

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR OUR COMMUNITY BUILDING IN SIGHT

After six years of negotiating, the Parish Council is pleased to announce that Essex County Council has agreed to sell the Youth Hall site land and Scout land to the village for community use.

History of Old Village Hall Site - Lord Buxton sold the site to ECC in 1948 and purchased a wooden building, originally to act as a school and then the Village Hall. After the new Village Hall was built on the Glebe field, the building in Loughton Lane was used for many years by the playgroup, youth group and the Guides and Brownies. In 1992 ECC applied for planning permission for three houses – Maplewood and agreed to construct a new, purpose built Youth Centre.

As the majority of the village knows, once the building had fallen into disuse ECC applied for planning permission for ten houses on the site of the Youth Centre and the surrounding land.



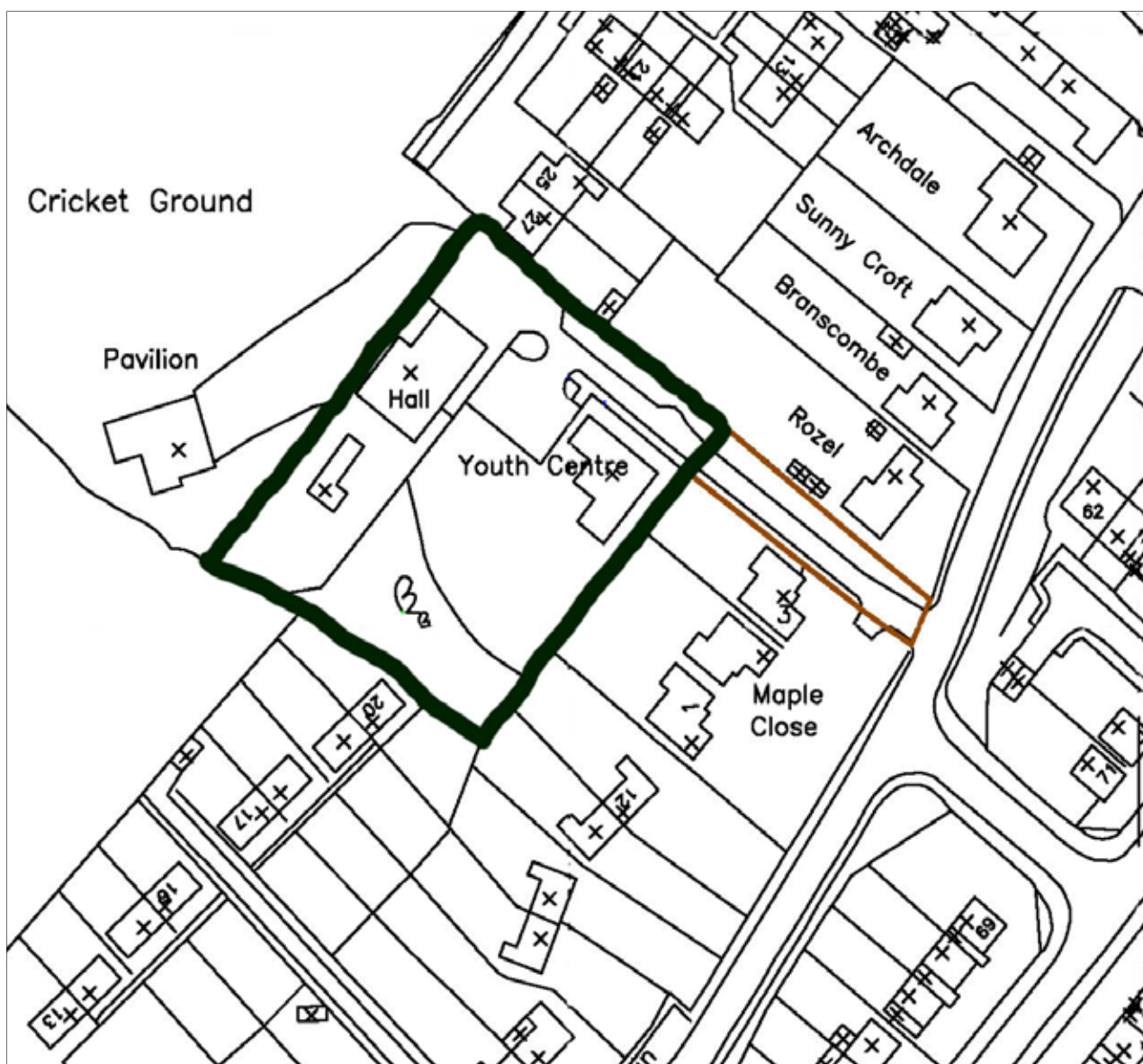
The Parish Council and Rural Preservation Society fought against the application and many villagers attended the public inquiry. However, in spite of our efforts, the Inspector agreed to grant planning permission. Roy Newland, a resident of Theydon Bois, had the foresight to apply for the registration of the site as a village green; with this manoeuvre he effectively stopped ECC selling the site for development. Cllr Anthony Purkiss and Roy Newland were determined that this site should not be lost to the village and worked hard to pursue the Parish Council's desire to secure the site for the village.

After two years of negotiations ECC offered a complicated deal whereby they would build three houses on the site. After three years their intention was to sell us the Youth Centre and freehold Scout land for £1.00. A condition of this required Roy Newland to drop his village green application. Our Barrister suggested how this deal could be put together but ECC refused to accept his suggestions.

As many villagers had expressed their concerns over any houses being built on the site, we asked ECC how much they would sell the entire site for. They offered the site for £600,000 as valued by their professionals. After further negotiations they have agreed to sell it for £300,000 conditional on the land being used for community initiatives. A local Estate Agent has stated that, in his professional opinion, this represents very good value.

The Way Forward - The Parish Council now have the opportunity to purchase not only the Youth Club building but also the freehold of the entire site including the land the Scout Hut is built on (please refer to the plan included with this article.) The Scouts only have eleven years to run on their lease. The advantage of purchasing the site is that it will give the village a facility that could be used for a variety of activities for many different sections of our community.

In order to buy the site we will need to apply for a Public Works Loan which will be paid for through the rates. Our current estimation is that it will cost each household in the order of an additional 25p per week. In addition, we will need to raise money to fund the operating costs and the refurbishment of the building. The Village Association at their AGM agreed to look at assisting the Parish Council in the first year's costs providing the trustees approve after receipt of further details about the money required. The newly formed Youth Club would like to use the building on several evenings but we think that there are many more groups that could use the centre during the day. It could, for example, possibly be used as a day centre for the elderly.



We believe that if the village owns this site it will not only be an asset but will give publicity to the Buxton Trust land and prevent further development of the site in the future.

Have your Say - We believe we can prevent houses being built on this important site and give the village a true community centre for young and old alike. However the Parish Council is committed to seek public opinion to ensure we have the support of the residents before we continue. We are therefore undertaking a series of public consultation measures beyond our normal Parish Council meetings, in order to ensure every resident has the opportunity to express their opinions, when we will be able to give you further details of the benefits and implications of this venture for our village.

**We will hold a public meeting dedicated entirely to this venture on
Friday 19th June at 8.00pm in the Village Hall**

We would encourage you all to attend the meeting to find out more and to voice your opinions. Any resident who would like to express an opinion on the matter should put their comments in writing to the Parish Council at the usual address. The Parish Office, Theydon Bois Village Hall, Coppice Row, Theydon Bois, Essex CM16 7ER or via email to theydonboisclerk@supanet.com Any comments should be submitted to the above office by 12.00 noon Tuesday 30th June.

CLLR PETER HAMMOND
Community Initiatives TBPC