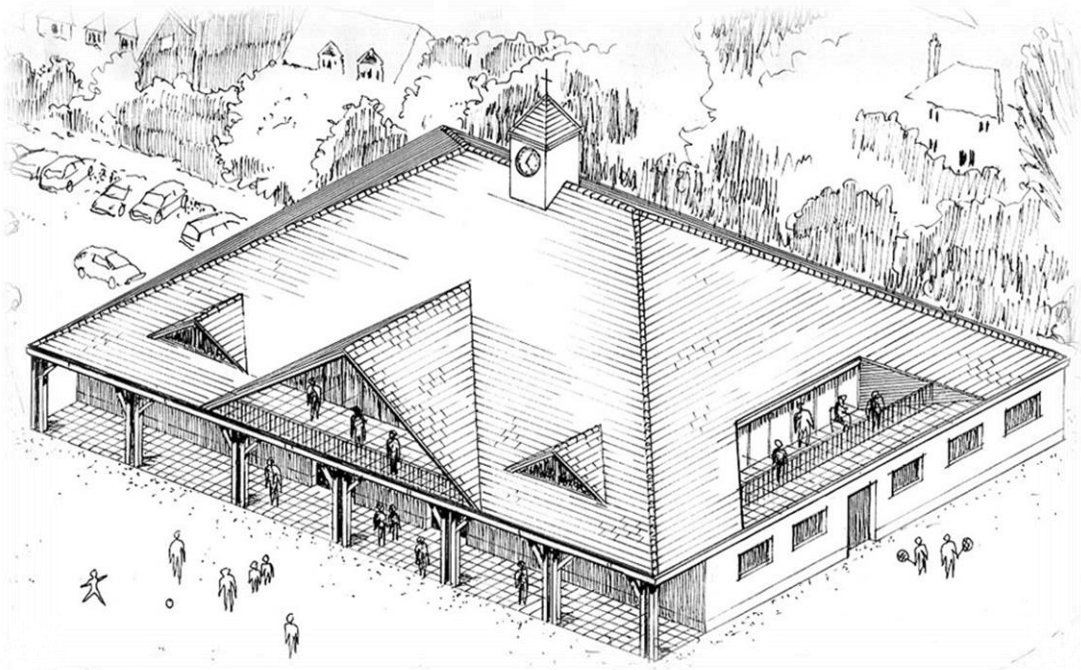


# Fernhurst backs plan for new pavilion



An open survey was recently circulated via social media, and more traditional means, to both Fernhurst and neighbouring communities. The goal of the questionnaire was to understand local people's attitudes towards the need for a new pavilion in Fernhurst and, if in favour, what the key features of the building should be.

**The voices of over 460 people were heard in the survey, so we were keen to discuss the results with two of the Fernhurst Recreation Ground Trustees, who are responsible for leading this exercise.**

Simon Vigar (SV)

*John & Bill, what is your history with Fernhurst and the recreation ground?*

John Mitchell (JM)

I came to Fernhurst in 1972 to work at the ICI business and I played a few times for the cricket club. Over the years I've been a Vice President of the club and am now President. I was also an independent district councillor representing the village down in Chichester. I've always thought sport is the key thing in a village, particularly for youngsters, and so held a vision of great facilities for

Fernhurst prominently in my mind since 2000. We've done a lot and the final piece in the jigsaw is the pavilion.

Bill Gourlay (BG)

I am a Trustee of the Fernhurst Recreation Ground, a Vice President of Fernhurst Cricket Club, and coach of the Under 11 cricket team. We moved to Fernhurst in 2008 and I joined the cricket club straight away as I believe that sport is a key part of community life.



(SV) *Why did you decide to launch the community survey regarding a new pavilion?*

(JM) We had been hearing increasing amounts of comments from pavilion users that the current building, which let's face it was built in 1971, was no longer fit for purpose. So, we decided that now was the time to consult the broader community to understand if this view was shared.

(BG) When we looked at the increase in the number of people using the building it wasn't surprising that issues were starting to occur. Overall, we counted around 800 members across the various clubs using the building, and anyone who has been to the village green on a Saturday morning will be familiar with around 200 people using it at the same time.

### **Survey – “The current pavilion’s toilet and changing facilities are ..? 79% said Not Acceptable”**

(SV) *So what was it that had caused this increase in sports club members?*

(JM) When Syngenta left the village back in 2001 it left us with a real shortage of good quality sports facilities. We had attempted a “Big Bang” initiative to address this issue but eventually decided that a more gradual effort was likely to be more successful. The creation of a tennis club and the construction of three courts in 2010 was the first step, bringing over 250 more users to the recreation ground.

(BG) At around the same time both the cricket and football clubs were going through difficult times. There was one point where we estimated that we were down to just 10 regular players in the entire cricket club, so were on our way to extinction unless we took drastic action. The two pronged approach was to build better facilities, in the shape of a new football pitch and top quality cricket practice nets, and to create junior sections for both clubs. We thought that this might bring us 35 young cricketers and 60 junior footballers by now but, in fact, we were very wrong and we now have well over 100 children in each of these sections today.

## Survey – “I use the recreation ground to play organised sport: 72% Quite Often & Often”



(SV) *What are the problems that are being caused by the volume of users for the pavilion?*

(JM) The tricky thing for us as Trustees is that we are trying to provide facilities for a number of different sports and social clubs, many of whom have different needs, but might want to use the venue at the same time. So, for example, it is not easy to host a junior football match at the same time as a tennis

tournament. Both clubs have a reasonable need to be able to use the kitchen, but will tend to be tripping over each other's toes which is far from ideal.

(BG)

The other major problem that we have is that standards and expectations have changed drastically since the 1970s. Whilst we have tried to make some improvements, we are far behind where we should be in terms of access for the disabled. Child Safeguarding rules also now mean that under 18s have to use different changing rooms to adults, so a Sunday cricket match can now require us to use as many as four different changing rooms. Non-compliance with these expectations simply isn't an option going forwards.

## Survey - “The current pavilion's facilities are: 46% Not Acceptable / 46% Acceptable / 8% Good”

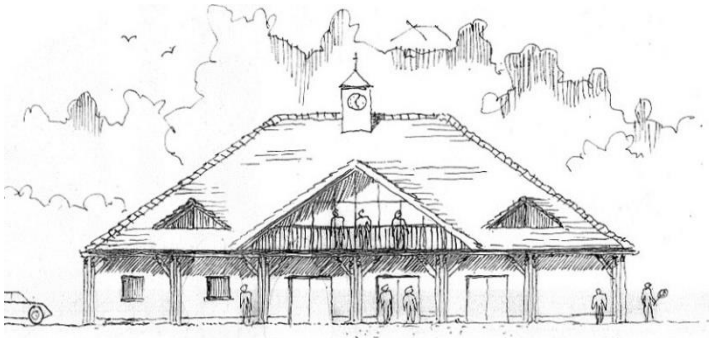
## Survey – “A new pavilion is vital in allowing better access for the disabled: 75% Agree”

(SV)

*I know that several respondents suggested renovating the existing building, couldn't you do that instead?*

(JM)

Sadly not. Whilst the current building has served us very well for nearly 50 years, we need to take this opportunity to ensure that we provide the village with something that can meet its needs for the next 50. The critical piece, alongside all the regulatory things that we just have to do, is to create something that can easily host two events at the same time. So, for example, if we have a tennis tournament happening at the same time as a cricket match, or a football match for that matter, both events can occur and operate as freely as possible without having to compromise on numbers due to lack of space.



(BG) If we take a responsible view and consider the projected population growth in the UK, let alone some of the well known local housing projects under discussion, the number of people wanting to take advantage of sports facilities in Fernhurst will rise considerably. We've seen first hand how offering a sporting outlet for

energies reduces the level of anti-social behaviour around the village, and certainly improves the sense of community.

**Survey – “Current pavilion plays a vital role in keeping the youth of the village active: 72% Agree”**

**Survey – “New pavilion is essential to provide suitable facilities for existing users: 65% Agree”**

(SV) *Okay, but £1 million is over the top. Lots of people are saying that. How can you justify it?*

(JM) A million pounds is certainly a lot of money for us as individual householders, but it's vital to remember that this is the cost to build a substantial facility for the community. So whilst it's hard for us to imagine spending this sort of sum in our own lives, this is simply what a building of this sort costs. Remember that a basic leisure centre costs over £10 million!

(BG) We were careful to ask “What do we need?” rather than “How much do we want to spend?”, as that would have been the wrong question. We aren't going to have the opportunity to do this twice and simply adding extension after extension to a building will cost far more in the long term. So we made sure that we put this survey together to understand the community's views, constructed a Design Committee from the sports clubs to understand their specific needs, and have held very detailed reviews of floor plans to try to make sure we get it right first time.

**Survey – “New pavilion is important in encouraging additional sports club members: 72% Agree”**

**Survey – “New pavilion is a complete waste of time and money: 1% True”**

(SV) *So, what were the key priorities that respondents were looking for in a new building?*

(JM) Roughly 50% of our respondents had already highlighted that the existing pavilion was below acceptable levels in terms of size, facilities and visual appearance. Many of those who did deem it to be “acceptable” added comments to the effect that lots of work was required to raise this up to a “good” level. The headline was, reassuringly, that the vast majority saw the priority as providing a pavilion that can hold simultaneous multi-sports events.

(BG) Another very interesting feature across the survey was the desire for the sports pavilion to play a larger role in the social life of the village. The level of interest shown in being able to hire a new venue, and in the creation of somewhere to go to have a drink or relax – irrespective of whether you are playing sport – was really very striking.

**Survey – “New pavilion should be a multi-sport venue for the next 50 years: 87% Agree”**



**Survey – “New pavilion should be a social hub encouraging use by all, sporting or not: 85% Agree”**

**Survey – “New pavilion is interesting as it provides a new hireable venue in the village: 76% Agree”**

(SV) *You've given yourselves a few years by calling it Pavilion 2022 What happens next?*

(JM) Frankly, this is where the hard work starts! Now that we know what people want, we have to get our teeth into the process of ensuring that the local authorities are supportive of our initiative. Without their buy-in we won't get very far at all, so there will be a lot of discussions at parish and district level. We then have to start the fundraising work as well which, given the target that we now know we need to hit, is going to require a substantial team effort.

(BG) Yes, we were lucky enough to have around 65 people express their willingness to get actively involved in the initiative as part of the survey. In the first instance we have set-up a "Friends of Pavilion 2022" Facebook site, through which we will seek their input, share our ideas, and look for their active support when the time is right. We would be very happy to have more people join us in this effort, and all they need to do is contact us directly or apply via the Facebook site.