

SOHAM COMMUNITY FACILITIES AUDIT

SECTION 2: REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND APPENDICES

SOHAM COMMUNITY FACILITIES AUDIT REPORT

SECTION 2: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

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1. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

1 Audit findings

This section sets out information as to how each building that was included in the review was performing as a community facility.

1.1 The Walter Gidney Pavilion

1.1.1 The building receives high level of usage and spare capacity is limited.

1.1.2 Of all facilities audited, the Pavilion was best known to the members of the community. Many respondents were familiar with it, having used it, either in a private or other capacity and 93 people submitted comments about it.

1.1.3 While most respondents described the Pavilion as 'central' paradoxically it was also described by about a quarter of respondents as 'out of the way', possibly because it is not located on the main street and a deliberate action to is required to reach it

1.1.4 There was a high level of concern about the access route to the building. This runs through the Recreation Ground. It is poorly lit and could be muddy. Fear of crime contributed to a reluctance to go there on foot in the hours of darkness. Coupled with uncertainty about the hours when the Council-owned car park on Fountains Lane was open this presented a significant deterrent to usage. This is because there was concern that leaving a car in the car park in the evening would result in it being locked in when the barriers came up. However actual usage over the last year indicates that 29% of use of the Pavilion was during the evenings, a sign that this is not a complete barrier.

1.1.5. The setting was regarded by the vast majority as 'bleak and lonely'. Many respondents said that this feeling disappeared in summer when the Carnival and Fair were taking place and there are more people around.

1.1.6. Almost all users found that it was easy to contact the Town Council to book the venue, and appreciated the helpful attitude of staff. The most frequently used method of contact was telephone, with long term booking possible.

1.1.7 The Council's presence in the Pavilion had advantages but made the building feel like 'Council territory' to some.

1.1.8 There was a high degree of consensus in feedback, which indicated that the barriers to usage were as follows:

- The atmosphere is perceived as austere and unwelcoming
- The décor is institutional and is a deterrent to use particularly for private celebrations and also for community events
- The layout with the two halls providing an 'L' shape is dysfunctional, particularly for any meeting with a speaker. It is difficult to use the space successfully.
- Where two events are run at once, the screen is not soundproof.
- Layout limits the number of participants
- The access road is single track, poorly lit and can be muddy

- The Pavilion setting is bleak except in summer, and during Fairs and Carnivals, when more people are around
- Fear of anti-social behaviour on the Recreation Ground is an additional deterrent to access during hours of darkness
- The kitchen and toilets require modernising
- Deficiencies in kitchen equipment (fridge in particular)
- Deficiencies in equipment for presentations etc – no banked seating, no stage, inadequate power points
- ‘The Council’s territory’
- Unclear when car park is open and fear of cars being shut in behind the barriers
- Location off main street
- Value for money perceived as poor
- Slightly small for some purposes

1.1.9 Negative comment also focussed, but to a lesser extent, on the part-time office staff cover (not always available) with no voicemail, disabled access (only rudimentary with metal ramps), and occasional interruptions to meetings. The building is widely regarded as needing investment to make it smarter and more appealing and up to date. Sympathetic renovation and updating was generally favoured. Three respondents specifically said that modernisation should not be allowed to detract from the character of the building.

1.1.10. Overall the Pavilion was regarded as a facility that is ‘Soham’s own’, with great potential that is wasted. It is currently failing to meet expectations as a community facility, and reaching a standard that is adequate rather than good. It provides a medium/large space with a kitchen and parking and is available for most of the week. Many of the current limitations may not be difficult to overcome.

1.1.12. The rate for hire of the Pavilion is £23.50 per (morning/afternoon) session in the week and the cost of kitchen hire is £6.50. See Section 6.3 for a comparison between facilities of cost of hire.

1.1.13. The Pavilion is regarded as a great asset to Soham in a unique setting but its potential as a community facility cannot be realised unless certain key barriers to usage are addressed.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Central position	Access road lighting & muddy in places
Sound attractive building	Access via car park – users uncertain of when this is open
Medium/large space with kitchen	‘Austere’ atmosphere
Parking	Institutional décor
Pleasant outlook	Poor layout
Organised booking system	Dividing screen not soundproof
Clear printed cost and conditions of hire	Setting bleak in winter
Familiar to all	Fear of antisocial behaviour
	Condition of kitchen and toilets
	Lack of equipment in kitchen
	Lack of equipment for presentations
	‘Council territory’
	Location off main street
	Value for money perceived as poor

	Rudimentary disabled access Cost for some
Opportunities High potential for improvement to provide a good facility Work on some aspects already planned Scout and Guide Huts replacement offers other possibilities	Threats Improvement not at the expense of character

1.2. Soham Village College

1.2.1. The Beechurst and Lodeside Halls attract a high level of usage and spare capacity is estimated as limited.

1.2.2. Soham Village College is located within its own grounds a few hundred yards from the centre of Soham.

1.2.3. The Beechurst and Lodeside Halls (and other facilities) may be hired by the community during the hours that they are not required by the College for its own purposes. They are in reasonably good condition.

1.2.4. The halls provide larger venues for events, large meetings, drama and private parties. Parking facilities are good for these purposes; they are particularly needed for parents dropping off/picking up young people to take part in stage performances for College and/or community groups.

1.2.5. The halls are not available during some school holidays and on a limited basis otherwise, as community use is fitted in around the school's needs for the halls. Access was described as 'complex' by several users.

1.2.6. The College has a commitment to the community to enable community use of its resources but operates as a secondary school with rooms that must be reinstated after any use by a hirer. This limits suitability for the performing arts groups doing a run of shows that have to remove scenery and equipment after each performance where the hall is required by the school the next day.

1.2.7. The main barrier to usage was found to be cost (caretaker costs are passed on to users). Costs increase also with the need for users to apply for their own licences and to have a member of staff present under certain circumstances.

1.2.8. The hourly rate for hire of the halls is £17.30 per hour (excluding kitchen £3.60) on Monday to Thursday and is to be reviewed. Insurance and performance licence are not included.

1.2.9. Increasingly there are heavy demands on both the school and community education to cover costs including caretaker costs and the cost of hire has risen.

1.2.10. A new performing arts space is planned. The Governors were asked in March 2008 to clarify their policy on hiring both existing and new facilities in the future. Their response indicates that they are committed to making school facilities and premises as accessible as possible to the community. However at

this stage it is not possible to put this arrangement on a firm business footing – the College aims to appoint a Business Manager in June/July 2008 and to review its charge out rates for all facilities at the same time. All lettings charges will be recalculated as part of a wholesale review of the current system. They are note that the rates at Soham Village College are significantly below those charged by Bottisham Village College. The College needs to recoup costs and realistically the rates must be regarded as likely to increase. However lettings to the community are likely to be at a discretionary rate. At present it is not possible to clarify the rates in practice, until the wholesale review that is planned, can take place.

1.2.11. Barriers to usage include:

- Cost
- Restricted availability/lack of access due to the College’s holidays and own needs
- Entertainments licence has to be obtained by hirer on an individual basis and is not included in hire fee
- Backstage facilities for drama groups are average
- No orchestra pit
- School environment may put off the ‘hard to reach’

1.2.12. The College is providing a valuable service to the community by making its halls available for hire but, due to the heavy demands of its role as a school and community education centre there are clear limitations to its ability to function as a community facility all the year.

<p>Strengths Organised booking system Clear costs and conditions of hire Large spaces</p>	<p>Weaknesses Available only part of the year Statutory service has priority No licences, hirer has to obtain for each usage Use of main kitchen for self catering requires member of staff to be present Relatively expensive</p>
<p>Opportunities New theatre to be built Clear commitment to enable community access</p>	<p>Threats Charge out rates may rise</p>

1.3. The Lode Centre

1.3.1. The Lode Centre attracts a very high level of usage and has little spare capacity.

1.3.2. This building on the Soham Village College site provides a self contained unit comprising an ‘L’ shaped space with a small outside area.

1.3.3. It is highly valued by community groups (including community education) as a venue for smaller group activities, particularly for adults, and is regarded as good value for money. However it is difficult to access as it is often fully booked during daytime (from 8.30am).

1.3.4. The pre-school uses the Lode Centre for children from Soham South. It is used for Messy Play in the holidays. It provides a secure, relatively modern and clean environment for this activity. It can also be booked for children's parties and provides a secure, enclosed space with small outside area.

1.3.5. Two youth clubs are based there and conversely for youth groups it is regarded as a less good location, working better for juniors than for the older group. This is mainly because it is close to school premises. The building also presents some problems as it is not possible to divide off some of the Centre during youth club sessions.

1.3.6. The Lode Centre was described as useful because it has very good disabled access and facilities; accommodates wheelchairs, is on the ground floor, and has toilets. The groups with disabled members experienced no problems but suggested that they might choose to improve access by installing a ramp for nearside kerb.

1.3.7. The hourly rate of hire is £14.40 with insurance at 12.5% of this.

1.3.8. Barriers to usage were identified as:

- Heavily booked, with little or no spare capacity
- Older people liked it but said that it was difficult to get to
- School space (for young people)
- Acoustics were regarded as poor.

1.3.9. The Lode Centre is a facility that is well used and valued by the community. However since it is managed by Soham Village College it is vulnerable to changes in policy by the College. Access for the community is therefore not secure.

<p>Strengths Flexible space Enclosed and safe for children Single level, good disabled access</p>	<p>Weaknesses Limited spare capacity Available in school holidays but booking must be done in term time. 'Difficult to get to' for some older people On school premises Not able to lock off some space – disadvantage for youth workers</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats Vulnerable to changes in policy Charges may increase</p>

1.4. St Andrews School

1.4.1. St Andrews School is adjacent to Soham Village College and the main facility that is available for hire is the hall. It is in good condition. Usage is at medium level and there is some spare capacity. The school does not promote hire of the facilities to the community.

1.4.2. The Hall is relatively large and offers a self contained space with parking nearby. A stage is available for use on request.

1.4.3. Some evening exercise classes take place here but evening access is limited due to the need to arrange for caretaking, the costs of which are passed on the users unless a member of staff is available to act as key holder. Most groups using St Andrews involve this arrangement.

1.4.4. As St Andrew’s is a church school the needs of church groups have priority

1.4.5. As the hall is geared to the needs of children it is of limited use for other purposes

1.4.6. It has been used by Viva for rehearsals from time to time

1.4.7. The hourly rate varies according to the category of hirer and is £14 per first hour and £10 per additional hour for the main hall and toilets for charitable organisations. Separate application required for use of main school kitchen.

1.4.8. Some users particularly liked to feel that they were supporting the school by hiring this facility rather than others

1.4.9. Barriers to use included:

- Caretaking costs increase overall cost
- Children’s furniture in the hall
- The hall is available for hire but the school does not actively promote this
- It is available only during some parts of the year

1.4.10. St Andrew’s School contributes to the community by making its facilities available, and these are suitable for a certain range of purposes.

<p>Strengths Adult toilets near the hall Large space</p>	<p>Weaknesses School environment Caretaking costs incurred if no staff key holder available Separate application for use of main school kitchen School not resourced to promote community hire</p>
<p>Opportunities Children’s Centre</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.5. The Weatheralls School

1.5.1. The Weatheralls School is located a few hundred metres north of the town centre. It offers a hall and other facilities such as classrooms and the staff room.

1.5.2. There is considerable amount of spare capacity.

1.5.3. Hiring facilities requires approval from the Head who would make a judgement in the light of the lack of complete security within the building.

Permission to hire would depend on age of participants and activity which would have to be compatible with school due to the open nature of the site. Checks would have to be made (possibly CRB check) and hirer would have to hold Public Liability insurance

1.5.4. The school’s kitchen is run by Cambridgeshire Cleaning and Catering Services and the school does not have control over its use. A separate application to CCS would be required for use of the main kitchen. As an alternative a smaller kitchen is available but it is in a different building. The staff room is equipped with microwave ovens.

1.5.5. The school receives few requests and it was thought that the general public may be unaware that the facility is available for hire. Only 14% of people in our sample group were aware of that facilities were available for hire at the Weatheralls School.

1.5.6. The school has never been hired for a private party. The premises are suitable for committee meetings – the governors meet on premises.

1.5.7. The cost of hire is negotiated with each user and no hourly rate was available

1.5.8. The new Children’s Centre is expected to be available on site in October 2008 and will have a varied menu of after school activities with flexi-time hours. It is anticipated that the premises will be available for hire when not required for its primary purpose and this may have the advantage of offering another modern venue and increasing community activity.

- 1.5.9. Barriers to usage include:
- Little explicit information about hiring the facilities or clear conditions of hire
 - School environment, furniture of mixed sizes
 - Separate application to be made for use of the kitchen which may result in an additional charge

1.5.10. The Weatheralls School is able to meet the requirements of some groups for a meeting venue at some times. However since use of kitchen facilities requires a separate application, there is a lack of clarity about cost and all requests must be approved by the Head, people may be put off while other venues are available.

<p>Strengths Variety of sized rooms available Bright relatively modern building Fairly central Hall suitable for drama rehearsals Suitable for committee meetings</p>	<p>Weaknesses Community broadly not aware that facilities may be hired Lack of clarity regarding cost Hire not actively promoted School environment Specific approval required from the Head for each hirer Separate application for use of kitchen Children’s furniture Not available for much of the year</p>
<p>Opportunities New Children’s Centre offers</p>	<p>Threats</p>

<p>opportunity to build family support services close to the school Work with Children's Centre to offer more community activity</p>	
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1.6.Soham Comrades Club

1.6.1. Soham Comrades Club is located very close to the centre of town. Due to temporary problems it is not possible to assess whether there is spare capacity, although this appears likely.

1.6.2. The Club is a spacious but run down social club, primarily for the use of members. Wider hire of some facilities has been suspended but is to be reinstated, following resolution of licensing problems.

1.6.3. The Club usually hires out a main hall, with kitchen, to members and non-members in certain circumstances, for performances, events and private parties.

1.6.4. The club has survived to date with old fashioned management but there is a need to modernise.

1.6.5. The recent problems have revealed other difficulties – staff members are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Policies are undeveloped. This has created obvious financial and management difficulties for the moment. The club is barely breaking even.

1.6.6. The club has a bustling, inclusive and informal atmosphere attracting evening usage rather than daytime. There was evidence in the survey however of some people seeking a venue finding the occasionally boisterous and noisy environment unsettling and at worst frightening. The police report that this area of town can be a focus for trouble.

1.6.7. Barriers to usage include:

- The acoustics in the large hall were not regarded as good for a live band.
- Club atmosphere could make it unsuitable for many community groups
- Main hall can be cold (no central heating)
- Difficult to contact by telephone at some times of the day/week
- In smaller room, the seating is fixed making it unsuitable for meetings and most community use
- Mainly available in the evenings
- Run down condition

1.6.8. The Club fills a gap in provision of community facilities. It is a central venue with a hall seating up to 120. However there are temporary problems which pose a serious threat to the club and the need to modernise should be addressed.

<p>Strengths Spacious premises Central Large car park adjacent Stage</p>	<p>Weaknesses Dated décor Medium sized room has fixed seating only Need to modernise and develop Staff are part time Mainly available in the evenings</p>
<p>Opportunities Staff keen to complete training and qualify to apply for licences</p>	<p>Threats Financial problems from reduced hiring Anti social behaviour in area</p>

1.7.Soham Town Rangers Football Club

1.7.1. Soham Town Rangers Football Club is located a short walk from the centre of town. A hall and a smaller lounge are offered for use by the community, at the discretion of the Manager. There is some spare capacity. Bookings are usually one-off.

1.7.2. It occupies a spacious building with bar facilities opening onto a covered terrace and football pitch

1.7.3. The aim of the Football Club is to provide a family friendly, traditional, safe and secure environment for football team members, football supporters of all ages and their families. Membership levels are good and the club is flourishing. All events have to be organised around the football fixtures which are central to club activity. Despite a large membership it needs to constantly monitor its financial position to remain viable.

1.7.4. It provides a large or medium sized space for community activity or private hire but this has to be fitted in around the club's own needs. It is chiefly used for private parties and events.

1.7.5. The club makes its facilities available to the community for hire at reasonable cost. The main hall hire is £50 per night. Daytime usage is permitted but only for activity involving no noise as the sound carries through the building to the offices adjacent.

1.7.6. Barriers to usage include:

- Social club atmosphere
- Emphasis on football
- Décor and style not always liked
- Lack of catering facilities was felt to be a weakness, kitchen only fair condition
- Daytime use – not suitable as a rehearsal space or for activities involving noise

1.7.7. The Town Rangers Football Club is one of the few places in Soham, apart from school halls, that are available for a large party or event. It is hired out at reasonable cost and available for most of the year.

<p>Strengths Large spaces with bar facilities Car parking</p>	<p>Weaknesses Style and décor not always liked No catering and kitchen only fair condition</p>
<p>Opportunities Trustees and Chairman are socially aware /community orientated and wish to make facilities available for the Soham community</p>	<p>Threats Needs to keep up own fundraising to finance repairs and running expenses</p>

1.8. Viva Arts and Community Centre

1.8.1. The Viva Centre occupies a central position in the town on the High Street and offers a first floor meeting room in good condition. Spare capacity is estimated at 50% in the day and 30% in the evening.

1.8.2. The Centre is staffed on a full-time basis.

1.8.3. It is understood that improvements to the meeting room are in progress and three incubator units have been installed in the building.

1.8.4. Heating levels were sometimes unsatisfactory to users

1.8.5. Feedback indicated that its hire facility in a central location at a reasonable price was highly valued. The facilities and the comfortable atmosphere were felt to be good for social gatherings. Viva was perceived to have a real sense of community ownership involving members of the community as volunteers. Some users however, found that meetings were interrupted by staff and others needing access to the room.

1.8.6. Disability access was also generally rated well, although young parents found that access for prams was difficult.

1.8.7. The building presents challenges for those working with young people. It is difficult to contain young people inside the premises. Because the interior cannot be patrolled they are able to go up and down stairs and have access to offices and Charity Shop which causes further problems.

1.8.8. Of the 24 older people in the sample for the study who had used the building, half thought that there was too much noise from young people hanging around.

1.8.9. Barriers to use:

- Disadvantages for detached youth work
- Building associated with young people's activities
- Meetings and training sessions were sometimes interrupted
- Heating unsatisfactory to users
- The building has proved to be difficult to access for young mothers with prams.

1.8.10. The Viva Centre appears to be a valued resource for the community, particularly as a meeting and training venue, and the Viva Arts and Community Group which runs it is constantly developing and expanding. It has the potential for further developing its functions and role, particularly due its location on the High Street.

<p>Strengths Very central Informal Perceived as a true community facility Clear information available regarding the rate and conditions of hire Website Relatively low cost and good value for money Constantly expanding and developing</p>	<p>Weaknesses Perceived as a young people’s facility Interruptions to meetings Heating levels unsatisfactory to users</p>
<p>Opportunities Plans to improve the meeting room</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.9. Ross Peers Sports Centre

1.9.1. Ross Peers is a busy, thriving and well patronised sports centre. It is located in College Close, adjacent to the Soham Village College site. It is markedly welcoming to all sections of the community with no barriers to use for any types of client groups and individuals. However Ross Peers has limited capacity for community use of a non sporting nature – sport is their business.

1.9.2. The meeting room with kitchen is available for community use to non-members, for long hours and with no caretaker charge. It is slightly dark.

1.9.3. Spare capacity for the hire of the meeting room was estimated at 75%

1.9.4. Ross Peers just about breaks even by looking to sustainability issues – one of which is the income from the children’s parties they provide. They are not meeting the demand for parties and ‘could offer parties all week’. The demand is estimated at 25% more. The parties are popular as they represent value for money and parents can bring their own food.

1.9.5. There is the possibility of an extension over the small piece of land adjacent. This would provide a dance studio upstairs plus a purpose built party room. This has been discussed but is shelved at the moment

1.9.6. There are however no facilities for cricket, football or hockey although the potential tennis court loss appears to be resolved.

1.9.7. Positive aspects of the facility mentioned by respondents were the good location and parking, the soft play area for children, the excellent birthday parties and the ease of booking facilities.

- 1.9.8. Barriers to usage include:
- The poor acoustics and echoes due to high ceiling and squash court voids
 - The lack of catering

- The limited availability for dances because of possible floor damage.
- Possible lack of public awareness that the meeting room is available

1.9.9. Ross Peers is perhaps associated in people’s minds with sports, and the demand for the meeting room is relatively modest.

<p>Strengths Clear scale of charges and conditions of hire Available day and evening Meeting room of adaptable size, with kitchen facilities Welcoming atmosphere</p>	<p>Weaknesses Lack of public awareness of Ross Peers as a meeting venue Poor acoustics and echoes</p>
<p>Opportunities More publicity could exploit unused capacity</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.10. Soham Library

1.10.1. Soham Library is located in an old building just off the High Street. It offers a meeting room for hire, with integral kitchen facilities.

1.10.2. There is some capacity available, notably Tuesdays, alternate Thursday mornings and three Thursday afternoons in a month plus evenings.

1.10.3. Meetings up to 30 people could be held but the room is probably not suitable for a youth club because there it is located close to the library itself.

1.10.4. The room has a secure entrance, is in good decorative condition, well heated and comfortably appointed. The room is private, cheerful and not intimidating in any way.

1.10.5. The cost of hire is £4 per hour to community groups rising to £15 per hour in the evenings

1.10.6. Barriers to usage include:

- Library opening hours which attract the lower rate are limited.
- While day time rates are comparatively low at £4 per hour, evening rates rise to £15 per hour to reflect the caretaking duties.
- Public perception may be that hours available are more limited than is the case as library has part time opening hours
- Suitable for activities that are relatively quiet

1.10.7. The Library offers a convenient room with kitchen facilities in very good condition at reasonable cost for community groups.

<p>Strengths Good decorative condition Clear hire rates and conditions of hire Low cost and good value for money in the daytime Disabled access and toilet Car parking Central</p>	<p>Weaknesses Public perception that the room is not available when the Library is closed Some of the tables did not suit some activities Rates of evening hire</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.11. Methodist Church Hall

1.11.1. The Methodist Church Hall is located in Berrycroft, alongside the Church, just north of the centre of Soham. The hall is hired out with toilets and a kitchen.

1.11.2. There is some spare capacity although this is very limited and, as the needs of the Church for the hall take priority, a hire arrangement could be cancelled should the hall be required for a funeral. Applications to hire the facilities are vetted by the Soham Methodist Church Council and have to be approved before any hire is agreed.

1.11.3. This is an older building needing refurbishment. The hall has a “Sunday School” atmosphere and the dark wood panelling makes it appear very dated. Although referred to by some users as “antiquated,” it is well used and the Methodist Church seems to want to reach out to the community.

1.11.4. It is a popular venue for small events such as talks or a drop in facility (recently used for this purpose and reported as successful so far).The maximum capacity is some 70 people seated. However wheelchair access is difficult as entry to the hall has to be gained through the Church itself.

1.11.5. It is used as a pre-school venue for Soham North children but it is less than ideal; it passed Ofsted inspection on the basis that the pre-school is working well in difficult circumstances. Negative aspects for the pre-school include toilets that are a problem as children cannot go on their own, need steps to wash their hands and toilets are unheated. There are also certain restrictions as to use of play materials.

1.11.6. Users also indicated that the facility can be very cold. This was identified as a problem by a number of users (27 individuals).

1.11.7. There are limitations as to use; as an example, there are restrictions on alcohol and music, making it unsuitable for most parties. It is seen as a place for young people but only with supervision. If a request for this type of use was received it would be given careful consideration by the Church Council and they would not have exclusive use. It is recognised that some guidelines for use may need to be developed by the Church Council.

1.11.8. There is no set rate for hire. The Church requests donations to meet the cost of heating.

1.11.9. Although there are no formal plans as yet the Methodist Church Council are considering making changes in line with Health and Safety, the Disability Discrimination Act and Safeguarding updates. They aim to relocate the toilets which are currently situated off the kitchen and to include a DDA compliant toilet. The windows throughout the building may be replaced with double glazing. The kitchen is to be redesigned and another meeting room provided in the corridor between the church and the hall. These plans are currently at the discussion stage.

1.11.10. Barriers to usage include:

- Restrictions on user groups and activities
- Requires modernisation
- Limitations for children’s use
- No alcohol
- Heating levels vary

1.11.11. The Methodist Hall holds approximately 70 people and meets a need for hall for group meetings of this size that is near the centre with parking facilities.

<p>Strengths Medium sized hall with kitchen and toilet facilities Car parking Serves northern area of town</p>	<p>Weaknesses Requires modernisation All applications are subject to scrutiny by the Church Council All hire is subject to cancellation in the event that the Church needs the building</p>
<p>Opportunities Plans to improve the hall being developed Church Council to develop guidelines for use</p>	<p>Threats Cost of improvements Work must fulfil the requirements of a building in a Conservation Area</p>

1.12. St Andrews Church

1.12.1. St Andrew’s Church is located at the crossroads in the centre of Soham. It is noted in many observations of Soham that the parish church of St Andrew is of outstanding architectural interest and the beautiful church yard setting provides a focus for the town centre

1.12.2. There is a high level of spare capacity

1.12.3. The building is used regularly for religious worship and is available for certain types of community use.

1.12.4. The nave, chancel, vestry and Lady Chapel are available for community use, but are suitable spaces only for a limited range of activity. Musical events

and recitals, for example, can be held in the nave, and small meetings in the vestry.

1.12.5. However, plans to alter the Church are intended to increase community use. The plans involve moving the font and then raising the organ to provide a larger space at the rear of the church. This would enable the installation of toilets and a kitchen.

1.12.6. It would still however have distinct limitations - whist drives or dances will not be appropriate activities for this location but talks, lectures, music and some performance would be acceptable.

1.12.7. Residents generally felt that whatever changes were made, the primary function as a religious building imposed severe limitations on wider community use. It was considered probable that it will be an improved church facility but not likely to produce any radical change.

1.12.8. The Church does not impose a rate for hire but requests a donation in return for use

1.12.9. Barriers to usage included:

- Inadequate heating to some parts of the building
- Restricted usage, limited to some types of activity that are compatible with the primary use of the building as a place of worship

<p>Strengths Building of outstanding architectural interest Beautiful setting Very large space seating 400 Smaller meeting rooms</p>	<p>Weaknesses Suitable for limited range of activities Heating poor</p>
<p>Opportunities Alterations intended to increase community activity</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.13. The Causeway Centre

1.13.1 The Causeway Centre is situated in a housing estate in the south of the town off Fordham Road. It is among located close to a number of bungalows for older people in the ownership of Sanctuary Hereward. It has a community room designed for older people but this is limited in size and is primarily for social usage by local occupants.

1.13.2. There is spare capacity but the room would only be available for a maximum of two or three evenings a week at most. However if there was demand it would be feasible to hold evening meetings there and possibly for two meetings to be held simultaneously

1.13.3 It is in excellent condition, recently refurbished and new furniture. It has a warm light and pleasant atmosphere, well maintained and with everything to hand in line with Sanctuary Hereward’s normal standards.

1.13.4 Hire is available in the evenings only, as the facilities are required by local residents during the day. The room offers reasonably quiet but not confidential use as it is overlooked. However the building is private and has ease of access. It is in the middle of sheltered housing scheme which restricts the use of the facility. It is not suitable for private parties as previous events have been disruptive.

1.13.5 The cost of hire is £15 per session

1.13.6 Antisocial behaviour around the building has been an issue here. Young people tend to congregate near the Causeway Centre and the river. They have been known to be drunk and bang on the windows. There can be as many as 12 or 13 young people about 14-15 years old. There have been a couple of break-ins. CCTV has been installed to cover all the back of the building to deter/detect any recurrence.

1.13.7. Barriers to use include:

- Hire facility not actively promoted
- Hire for maximum of 2 -3 evenings per week
- No daytime hire
- Kitchen for tea and coffee only
- Perceived as older people’s venue

1.13.8 The Causeway Centre is most suitable for evening meetings of up to 20 people

<p>Strengths Good condition Warm Can be divided into two separate areas if needed</p>	<p>Weaknesses Perceived as being older people’s venue Not available in the day</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats Growth in antisocial behaviour</p>

1.14. Keith Leonard House

1.14.1. Keith Leonard House is located within a few hundred metres of the High Street. The Mill View Room, which has integral kitchen facilities, is only available for hire if it is to the benefit of Hereward Sanctuary tenants. It is the tenants’ sitting room and they have first call. This policy is paramount. Currently there is no spare capacity.

1.14.2. The building is kept in pristine condition and has a peaceful and quiet atmosphere. The Mill View room itself is immaculately clean and well appointed; highly suitable for the purposes for which it is currently used.

1.14.3. Some contributors found parking a problem and security devices meant that it was hard to gain access. There was however it is understood that it is a residential home for the older people and thus security is essential.

1.14.4. The staff are called away from their primary task to deal with visitors and thus external community use is not the highest priority. This may explain problems with double booking which had affected some users.

1.14.5. Positive aspects of the facility mentioned by respondents were the central location with parking, one that was warm and comfortable and with tea making equipment and a dishwasher. In general satisfaction levels were high.

1.14.6. The cost of hire of the Mill View Room is £11 per session

1.14.7. Barriers to usage include:

- Security devices – no spontaneous drop-in
- Limited range of activities permitted
- Must be compatible with residents needs
- No current spare capacity

1.14.8. Keith Leonard House is busy and an expansion is planned. Currently community hire puts an additional burden on staff. It is a valued location but it has no spare capacity at the present time.

<p>Strengths Central Warm Good condition Up to date kitchen equipment integral to room Relatively low cost/good value for money</p>	<p>Weaknesses Secure access deters spontaneous or drop in use Limited range of activities permitted Must be compatible with residents needs</p>
<p>Opportunities Expansion plans may broaden community use</p>	<p>Threats Unknown consequences of expansion. Expansion puts staff under additional pressure, reduced community use</p>

Commercial Facilities: Public Houses

The public houses in this section all accommodated groups for meetings over a meal or a drink. They do not make a charge for the use of space in the bar but only for food and drink consumed. Most are unable to provide a private room for a meeting at present, with the exception of the Cherry Tree. The landlords of both the Carpenters Arms and The Ship would be willing to consider doing so if there is a demand.

1.15. The Cherry Tree Public House

1.15.1. The Cherry Tree is large enough to enable small meetings in one area of the pub; it is exceptional in that it is sometimes possible to arrange to use a closed off section of the lounge for meetings. It has reasonably good disabled facilities (disabled toilet has to be accessed through the ladies’ toilet) and the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. It is also family friendly and has a play area; it has relatively large outside facilities. The unusual bandstand is used by the Brass Band in summer.

1.15.2. Some groups had experience of using the pub, and were quite satisfied. The Rotary Club had negotiated the use of a private area. Other groups working with people with Learning Difficulties found that it was a suitable location for a meal.

1.16. The Carpenters Arms Public House

1.16.1. This is a community based pub, in good condition, which primarily serves the immediate locality. There are a lot of new houses in the area although customers also come from other parts of Soham. The owner believes that people value a traditional quiet sort of pub, with an established order - it is a pub for drinking with the various age groups each having their usual place and younger people usually occupying the pool area. It is busy on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The owner/landlord reports that he has had no experience of any trouble and is prepared to take care to ensure that no underage drinking occurs.

1.16.2. There is also a possibility that in future it may be possible to hire an area or room for private meetings. There could be exclusive use of the room at the rear but this would involve a surcharge. Bookings would be at owner/landlord's discretion. The new owner/landlord is currently holding a watching brief while he settles into the pub. The cost of hire would depend on what and where is used. Hirers would have to do their own catering using paper supplies. If using the bar then there would be no charge.

1.16.3. However there are no disabled facilities and alteration is not possible due to the age of the building.

1.17. The Red Lion Public House

1.17.1. This is a centrally located public house. The only space that could be available for private meetings is an area around the pool table area; this is impractical and in practice there has been no demand for this. Young people use the pub to use the pool table, buy non-alcoholic drinks and it is reported that they accept that they will be served no alcohol. No groups in the study had used the pub on an organised basis.

1.18. The Ship Public House

1.18.1. The Ship is a small public house in good condition and conveniently located near the centre of town. The landlord has not been approached by community groups to hire a room for their exclusive use, but such a request would be considered. Food is to be added to what is on offer. Although this could meet the needs of small adult groups requiring for a meeting room with catering, it is unlikely to be entirely satisfactory because the rooms cannot be completely private. No groups in the study had used this on an organised basis.

1.19. The Fountain Public House

1.19.1 The Fountain is a centrally located public house. A considerable amount of work has been done on it recently to redecorate and refurbish it. According to the management a private room could be made available to community groups, who wished to use one. The charge is under consideration. Feedback from groups indicated a cautious attitude to using this location for fear of noise and anti-social behaviour in this area of the town.

<p>Strengths Open during the daytime and evenings Cherry Tree and Fountain can cater for a meal Responsive to demand</p>	<p>Weaknesses Most are unable to provide private room for community use (except the Cherry Tree and Fountain) Usually relatively small spaces (the exception is the Cherry Tree and to some extent the Carpenter's Arms) No catering at the Carpenters Arms, The Ship and the Red Lion Variable disabled access</p>
<p>Opportunities The Ship plans to increase parking area</p>	<p>Threats</p>

Other commercial facilities

The following locations were used for events, parties and meetings

1.20. The Brook House Motel

1.20.1. Brook House is located on Brook Street at the south end of town. It offers for hire a facility providing linked large and medium sized spaces that could be adapted for a number of uses; community, social, performance-based or conference. Although there is some spare capacity, access by community groups is currently limited. The space is used by the management for concerts, private parties and events, and as a dining room for guests using the Motel. There is a kitchen and bar.

1.20.2. It is possible that it would have considerable potential as a community facility with wider usage, but this has to remain currently unrealised, because it is in regular commercial use.

1.20.3. The owner does not promote wider community access for several reasons. There is little spare capacity, and she is anxious to protect neighbouring property owners from noise and other nuisance. No-one is barred from hiring but extra staff is employed to mitigate risk where there is concern about any problem.

1.20.4. Occasional access has been given to community groups for rehearsals free of charge during quiet periods when there was scope to do so.

1.20.5. Positive aspects of the facility mentioned by users and potential users are the excellent disability access, good acoustics and plentiful parking together; the size of the facility, the dressing area and its location being an outstanding advantage for performing arts events. However the size of the large Function Room also attracted a cautious response from some community groups as it could be difficult to fill and may therefore prove unsuitable for their everyday needs.

1.20.6. The facility was also felt to be a little dated in décor.

1.20.7. The cost of hire of this facility is £100 for a one day period from 8am to midnight

1.20.8. The location of the facility is off Fordham Road feels as if it is 'out of town' but is still in the middle of a residential housing area. It is however close and convenient to the area identified for development to the east of Brook Street stretching between Tanners Lane and Greenhills across to the Lode. With the linear shape of Soham, should this facility become available for more general community use in future it could be well located in a neighbourhood at the south end of the town. Management decisions will be made on the final disposal/future development of the site when local authority planning decisions are clarified, which is anticipated to be in 2009.

1.20.9. Barriers to usage include:

- Hire is usually for a whole day
- Some community use but not promoted
- Décor needs update

1.20.10. The Brook House Motel Function Room meets the need for a large space with a bar for parties and events, and occasionally for drama rehearsals, but there is no possibility of the hirer providing their own drinks or self catering. It requires some updating.

<p>Strengths Self contained suite of rooms Very large and adaptable spaces Excellent disabled access and facilities Good general condition Licences in place Parking for large number of cars</p>	<p>Weaknesses Décor needs update</p>
<p>Opportunities Future use of site to be decided in 2009</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1.21. The Soham Lodge Motel

1.21.1. This modern motel is located out of the town of Soham, on the A142 bypass. It is available for meetings and events. A variety of large, medium and smaller spaces are available.

1.21.2. It is most suitable for large groups, smaller groups requiring a private room with catering, conferences and medium to large events. It would also be suitable for private hire for parties and weddings.

1.21.3. It offers a clean, light, up-to-date and comfortable facility, in good condition. The standard of comfort and style that it was able to supply was attractive to several groups who reported that this had not been available elsewhere in the town.

1.21.4. Barriers to usage include:

- It presents some barriers to usage for smaller groups, who may find the spaces difficult to fill and the cost beyond their budget.
- Use of facility depends on ability to pay; some feedback indicated that it was found to be expensive

NOTE: Since completion of the interview the Motel has closed and no additional information is currently available as to its future.

<p>Strengths Up to date facilities in good condition Described as very comfortable Rooms of various sizes available</p>	<p>Weaknesses Financial problems Location not easily accessible from town except by car</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats Uncertain future Creditors meeting imminent after possible fraud came to light</p>

Community Facilities available on a limited basis

The following facilities were found to be available only in certain very limited circumstances, or for specialised use.

1.22. Salvation Army Hall

1.22.1. The Salvation Army Hall is located in Bushel Lane and is a basic hall in poor condition.

1.22.2. The local Salvation Army officers do not wish to broaden community use due to their own needs for the hall. The Salvation Army Divisional Office has decided to support the current local corps in their approach for the present. Future plans will be reviewed in due course.

1.22.3. Currently there are substantial barriers to usage due to:

- Unsuitability for children due to heaters presenting a danger and other issues
- Poor general condition
- Severely limited hours available as a Salvationist must be present
- Administrative barriers

Without complete refurbishment this hall has very low potential as a community facility.

1.23. The Soham Cemetery North Chapel

1.23.1. The Soham North Chapel is located in the Cemetery. It has no electricity, toilet facilities or heating and seating in pews. This severely limits its adaptability to any other activity than religious worship, quiet contemplation or very small recitals. The key holder reports that no requests for access for community uses have been received. Income levels since 2002 have been below £300 per annum. The building is maintained by skilled labour contributed on a voluntary basis.

1.23.2. It is the property of the Soham North Chapel Charitable Trust, Charity Number 1057013

1.24. Care and Repair Office

1.24.1. The Care and Repair office is located centrally on Churchgate Street. The organisation works to help older and vulnerable people to stay in their own homes. Its office is currently used by Ely Citizens' Advice to offer a part time outreach service. The two organisations find the arrangement helpful to them in assisting their clients but no additional hire is regarded as desirable. The Manager reports that therefore they have no facilities available for general community use.

1.25. Staploe Medical Centre

1.25.1. The Staploe Medical Centre is located in Brewhouse Lane.

1.25.2 The Cogwheel Trust uses the consulting rooms to provide a counselling service to patients of the practice.

1.25.3 A small meeting room suitable for up to 40 people may be available on an occasional basis to groups working in a health-related field. Otherwise it has no suitable facilities available for general community use.

Facilities not currently available

The following facilities were not currently available for community use

1.26. Scout Hut

1.27. Guide Hut

1.28. Baptist Hall

1.29. St Andrew's Church Hall

1.30. St John Ambulance Hall

C. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: LIST OF FACILITIES IDENTIFIED BY SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The following facilities were identified by Soham Town Council for inclusion in the review:

Definitely available

Walter Gidney Pavilion
Soham Village College
The Lode Centre
St Andrew's School Hall
The Weatheralls' School Hall
Soham Comrades Club
Soham Town Rangers' Football Club
The Viva Centre
Soham Library
Ross Peers Sports Centre

Commercial Facilities

Cherry Tree Public House
The Carpenters Arms Public House
The Red Lion Public House
The Ship Public House
The Fountain Public House
Brook House Motel
Brook House

May be available

Guide Hut
Scout Hut
Methodist Church Hall
Baptist Church Hall
Salvation Army Hall
St Andrew's Church and Hall
Keith Leonard House
The Cemetery North Chapel
The Causeway Centre
Care and Repair office

NB The following facilities were added by agreement during the review:

The Staploe Medical Centre
The Soham Lodge Motel

Appendix 2: METHODOLOGY

1. Documents examined

Before and during the review we examined a range of documents some of which were provided by Soham Town Council in advance. These included:

- Soham Community Appraisal 1996
- Soham Community Appraisal Newsletters
- East Cambridgeshire Parish Council Survey Analysis 1996
- East Cambridgeshire Town Centres Strategy and Action Plans 1998
- Health Check 2004
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Older People Jan 2008

2. The Audit of Community Facilities

Visits were carried out to each facility for the purpose of data collection, viewing the facility and to carry out an interview with the manager/owner of the facility or their representative. Photographic evidence was as gathered wherever possible to illustrate the condition of the facility.

Interviews were not carried out where the owners/managers of facilities advised that the building was not currently available to the community.

All data in this report relates to facilities on the date of audit only, except where stated otherwise.

2.1 The standard

The New Forest Community Facility Toolkit was designed by New Forest District Council to help people involved in community planning to take stock of the community facilities.

Guide Four of the Toolkit was used as a checklist in order to obtain information about the identified facilities in Soham. Similar data was collected for each facility using this questionnaire.

Profiles of all facilities that were available to the community were completed. The following areas were covered by the audit:

- The current ownership of the building, its age, management, and primary use
- Details of the facility available to the community, its size and capacity, additional facilities such as kitchen or toilets that may also be available
- Equipment, storage facilities for users, car parking, bar, self catering*
- Condition, heating arrangements
- Accessibility
- Usage/ spare capacity
- Information and booking arrangements, hours available, cost of use, limits to usage, licensing, degree to which the organisation's management perceived encouraging wider community use of the facility as part of its role*, management relationship with user groups
- Financial aspects, business planning
- Future plans
- Involvement of volunteers

- Atmosphere/suitability for a range of community purposes

(* An indicator not included in the Toolkit Guide Four)

In this way each facility was audited in terms of what it offers the community, its suitability for general community use, strengths and weaknesses, management approach, interaction with users, volunteering opportunities, financial soundness (where possible), usage policy and how it functions as a community facility. Barriers to usage were identified from data gathered from user groups and questionnaire responses (see below).

2.2 Satisfaction survey

A basic satisfaction survey was carried out with representatives of a sample of user groups. The purpose of this was:

- to verify other data
- to find out what it is like to use the facilities
- to find out how far they meet needs and expectations
- to gather data to illustrate the perceptions of user groups of facilities in the town

This recorded levels of satisfaction with a range of aspects of the facility:

- Location, setting, and suitability of facility for community use
- Information and booking arrangements
- Cleanliness, heating and acoustics/sound proofing
- Equipment available
- Accessibility
- Cost, value for money
- Privacy for users

Users were asked to allocate, in confidence, a score from 1 to 5 to each aspect, to indicate how happy or dissatisfied they were with each aspect. An average score could then be reached for each facility. The information was treated as confidential to encourage full and honest responses.

2.3 An assessment of local needs not currently being met by existing community facilities

The brief for the study called for an investigation into whether there are local groups or organisations which are not able to find venues for the activities they wish to pursue.

To obtain a full picture, relevant information was gathered from the following groups and, if evidence of local need was obtained, additional enquiries were made:

- **Managers/owners of facilities** supplied details of usage over the last year. They were asked whether they had been approached in the last year by any group or individual, for use of the facility, but had been unable to respond because the facility was operating at full capacity. They were also asked whether, from their local knowledge, they were aware of any unmet need.

- **User groups** (see Appendix 5) were sent a letter by post in the first week of January 2008 inviting them to contact the researchers to discuss community facilities, and their own group's use of these, in the town. They were invited to supply a response by post, by telephone, email or by returning a tear off slip to the Pavilion requesting the researchers to contact the individual. The letters were accompanied by a letter of introduction signed by a District and Soham Town councillor, on Soham Town Council's headed paper, in order to establish the credibility of the survey. This also explained the purpose of the study and asked for the cooperation of the recipient. Letters were sent in each case to a named individual in the group. Of 34 groups only 2 responded and the remainder were followed up by post and telephone over the following 9 week period. 28 were successfully contacted and consulted; thus a substantial proportion of users of facilities, and especially frequent users, have contributed to this study. Semi structured interviews were carried out to gather data regarding the needs of the group, whether the current facilities were able to meet their needs and their experience of using the facilities. They were also asked whether they were aware of unmet need elsewhere.
- **Soham residents** were invited to contact the researchers. 139 people living/working in the town came forward to give their views. Some also represented community organisations (see above). Flyers advertising the contact details for the researchers were placed at many points in the town's shopping centre by kind permission of local shop managers and at facilities. A questionnaire was placed on www.soham.org.uk, with links from/to other sites. Press coverage in the Newmarket Journal and East Fens Directory (which also included the questionnaire) carried an invitation to contact the researchers. Local schools indicated that they would place a notice in their newsletters to similar effect. A Drop-In session, aimed at members of the public, was held on 22nd January at the Pavilion to enable anyone to who wished to do so to talk to the researchers without making a prior appointment.
- **Grant-giving organisations:** The Cambridgeshire Community Foundation and East Cambridgeshire District Council were each asked whether they were aware of unmet need through their grants application processes. It was thought likely that a local organisation that wished to pursue an activity or offer a service may be seeking the resources to do so by applying for a grant.
- **Representatives of voluntary, community and statutory agencies working in the area** were interviewed to ascertain whether new services that may be planned would require additional facilities in Soham, and whether unmet need existed in their own field of work. See Appendix 5.
- **In addition to the above, the following were consulted to assess whether unmet need exists :** Messrs Shropshire's

2.4 Consultations

- A Consultation Workshop for Soham organisations was held on 19th March 2008. The aim of this event was to gather a more in depth assessment of

the views of the local community as to how in future local community facilities might best deliver local aspirations, and what changes might be required to optimize this. The consultation was attended by 29 representatives of local community groups. A report is attached at Appendix 4.

- A meeting with the Phoenix Club was attended on 12th March to consult members on their satisfaction with adequacy of the facilities in Soham. 35 members responded.

Appendix 3: PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

SOHAM COMMUNITY FACILITIES AUDIT

PLEASE REMEMBER TO:

- ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS and
- FILL IN YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS
- *Otherwise we may not be able to include your response!*

Name.....Address.....

Phone no.....

Do you (or your family) use the community facilities/halls/meeting places in Soham? Yes/No

If **YES** have you or your family used any of the following:

The Pavilion	Soham Library
Scout and guide huts	St Andrews Church
Lode Centre	Football Club
Comrades Club	Ross Peers Centre
St Andrews School	Weatheralls school
Viva Centre	Keith Leonard House
Methodist Hall	Medical Centre
Village College (Beechurst/Lodeside)	Brook House/Motel
Pubs.....	Other.....
.....(name)(name)

If **YES**, what have you or your family used them for? Please tick all that apply

- Private events (birthday parties, wedding receptions etc)
- Community activities/meetings
- Sports
- Theatrical/performing arts/musical events/exhibitions
- Indoor market
- Adult Learning
- Young People's activities
- Indoor Fairs

Were the facilities adequate for your needs? Yes/no

If no, which facilities would benefit from improvement?

.....

.....

Please tell us what improvements you would like to see to these facilities?

.....

.....

Do you think that there is a need for a new community hall in Soham? Yes/no

If so,

why?.....

.....

Please return this form when completed to: Celia Dickinson, c/o The Pavilion, Fountain Lane, Soham, CB7 9PL

Alternatively you can complete it online at www.soham.org.uk

Appendix 4: REPORT ON CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

**Soham Community Facilities Audit
Consultation Workshop**
Walter Gidney Pavilion
6pm – 8pm, Wednesday 19th March 2008

The purpose of the evening was for participants representing a wide range of local organisations to look at local community facilities and related issues in more depth; focussing particularly on the second part of the consultant's brief – the need for facilities.

Participants were asked to consider how the facilities could more closely reflect the requirements, and meet the needs and aspirations of the Soham community

Some twenty nine people attended the Community Consultation event.

They represented from statutory agencies to include local government, the police and education and also the voluntary and community sector to include community groups representing older people, young people and several specific interest groups in Soham, including sport and culture.

County and district support groups were also represented to include community development, mental health, community transport and advice and information organisations.

Some individual members of the community also attended.

After a short context presentation, small groups worked on a series of questions which were posed to those present to elicit views and opinions. Those opinions are listed below.

Finally participants were asked to identify up to three strengths and three weakness of each community facility by attaching their comments on post-it notes to the photographs of the building on display.

All comment is included in the main body of the report. The table below shows how participants perceived the need for certain additional facilities.

1. What gaps are there in community facilities in Soham?

Are enough of the following available?

	Level of provision	Priority for action	COMMENT
Small meeting rooms	Good	Low	
Large meeting rooms	Good	Medium/low	Cost issues
Training rooms	Very good	Low	Library - restricted opening hours
Spaces for general social use	Good	Medium	Cost issues
Older people's facilities	Good	No	Cost and central source of information re what's on
Youth facilities		Essential	Concrete wall for kicking ball Gap 15 -17s
Pre-school/crèche facilities	Excellent		
Crafts/artists studios		Low/medium	
Exhibition/performance space		Medium	Expect to be enough with SVC performing arts facility
Performance/rehearsal space		Low	
Indoor market/fairs space		Low	
IT/internet access	Good		Limited hours at library
Welfare rights/benefits advice	Poor	High	
'Hot-desking'/part time facilities for small organisations	Poor	Low	
General information centre	Poor	Medium	There are centres but need to be on High Street
Office/business accommodation/starter units		Medium	
Other (please specify) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside sporting facilities • Central community hall • Railway station • Late buses • Cinema • Swimming pool 			

2. Are there any particular groups who have an unmet need (i.e. are unable to find a venue to pursue their activities) for community facilities in Soham and what is the evidence for this need?

Comments from participants included the following:

- Dramatic and musical groups find existing facilities very inadequate. This is based on several groups' experience
- Performance space with stage and seating for 200
- Youth
- No current provision for youth groups not within sports or arts based activities
- Nothing for teenagers away from school premises
- Specific youth facility
- Advice Agencies
- Provision for small confidential consultations
- Private room for a meal plus meeting. Most spaces are too large and not private
- Rooms for social uses get very booked up
- No obvious central easily visible notice board that both users and providers make use of. No info centre or facility will work well if people don't keep it informed
- Only notice boards for information
- Need some sort of central newsletter that goes to all
- A Soham magazine for info

3. How can we ensure that community facilities in Soham cater for all sections of the community and the community voice is heard in shaping their future?

Comments from participants included the following:

- Ask all sections of the community
- Publicise results
- Listen to requests and opinions of the community
- Facilities survey should help achieve this
- To please as many groups as possible, a new large multi use facility with user group participation

4. Identify where community facilities in Soham need to be improved or expanded and why. (Identify up to 3 priorities)

Comments from participants included the following:

- Pavilion - cost, long drive, unlit at night, needs a refit, entry barrier confuses people about how to get in
- Pavilion good but no sound proofing, ramp slippery, poor lighting, not well sign posted, wrong size and shape, disabled access poor
- Exhibitions at Pavilion don't attract many visits, out of centre and feel unsafe
- Pricing structure of council buildings – extra usage should drive price down
- Car parking at night in Pavilion area for Scout hut
- Scouts etc need bigger place with storage area
- Many facilities are small
- Disabled access, facilities and loops important
- Sound proofing and acoustics also
- Need suitable purpose built meeting place
- School is expensive, can't use kitchen, no license
- A good Youth Centre close to town centre and open all hours
- Facilities too expensive for smaller clubs
- All facilities in Soham are in need of some improvement or expansion we cannot prioritise

5. Soham faces major new housing development – what are the challenges of the future and how can these best be met?

Comments from participants included the following:

- One multi purpose facility to serve the whole community, to seat up to 400 with stage and full facilities/amenities
- To be run by the community for the community
- Central location with adequate parking
- Better public transport
- Facilities for younger people after school activities, sport, drama, arts, leisure
- Facilities for older people – bungalows
- Getting people to be part of the community
- More employment opportunities, small units, serviced offices, workshops studios
- More local jobs
- Consumer amenities at each end
- Train station

6. What types of local facilities are needed to ensure that Soham has a cohesive community and to sustain and improve the quality of life in the town?

Comments from participants included the following:

- Facilities for young people in a free and relaxed environment
- Community building which acts as a focal point in central location
- Ask the public what is needed not a select few
- Magazine - ask Newmarket Journal
- Signage (police) and info
- Focus on young people as well as older, due to newer housing
- Family support?
- Accurate population forecasting
- Encourage people to stay in Soham not drive out
- Social clubs/meeting places for all the community
- We should make visiting workers very welcome
- A really good youth centre
- A good welcome pack for all residents

Post-it Note comments received from participants

VENUE	STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
Ross Peers Sports Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not versatile for community use i.e. specialist facility
Salvation Army Hall		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not available for community use • No disabled access or facilities • Needs renovation
The Ship		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor disabled access • Pub – not suitable for community use
The Cherry Tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great as a pub but not good for meetings – no privacy • Welcoming and friendly but dedicated space would be better • Minor issues with disabled loos
The Comrades Club		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disabled access or other facilities • Quite good but rather small – maximum seating 120

The Fountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservatory was a really good facility when good food was available (private room) Shame it's no longer available • Conservatory used to be excellent facility – sorely missed 	
Guide Hut		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilapidated • Not for public hire • Roof leaks • Run down
Keith Leonard House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room is nice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security system presents access difficulties • Problem is getting inside the security door – need a gateopener on duty • Too small facilities
The Lode Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OK for small groups up to 40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too close to school for youth activities • Fully booked daytime • Good for small group activities but poor quality • OK but acoustics poor
Weatheralls Primary Scholl		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not practical • Cannot use daytime
Viva Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Directions Plus survey and approval – two wheelchair ramps and widened doors • Good small meeting space (x 2) • Friendly 'community minded' staff (x 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No easy wheelchair access

Lodeside		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall has more limitations than Beechurst • Too expensive to hire • The school halls are good but not really a community facility – available 20 weeks a year at best • No facility for daytime
Beechurst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good hall space • Needs better theatre facilities – coming soon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too expensive to hire. Too big, too expensive • Not viable for everyday folk • The school halls are good but not really a community facility – available 20 weeks a year at best • No facility for daytime • Large hall is good but has limitations
St Andrews Church Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central location plus car park • Needed • Lots of potential if secured • Excellent as a community focal point • Suitable for every resident to use. Large hall, Great acoustics. Can be used for every function and also a great site for a public car park. Desperately needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would use it and maintain it? With the new Scout and Guide Hut and Performing Arts Centre it would become a white elephant • Not been used for 10 years
St John Ambulance Hall		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not let for public use • Not easy to use or hire • Not too bad but bad location • Inappropriate
Guide Hut		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joke – bad condition
Care and Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a good job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not for public use
Brook House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good private facility – will seat 200+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now in liquidation! • Good facility but expensive to hire • Privately run , not community facility
Baptist Church Hall		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No alcohol
Soham Town Rangers FC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available for hire • Private room 	
Soham Lodge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loadsa space and parking but do people know what's there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only useful if everyone can drive • Cannot walk to it only over fields or bypass – taxi, car only. Out of the way • Wrong location – rather impersonal dining room • Wrong location
Soham Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs a purpose • Good price for hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting room tables not flexible enough to make it really “user friendly” • Fully booked day time

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would have liked to book it for small meeting on more than one occasion but it has been shut when I needed it • Meeting room charges deemed to be expensive by local people who feel that the facility should be available free as part of their council tax payments
Staploe Medical Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No night use – prescription drugs on premises • Can all members of the public use this during open hours? • Cannot be used by all. Not in the evening due to it being in the medical centre
St Andrews Church		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonderful building but not a community hall – a religious building and should be respected as this • Move the organ and open the west door!
St Andrews Primary School		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too expensive and not always available
The Red Lion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disabled facilities – listed building
Methodist Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great for small meetings but has restrictions i.e. no alcohol at all and no music (dance)
The Pavilion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for large groups • Huge potential but needs a rethink (access, layout, price, décor) Make better use of it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrong shape for larger events • Expensive/bad location at night • Halls wrong size/not in central location/dark approach at night • Difficult facility at night-amenities old fashioned • Location poor, facilities outdated • Useful but very limited as is – 2 small halls seating 80-100 max
The Causeway Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice facility but not suitable for general use as too close to older residents • Suitable for older people but not suitable for larger groups or younger people due to it being close to sheltered housing and older residents
The Carpenters Arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just a very good pub 	
Cemetery North Chapel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No heating, no electricity, not at all a meeting facility. No pro's only con's

Appendix 5: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS INTERVIEWED /CONSULTED

The following organisations were interviewed in addition to those managing facilities:

Cambridgeshire ACRE
Cambridgeshire Community Foundation
Cambridgeshire County Council - Community Education
Cambridgeshire Community Education – Children’s Services
Care and Repair
Cogwheel Trust
Craft Group
East Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambs Family Project
Ely Citizens’ Advice
Ely and Soham Dial a Ride
Ely Police
Facilitaron
Legal Services Commission, Cambridge
Mothers’ Union
Music Makers
The Phoenix Club
Red2Green
Rhymetime
Soham Action4Youth
Soham Association of Commerce and Trade
Soham British Legion
Soham Community Care
Soham Community Hall Trust
Soham Comrades Brass Band
Soham Drop-in
Soham Festival Society
Soham Guides
Soham Lunch Club
Soham Museum Project
Soham Over 60s
Soham Rotary Club
Soham Scrabble Club
Soham Scouts
Soham Summer Playscheme
Soham Town Council
Soham Town Forum
Soham Twinning Association
Viva Arts and Community Group
Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire
Windmills Under Five Pre-School
Youth Council

This list is not exhaustive



HALLMARK is a quality standard scheme for community buildings and village halls.

HALLMARK is open to any community building or village hall management committee and aims to:

- **Reward and establish good practice;**
- **Encourage improvements in established customs and procedures;**
- **Provide recognition for obtaining good standards of building / hall management.**

As **HALLMARK** is a nationally recognised quality achievement for Community Buildings and Village Halls, it can mean that funders look favourably on a building or hall with the standard should they apply for grant funding.

There are three levels to

HALLMARK:

- Level One **HALLMARK** assesses whether the hall is complying with the requirements of its charitable status.
- Level Two **HALLMARK** assesses compliance with legislative issues. *******
- Level Three **HALLMARK** examines the role of the building or hall in the community and how it interacts with its users and the wider community.

A HALLMARK at any level will be valid for three years from the date of the official visit.

How does the scheme operate?

- The Community Building or Village Hall Management Committee completes a simple one-sided application form.
- The Management Committee is sent details of the Level One HALLMARK standards which must be met, together with the names of the 'official visitors' who will assess the hall.
- The 'official visitors' are volunteers who are either members of another building or hall management committee within the county or who have been closely involved with the work of another building or hall committee.
- To achieve Level One HALLMARK, 70% of the listed standards must receive a positive response from the 'official visitors'.
- The Community Building or Village Hall Management Committee is sent a copy of the comments made by the 'official visitors' and a certificate of achievement.
- Level One HALLMARK must be achieved before Level Two HALLMARK can be applied for and, similarly, Level Two must be achieved before Level Three HALLMARK can be considered.

What does it cost?

- HALLMARK is funded through Capacitybuilders, a Government programme that provides support and assistance to voluntary organisations and community groups nationwide. HALLMARK is a free service available to all community buildings and village halls in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

ChangeUp



**Cambridgeshire ACRE's
Community Facilities Advisor:
Philip Peacock**

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If you would like more information about this service, please contact:

Cambridgeshire ACRE
32 Main Street
Littleport
Cambridgeshire
CB6 1PJ

Tel: 01353 860850
Email: enquiries@cambsacre.org.uk
Web: www.cambsacre.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1074032
Company limited by guarantee No: 3690881

