. Running cost savings net of income would be an estimated £6,000 to give a Council Tax reduction of an estimated:

Band	Saving (£ annually)
A	-4.38
B	-5.10
C	-5.88
D	-6.60
E	-8.04
F	-9.54

Band	Saving (£ annually)
G	-10.98
H	-13.20

### Option 2 renovate existing space

Renovating the existing space, including the public toilets, could give it a further 15-20 years life and bring it more into line with minimum building standards, but without any improvement. This option will not respond to present and future levels of demand nor will it provide a better experience for users. But, as well as extending its useful life, it should contain running costs to existing levels and reduce pressure on Parish Council staff.

The budget cost is between £174,000 to £200,000 ex VAT at 2023 prices. It is unlikely that running costs or income would be significantly affected. Assuming that it is both desirable and possible to use all the housebuilding levy money to do the work, the annual 10-year loan cost of between £14,000 and £40,000 with annual cost of £1,800 to £5,200 would increase in Council Tax by an estimated:

Band	High (£ annually)	Low (£ annually)
A	3.78	1.32
B	4.40	1.54
C	5.07	1.77
D	5.69	1.99
E	6.93	2.43
F	8.22	2.88
G	9.47	3.31
H	11.38	3.98

### Option 3 replace the existing Pavilion

In 2020 the Pavilion Working Group, acting with the Parish Council, researched Sports England guidance on an appropriate specification for a pavilion. With that information it considered sports pavilion specialist providers and sought further details on design and costs from 'SportsClubHouses.com'.

Based on that research, this option proposes a replacement facility that is 10-35% larger. It incorporates modernised and enhanced facilities that meet current building regulation standards of disabled access and energy efficiency. It provides appropriate and comfortable facilities for the users and would be cost-effective for the Parish Council to maintain.

Design features include matching facilities for 'Home' and 'Away' players, separate facilities for a referee, improved clubroom space for activities such as yoga, an improved kitchen (particularly important for community events), increased storage space for furniture and equipment, and office space for the Parish Council (to save on current rented provision) and public toilets.

The activity space would have uses that overlap with those in the Village Hall, the Parish Room, URC Hall and school. Recent experience at the Village Hall is that lettings for private functions have fallen off following the Covid epidemic, possibly due to it and then because of cost of living problems. This is expected to be temporary and the trend of increasing demand due to village growth is expected to start again.

The current costing is based on a July 2022 design obtained from the pavilion design and build company RLPsurveyors but other (cheaper) designs could be investigated if this option has support.

The estimate for replacing the Pavilion is between £425,000 and £500,000 at 2024 prices, including public toilets. This would be funded by using all the housebuilding levy money and a 10-year loan of between £265,000 and £340,000 with an annual cost of £34,300 to £43,000.

It is difficult to work out the effect on annual running costs. However, the larger area and cost of running an office on the site would be offset by lower maintenance and utility costs for a new structure. The assumption is that running costs would be similar to present. Discontinuing the use of the 6a Back Street office would provide estimated savings of £2,800.

It is reasonable to expect additional income with improved facilities, both in terms of usage and the level of charges and a provision of £1,000 per annum has been made.

The 10-year increase in Council Tax is estimated to be:

Band	High (£ annually)	Low (£ annually)
A	29.32	22.24
B	34.14	25.90
C	39.36	29.86
D	44.18	33.52
E	53.82	40.83
F	63.87	48.45
G	73.51	55.76
H	88.37	67.03

## Next steps

The Parish Council will form a volunteer group to:

- Carry out a Parish consultation
- Report to the Parish on the results of the consultation
- Research suppliers capable of providing the services required by the three options
- Obtain illustrative designs, specifications, and costs from suitable suppliers
- Assess likely future maintenance costs of the various options and critically analyse the current and potential future revenue sources and levels, that might be generated from the Pavilion
- Consult those running the Village Hall, Parish Room, URC Hall, school and Ashwell Housing Association
- Suggest a leading option to the Parish Council, based on analysis of consultation responses and detailed consideration of the research carried out
- Re-consult with the Parish on the option preferred by the Parish Council, the costs involved, and the funding plan.

## Appendix A

### Information sources

#### Option 1

Pavilion removal cost. £10,000 currently shown is a placeholder figure but considered reasonable.

Pavilion running costs saving: current expenditure, excluding electrical safety check (every three years) but including £2,000 of total asset insurance costs (Pavilion is the major asset), is £7,957. Less loss of income (retain pitch rents but at reduced level) of an estimated £2,000. Net saving would be £6,000 rounded to nearest £100.

#### Option 2

Renovation costings: derived from architect's advice and based on elements of option 3 pavilion design needed to achieve 15–20 year life .

#### Option 3

Costings: RLPSurveyors.

Income increase: not expected to be very large, current rents are £3,200 from cricket and Accies. Placeholder figure of £1,000 per annum is considered reasonable.

Parish office running costs: 2024/25 budget, £2,760