

Design and Access Statement in respect of

Proposed Rear Extension and Alterations to Widdrington Community Centre, Grange Road, Widdrington, Northumberland, NE61 5LZ

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Widdrington Community Centre is ran by the Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council, and serves as a non-profit community centre for the local area and residents.
- 1.2 The community centre adjoins to the local library owned by Northumberland County Council. The community centre is located on Grange Road in Widdrington, which also comprises other local amenities such as Widdrington Medical Surgery and Grange View C of E First School.
- 1.3 The community centre is of steel-framed construction, comprising a brickwork masonry and vertical profiled metal clad finish to external walls. The pitched roof also has a matching metal cladding finish.
- 1.4 The community centre is a multi-purpose venue which supports local events and private hire. Such functions include fitness classes, sports clubs, crafts clubs, childcare provision, Parish Council meetings, coffee mornings, charity events and wedding receptions.
- 1.5 The Parish Council now wish to expand the community centre, so that the venue is able to further meet the needs of the local residents. The current kitchen and toilet facilities are outdated, whilst events and functions are often limited by the space available.
- 1.6 It is proposed to form an extension to the rear of the building, which would be of pitched construction to tie in with that of the main building. This would allow the new toilet block to be located in the extension, whilst the kitchen would be relocated to ensure it can meet modern requirements. Crucially, the extension would allow more space for building users, which would allow the venue to run separate events simultaneously.
- 1.7 Planning permission is therefore sought for the rear extension and alterations to the existing community centre.

2.0 Amount of Development

- 2.1 The existing community centre has an internal floor area of approximately 309 square metres. The proposed rear extension would take the overall floor area to 398 square metres. The extension would therefore result in a net increase of 89 square metres.
- 2.2 As well as constructing the new rear extension, there will be a number of internal alterations proposed to enhance the functionality and layout of the building. This will include some door openings off the sports hall being blocked up, albeit with a new set of external double doors from the hall to ensure suitable means of escape.

- 2.3 The old kitchen is proposed to be removed and a new modern commercial kitchen installed where the current toilet block is located.
- 2.4 The new modern toilet block with separate male, female and accessible WC's would be located within the rear extension.

3.0 Layout

- 3.1 The new layout of the building will ensure that the community centre can cater for various guests, and often with separate events running concurrently. The main hall would remain central to the layout, whilst large space rooms can be directly accessed from the hall to ensure there is a link for the building users.
- 3.2 A new lobby is located to the north west of the rear extension. This will allow for suitable means of escape from the main function rooms.
- 3.3 The existing lobby to the front is to be retained with access into the building possible via either the external steps or ramped approach.
- 3.4 A new bar space will be provided where the current kitchen space is occupied. By locating the bar and kitchen within the existing building, this maintains effective use of floor space, thus affording more general public space within the new extension.
- 3.5 The outer wall of the rear extension is slightly stepped back in from the boundary fence line. This has been done to allow working space in which to undertake the construction process, including that of excavating trenches for laying foundations.

4.0 Scale

- 4.1 The scale of the proposed extension is proportionate to the existing building, and will be in keeping with the surrounding area.
- 4.2 The nature of the new single storey pitched roof of the extension means that the profile of the existing roof slope is followed closely. Effectively, the rear roof slope will become a continuation of the existing subservient roof slope in this area.

5.0 Appearance

- 5.1 The eaves of the new rear extension will be lower than the existing full height eaves, meaning this would be a sympathetic addition to the existing building. Therefore there would be no interference on the existing maximum ridge or eaves height.
- 5.2 The majority of the rear extension will be constructed using a brickwork outer leaf, which would soften the aesthetics of the community centre. Carefully aligned glazing on the elevations between windows and roof lights will ensure a high amount of natural light into the extension.
- 5.3 New windows and doors to the rear extension will be finished in PVCu, which will help create a more domestic feel to the addition. This would therefore be in keeping with the likes of the medial surgery located further north on Grange Road.

6.0 Access and Car Parking

- 6.1 The existing shared car park to the south of the site is currently used by both the library and community centre. The car park is owned by Northumberland County Council, with an agreement in place with the Parish Council regarding the parking of vehicles using the community centre.
- 6.2 With the extension works being undertaken to the rear of the building, there will be no encroachment or disruption to the car park as a result.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The existing layout of the community centre means that there is limited availability for events and hire, which fundamentally affects income and wider usage of the venue. The current kitchen and toilets are below standard for a venue of this nature.
- 7.2 To create a more functional capacity for the community centre, the new rear extension would allow for various events to run at the same time, which will help enhance the reputation of the venue. The installation of a new kitchen and toilet block will ensure the building is more in line with modern expectations and requirements.
- 7.3 In our opinion, the proposals are not detrimental to the building, and are in fact a considerable improvement which will help develop the aesthetics of the community centre and assist in supporting the local community.
- 7.4 We would therefore ask officers and members to consider the application for approval.

8.0 Photographs of Site



Front elevation of community centre.



Front/side elevation at junction with adjoining library.



Side elevation of community centre from Grange Road.



Rear elevation of community centre.

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7th September 2021