

Proposal: Knockholt Village Centre Refurbishment

Applicant: Knockholt Village Centre Council

Ward(s): Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount

RECOMMENDATION: That the **£200,000** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Knockholt Village Centre Refurbishment” be refused on the following grounds:

- Funding for the scheme is not approved on the basis that other proposed schemes have been given greater priority;

Principal Criteria not met:

- Insufficient evidence has been submitted to justify economic need.
- Insufficient evidence to show strong partnership working.
- Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding has been maximised.

Introduction

- 1 Knockholt Village Centre falls within the Parish of Knockholt. The parish is one of the 31 that are located within the Sevenoaks District. It is located to the north of the district sharing its administrative parish boundaries with Chevening, Dunton Green and Otford. It also shares a border to the west with London Borough of Bromley. The proposal is for a refurbishment of the Village Centre which serves this Parish.
- 2 The application was received before the application deadline closed on 31st December 2020. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The proposal is to refurbish the Knockholt Village Centre and redevelop the Eastern end of the existing building to incorporate an additional community hall.

- 4 The new facilities will offer an additional community hall to address the demand of village groups. The refurbishment works include kitchen refurbishment, re-roofing of the entire premises, disabled toilet facilities and improving the heating and ventilation. The refurbishment works will enable for the current layout of Knockholt Village Centre to be amended to incorporate the provision of a pre-school nursery and for historical records and heritage archives and community-based library to be located in the centre.

Funding

- 5 Knockholt Village Centre Council, the applicant, has estimated that the total cost of the project to carry out the refurbishment and redevelopment works will cost £350,000.
- 6 Knockholt Village Centre Council have identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
 - Funding provided from Knockholt Parish Council - £100,000
 - Funding provided from Knockholt Village Centre Council - £50,000
- 7 It should be noted the applicant has submitted bids for funding from other sources including Kent County Council. There is a tentative funding bid to be submitted to Enover. The applicant also has a membership to a scheme run by Brevio Organisation to identify potential funding sources. No potential funding sources have been identified by this yet.
- 8 Therefore, to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, the applicant has applied to the Board for £200,000 of CIL funding. This equates to 57% of the total project cost.

Representations and Support

- 9 The application submitted indicates that the applicant is working in partnership with Knockholt Parish Council to deliver the scheme.
- 10 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
 - Cllr Gary Williamson (SDC Ward member for Halstead, Knockholt & Badgers Mount)
 - Knockholt Parish Council

- Knockholt Rainbow Pre-School
- Knockholt Books
- Knockholt Society
- Knockholt Horticultural Society

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong social benefit to the community.
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan.
- There is sufficient certainty the scheme will be delivered.
- Strong community benefits.
- Strong local support for the scheme.

Principal Criteria not met:

- Insufficient evidence has been submitted to justify economic need.
- Insufficient evidence to show strong partnership working.
- Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding has been maximised.

Appraisal

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 11 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed. This enhances the sustainability case as to whether the scheme should receive CIL funding.
- 12 The proposal demonstrates clear social benefits to the community. The centre is a significant hub for social activity serving as a base for local groups and societies. The proposed works would enable the centre to continue to serve this function and an additional hall would support further growth. The provision of disabled toilet facilities will facilitate the use the centre for people who are disabled improving the inclusivity of the centre.
- 13 The environmental benefits of the scheme include insulation and double-glazed windows that will improve the centre's energy efficiency. It is considered that the environmental benefits are localised in nature and there will not be wider environmental benefits to the proposal.

- 14 On balance of the information submitted, it is clear there is strong local benefits to the community resulting from this scheme.

The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan

- 15 This project is not listed as a priority in the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement. However this does state that one of the Council's priorities for infrastructure, for the next year, should be to partially fund local community or infrastructure projects that show a clear public benefit or support a clear local need. It is considered that the scheme demonstrates a clear public benefit and supports the local need for a village centre.
- 16 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan does not refer to the proposed scheme.
- 17 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is identified in an adopted strategy or plan, although it does not specifically mention in a particular document.

Sufficient evidence has been provided to show that this will provide a strong community benefit.

- 18 The applicant has supplied a number of community benefits the scheme can bring to the community. The centre is a vital location for local activities for all age groups to take place. The addition of a new community hall and amendment to the current hall's layout would enable continued use of the centre and support the growth of groups and societies. It is further noted that the provision of the pre-school would provide a convenient location for its users. The application form states that Knockholt has poor transport connections and insufficient broadband and mobile phone coverage. This further reiterates the importance of a local social hub for residents.

Strong community support for the project

- 19 A further key consideration when assessing applications for the CIL Board is to determine whether the scheme has local support from the local community.
- 20 The applicant has confirmed that local support has been received from Knockholt Parish Council and the relevant SDC Ward member Cllr Gary Williamson. In addition to this, emails of support have been provided from

four community groups that use the hall and a local pre-school.

- 21 The application form shows that the applicant carried out a consultation where support for the centre and its refurbishment was expressed.
- 22 Therefore, it has been clearly demonstrated that the application has strong local support from the local community and its representatives.

Sufficient evidence has been submitted to show that the scheme will be delivered

- 23 It is important in the assessment of the bid to consider the likelihood of the scheme being delivered if the CIL monies are granted.
- 24 The application form shows that bi-monthly progress reports will be provided throughout the project's duration. Planning permission was granted for the proposed works on 23 March 2018. It is noted this will expire shortly. However, the principle of the works has been deemed acceptable by the grant of planning permission and so this is not a significant concern. In addition to this, the applicant has the legal right to carry out the scheme.
- 25 On balance of the information submitted, it is reasonable to conclude that the scheme is likely to be delivered.

Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria

- 26 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:

There is not sufficient evidence to show strong partnership working

- 27 Another key criterion for assessing the application is how the project will be delivered and whether any partnership working is included in the project delivery.
- 28 The application form does not indicate that the applicant will be working in any formal partnership with organisations to deliver the project. However, it is indicated the applicant will be working with the Knockholt Parish Council to deliver the project. Furthermore, the Parish Council have agreed for up to £100,000 Public Works Loan to contribute towards the project costs. It is also indicated that there is a great deal of support from local groups.

Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding has been maximised.

- 29 The majority of money required to fund a project should not come from monies granted at CIL Spending Board. The CIL monies should only be used to “top-up” a project’s costs. The CIL funding for the proposed scheme would amount to over half of the scheme’s costs.
- 30 The application form shows the funding will be coming from the applicant’s funds and a public works loan from Knockholt Parish Council. It is noted that the applicant has sought funding from other sources that have not been agreed. The application form does not indicate bids for CIL funding has been made to the relevant town and parish council(s). Furthermore, the information supplied on the application form does not indicate that all the sources of funding are secure.
- 31 While it is positive to see that Knockholt Parish Council has agreed funding by Public Works loan and the applicant will be using their own funds, it is not clearly demonstrated whether CIL funding from relevant town and parish council(s) have been maximised to meet the project cost in full.

Insufficient evidence has been provided to show the economic need for the scheme

- 32 The applicant has stated a number of potential economic benefits in relation to the scheme. However, these are limited to the centre and are similarly associated to the environmental benefits, such as reduced running costs as a result of improved insulation and windows. It is considered that the economic benefits are localised in nature and there will not be a wider economic benefits to the proposal.

Other proposed schemes put forward to the Board have been given greater priority

- 33 A total of 6 schemes have been put forward to the Board for funding for the current CIL Spending Board. Whilst the scheme provides a significant piece of local infrastructure, there have been other schemes put forward that are considered to be of greater strategic importance and offer more value for the amount of CIL requested.

Conclusion

- 34 Knockholt Village Centre Council has submitted an application to the Board to consider the proposed additional village hall, refurbishments and renovations to the existing community hall. It is clear there are strong social benefits to

the local community. In addition to this, the scheme is identified in adopted plans and supported by the local community. The applicant has not benefitted from CIL funding previously.

35 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £200,000 of CIL funding be refused. Although it is clearly demonstrated that the scheme provides public benefits and would be a piece of significant local infrastructure; the scheme has not demonstrated strong economic benefits and over half of the overall costs would come from CIL funding. Further to this, it is considered the other proposed projects provide infrastructure of strategic importance and offer more value for the amount of CIL requested.

Appendices	Original bidding proforma and supporting information
Background Papers	None
Contact Officer(s)	Claire Pamberi ex 7221/Carlyn Kan ex 7264
Richard Morris	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning and Regulatory Services