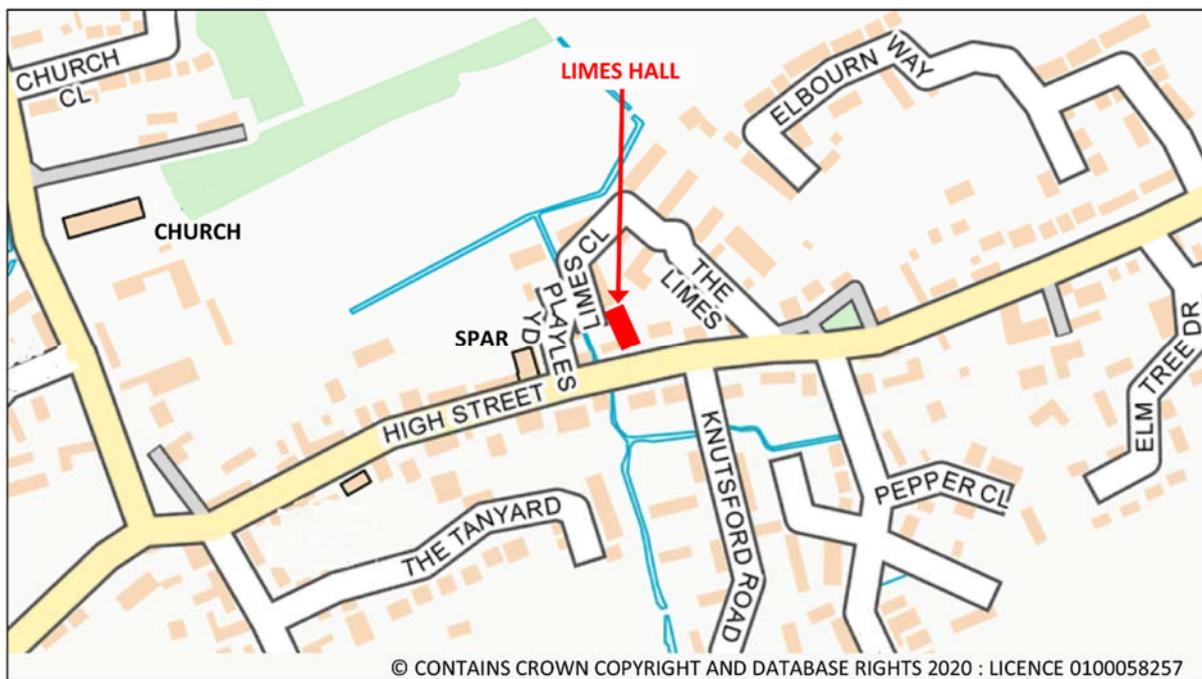


**REVISION 1 - 21 July 2020**

# **THE LIMES BUSINESS CASE**





The Location of The Limes

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## **1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This Business Case sets out to achieve the following aims and objectives:

To secure The Limes from South Cambridgeshire District Council as a village amenity

To establish, develop and manage The Limes as a village hall to retain the activities currently provided

To provide additional opportunities for recreation and leisure-time occupations, for the benefit of Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth and neighbouring Cambridgeshire villages.

To provide for the advancement of education, health and well-being, community development and environmental protection

To support local environmental conservation and sustainable development

To support capacity building in the local community

To provide a base for the Parish Council clerks to enable the Council to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

Further detail of financial objectives is provided in section 3.9.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Limes was established as a school in 1877 for children from Bassingbourn, Kneesworth and the surrounding villages. It continued to educate the local children until 1990 when the last of the pupils were transferred to the Primary School in Brook Rd. On the closure of the school The Limes became a facility linked to the sheltered housing behind the building and also became available for limited community use. The building contains many memories for a substantial number of local people and is part of Bassingbourn's heritage.

Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth is a Minor Rural Centre with an expanding population with a substantial number of new houses being built. The return of military personnel to Bassingbourn Barracks is also putting pressure on village facilities. For its size Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth is unusual in not having a dedicated village hall and is substantially disadvantaged by this. There is no focus, no central point for people to gather and inadequate accommodation for village activity. In the past the Village College provided this focus and facilities for the community but as times changed and school structures altered, this has been lost.

### **2.1. COMMUNITY USAGE OF THE LIMES**

The Limes has to a very limited extent filled the gap in community facilities. Existing users include:

- Sheltered housing residents
- Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth Parish Council
- Bassingbourn Community Library (the Book Café)
- Environment Group
- Village Band
- CAMTAD Hearing session
- National Childbirth Trust
- Over 60s
- Lego group
- Disaster Emergency Response Centre
- Polling Station

The Bassingbourn Community Library is a voluntary library which holds approximately 7,000 books and gives access to thousands more from the Cambridge and Suffolk Library systems. During 2017/2018 there were 3,900 visits to borrow books with an estimated 1,500 others who accompanied those who were borrowing the books. Residents can also find information from various leaflets and ask the volunteers for help. As well as having access to literature and information people can meet up with their friends and enjoy a drink and a snack together, thus contributing to health and wellbeing.

The Bassingbourn Community Library has developed important links with Bassingbourn Community Primary School so that children visit for various activities and from an early age learn to use a library, particularly important for a rural population. Two classes from the Primary School visit once a term for stories which totals 6 sessions per year. The Big Summer Reading Challenge, a national programme for over 5 year olds and the Sure Start Bear Club for children under 5 are annual events.

The Limes provides a venue for the Parish Council and other organisations to have their meetings and a number of voluntary groups, including the over 60s and CAMTAD (a hearing loss group) hold their activities there. It is where the Village band rehearses and a small number of groups such as NCT (National Childbirth Trust) use it for their courses.

### **3. THE BUSINESS CASE**

#### **3.1. COMMUNITY NEED**

There is great potential for increasing the range and variety of uses for The Limes. Not only could the conventional uses of a village hall be catered for, including providing a venue for family gatherings, public meetings, talks, training courses and social events but a range of other projects have already been suggested.

It is anticipated that further use of the building could include:-

- First aid training sessions
- District and County Councillor surgeries
- MP surgeries
- Neighbourhood Police surgeries
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Film club
- Produce Market
- Art displays
- Children's parties
- Men's shed
- Craft groups
- Private hire (dependent on the type of event)

There is a thriving allotment community and others who grow fruit and vegetables so a produce market could be developed. Local artists are keen to display their works and other cultural activities such as a film club could be organised, as could craft groups. Opportunities have also been identified to encourage creation of a Toy Library, fitness classes and dance/ballet classes. Activities related to the environment, community support and recycling have been suggested as have projects to tackle social isolation.

When the community became aware of the possibility of the transfer from the District Council a local member of the public wrote to the Parish Council saying the following: "I am trusting that the Parish Council secures the Old School in Bassingbourn. I can evidence huge village demand for it as a community space for a range of activities. I started a Facebook group today, in just 12 hours 75 villagers have committed to future hires of that building if it were made available."

There is longstanding support from the community to have its own village hall, which was demonstrated both in the 2008 Parish Plan and in the 2018 Neighbourhood Plan survey. In response to the question "Tell us how you would like to see the village evolve" the answer was overwhelmingly "a Village Hall".

#### **3.2. NEED FOR LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The importance of village halls was recognised in a circular from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in which Lord Gardiner, Defra Rural Affairs Minister is quoted as saying "Village halls are an essential part of rural life and that there can be no doubt that village halls are more important and relevant than ever."

Other villages locally have recognised this need and made sure that they have provided adequate facilities. There is a danger, however, in viewing the acquisition of The Limes simply in terms of providing a building for a village hall, although that is much needed.

It is incumbent upon the Parish Council to look to the future and assess what the possible needs of the community are likely to be in a rapidly changing world. With the continuing reduction in public funding local communities will have to become increasingly self-sufficient and having a certain level of basic infrastructure is essential for this to be realised.

The need has become even more apparent over the past few years as central government and County and District Councils have ceased to provide many non-statutory services and have also devolved responsibilities down to Parish Councils. The Covid-19 pandemic has provided an example of how mutual support has needed to be delivered locally. For this to be possible it is vital that the local infrastructure is built up to support such activities and having a suitable building from which to do this becomes essential.

As the SLCC report on the Review of the Operation of the Council 2018 states "The devolution of services agenda is by far the biggest issue facing PCs of all sizes over the coming years" (para 13.4). They (PCs) either embrace this as an opportunity accepting that it is likely to cost more in terms of precept requirements, staffing resources and so on and bring local services in to be managed and maintained at a truly local level, or they do not embrace and allow the principle authorities to either close facilities or run them down to an unacceptable levels." (para13.5)

### **3.3. BASE FOR THE PARISH OFFICE**

The Parish Council has recently modernised its organisational structure and appointed a Clerk and a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) on a job share basis, both of whom currently work from home. Ideally, they should have a centrally located office space in which to work and so become more accessible to the community.

The SLCC report stated that "setting up a purpose made office within Bassingbourn itself would be a step forwards giving the PC a clear presence within the location it serves also suggesting a growing , more influential and professional body is at work"(paras 18.2 and 18.3). Basing the Clerks in The Limes would contribute to the smoother running of the Council by allowing the public and others such as the PCSO and representatives of voluntary and statutory authorities to liaise more easily with the Parish Council.

### **3.4. OTHER BUILDINGS WITH SOME COMMUNITY USE**

To assess whether The Limes should be acquired and developed as a village hall/community centre/vital part of the community infrastructure an exercise was undertaken to assess any other options. Various other buildings in the village have some, often limited, community use but none can provide equivalent facilities to those at The Limes (see Appendix 1).

Specifically, none of these other buildings can provide the space required for current activities including the community library or the village band which requires storage for musical instruments and a space with the right acoustic, let alone allow for the community infrastructure development including a base for the Clerk/RFO.

The location of The Limes (as shown on page 2 and in Appendix 1) is central for users, provides disabled access and has the potential to accommodate a wide range of social and other activities. It also remains accessible to residents of the adjacent sheltered housing,

many of whom are elderly and/or disabled and would find even the short distance to other facilities a deterrent to partaking in social activities.

Other facilities in the village are either too small, provide limited access, can be expensive and are not available much of the time and could not accommodate a base for the clerks. There is neither the land available in a central location nor the resources to undertake to build a new Village Hall.

Not only is The Limes the most suitable option for a village hall but it has a long historical association for the village and is part of the local heritage. This is demonstrated by the following quote in support of obtaining The Limes for the village: "There is a personal element for me having gone to school there and because it was built by my Great Great Grandfather. That aside it was built to benefit the village, to support youth development and community cohesion, a duty which it has steadfastly fulfilled since 1877 and must continue so to do".

### **3.5. ALTERNATIVES**

The identified alternatives are:

#### 1. Do nothing

The Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire District Council has advised that in the event that the Parish Council did not take on The Limes, the building would be sold and would no longer be available for community use. Existing users would be displaced and it is unlikely that other buildings in the village would be suitable for the majority of them (see the following section). There would be a very significant loss of community activities in the village.

#### 2. Proceed with the transfer of The Limes to the Parish Council as described in this Business Case

3. Build a new community hub on the Recreation Ground replacing the existing pavilion. The space required to match the space available at The Limes is not available without significant detriment to the cricket pitch. Demand by users for the hub facilities is likely to conflict with the demands of the sports clubs for pavilion facilities. Construction costs of a building to match the size of The Limes are likely to greatly exceed the costs of taking over The Limes and also exceed the funds available.

4. Build a new community hub elsewhere in the village. No suitable land has been identified close to the centre of the village. The costs of purchasing the land and constructing a building to match the size of The Limes are likely to greatly exceed the costs of taking over The Limes and also exceed the funds available.

### **3.6. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT**

Arrangements for organization and management will need to be carefully structured in order to minimize exposure to business rates and VAT.

There are a number of models for running community organisations which will need to be examined once the building has been transferred. One approach is to establish a charitable body such as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This involves setting up a Management Committee consisting of Trustees drawn from the user groups which then have a sense of "ownership" towards the building. The Council has members

experienced in setting up and running these organisations. Because of their charitable status CIOs can make grant applications and so attract resources.

The setting up of The Limes as a village hall and community centre will be facilitated by the fact that the Clerk and the RFO will have their office based there. Both are experienced in the management and running of community buildings and of establishing booking systems. It will also allow for the Parish Records to be co-located with the clerk and the RFO in a more appropriate and safer setting than hitherto has been the case. The increased accessibility of the clerk and RFO to the public and Councillors will make for a more efficient and responsive council.

A set of policies will need to be developed to cover a wide range of issues relating to the access, use, day to day maintenance and hiring out of the building. A hiring agreement will be used. This will need to include a stipulation relating to a prohibition of parking in Limes Close when using the building. Initially, the Clerks could provide "after use" checks and building inspections. Once the management committee is in place it is anticipated that role will be part of its remit.

### **3.7. MARKETING**

A range of approaches will be used to market The Limes. These will include regular monthly advertising in the Village Voice and in the Royston Listings, both of which are delivered to every household. General information and that relating to specific events will be posted on the five village notice boards. A page on the village website will hold details and Facebook groups will provide up to date information and encourage people to use the facilities for a range of different activities.

### **3.8. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES**

The first impact will be to enable the current activities, particularly the library, located at The Limes to be continued and not lost to the community which would be the case without the retention of the building. The long term impact will be to enable a whole range of social, educational and economic activities to be developed to contribute to the health and well-being of the local population.

Consideration can be given to re-naming the building, perhaps through a competition, to emphasize the wider community use of the building and to avoid confusion with the nearby road with the same name.

### **3.9. FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES**

The Limes is regarded by many in the community as a vital asset.

The majority of Parish Council services are provided for community benefit funded entirely by the precept (for example, the recreation ground) or receive only a minor contribution from users (for example, the cemetery). Other Parish Council activities are operated on a break-even basis (for example, the allotments).

As a result of the constraints imposed by an agreement with sheltered housing residents, The Limes is currently not marketed and is hired at far less than market rates. Consequently income does not cover costs. Transfer to the Parish Council will remove these constraints.

The primary objective is to secure the building as a village amenity and initially this will require some funding from the precept, notably in carrying out building maintenance and in smoothing the transition of hiring charges to market rates. Over the medium term (5-7 years) the objective will be to move The Limes to a break-even basis or modest surplus through increased marketing and making the hiring charges comparative with other facilities.

### **3.10. FINANCE**

An assessment of revenue costs was produced for the draft business plan (Appendix 2). This was kept deliberately conservative in relation to income as the projections for increased usage have been set at a modest level. The Parish Council believes that with a more local point of contact for bookings, with fewer restrictions on the range of activities which can be undertaken then use of the facility will increase substantially.

It is anticipated that some internal remodelling will be necessary to relocate the Bassingbourn Community Library within the building in order to make the main hall amenable to variety of uses.

### **3.11. RISKS**

Risks have been identified and a Risk Management schedule prepared (Appendix 3).

#### **4. PROJECT PROGRESS**

This section describes work carried out on the project leading up to the preparation of this business case.

Discussions and negotiation with South Cambridgeshire District Council are detailed in Appendix 4.1.

Information from the Parish Council meeting of 21st January 2020 is provided in Appendix 4.2.

A survey of the building on behalf of the Parish Council has been undertaken and a brief statement regarding the survey is provided in Appendix 4.3.

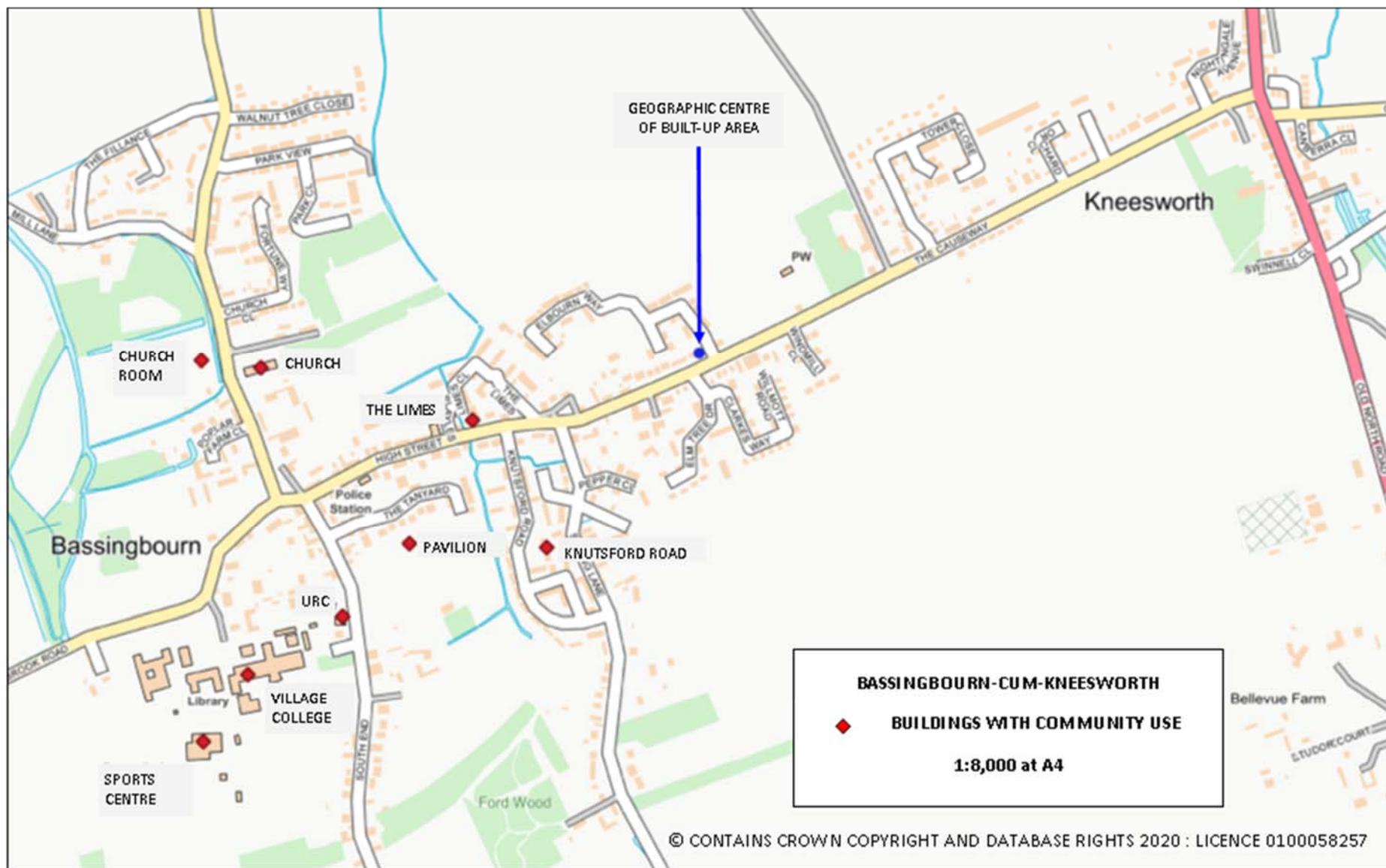
A draft lease on the building from South Cambridgeshire District Council is referenced in Appendix 4.4.

This document will be updated as appropriate as the project progresses to enable the Parish Council to comply with its Financial Regulations.

### Appendix 1: Comparison of The Limes with other buildings in the parish that have some community use

Building	Benefits	Constraints	Suitability for library	Suitability for village band	Suitability for Parish Council	Distance from The Limes	Distance from geographic centre*
The Limes	See main text	See main text	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	346 metres
Parish Church	Large space	Layout with pews Not for Parish Council meetings (LGA 1894)	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	Not for PC meetings (LGA 1894) No office space	466 metres	812 metres
Church Room	Good availability Moderate cost	Small size	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	Too small for main PC meeting. No office space.	510 metres	856 metres
Knutsford Road facility		Casual layout with soft furnishings unsuitable for many activities	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	Unsuitable layout No office space	354 metres	510 metres
Pavilion	In Parish Council ownership	Building in need of rebuild/refurbish Only access is across grass and unlit Difficult for disabled	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	No office space	486 metres via South End	832 metres via South End
Sports Centre	Large space	Layout for sports only Only available for block bookings	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	Availability uncertain No office space	712 metres	1058 metres
United Reform Church	Moderate cost	Constricted layout in room usually offered	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	No office space	467 metres	813 metres
Bassingbourn Village College	Large main hall	Often not available (exams, holidays) More expensive than other options	No space for library	No storage space for instruments	No office space	561 metres	907 metres

\* Geographic centre of built up area (30mph speed limit)



## APPENDIX 2: The Limes Financial Projections

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	notes
	SCDC Budget	6 months					
<b>INCOME:</b>							
Limes tenants	8,686	520	1,040	1,456	1,456	2,080	1
Existing users	2,050	575	1,100	1,420	1,900	2,370	2
New Hirers			4,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	3
	10,736	1095	6,140	8,876	9,356	10,450	
<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>							
<b>SET UP</b>							
SCDC contribution		9,000					
Survey		690					
Legal fees		2,000					
Other legacy repairs		1,000	2,500				4
<b>OPERATING</b>							
Insurance	150	155	160	165	170	175	
Repairs	3,060		1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5
Improvements		2,000					6
Caretaker/cleaning	2,380	1,250	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	7
Utilities	3,880	2,000	4,000	4,200	4,410	4,500	8
Broadband		200	400	400	400	400	9
Performing rights		100	200	200	200	200	
Other costs	1,266	500					
Marketing		500					10
Sinking fund			1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	11
	10,736	19,395	11,760	9,465	9,680	9,775	
PROFIT/(LOSS)	( - )	(18,300)	( 5,620)	( 589)	( 324)	675	
<b>OFFSET BY SAVINGS</b>							
Book café grant		900	900	900	900	900	
PC room hire		180	360	360	360	360	
Work from home allowance		240	480	500	520	540	
NET IMPACT	( - )	(16,980)	(3,880)	1,171	1,456	2,475	
		Loss	Loss	profit	profit	profit	

## NOTES

1. This is based on ½ day of usage per week at £5 per hour increasing to £7 per hour in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 and to £10 per hour in 2024/2025
2. Other existing hirers are taken from SCDC current figures and represent modest casual letting
3. New hirers are budgeted to commence in 2021/2022 at a rate of £10 per hour. The first year assumes several bookings totalling one day each week of 8 hours and several bookings totalling 1½ days each week thereafter
4. Other legacy repairs represents residual repairs identified in the survey report which are unlikely to be covered by the joint allocation of £18,000. The survey report did not unearth any major items and the most significant single item is probably the guttering repair( not replacement) for which an allocation of £2,500 is made in 2021/2022
5. Repairs represents minor items of replacement and maintenance
6. Improvements represent cost allocation for alterations to enable the Bassingbourn Community Library to be relocated out of the main hall to elsewhere in the building
7. The hall will need a caretaker/cleaner and this estimate is taken from the Litlington hall accounts and is based on a charge of £40 per week plus £500 per year for materials and expenses
8. Utilities spend is based on the existing SCDC figure plus a comparison with the Litlington and Whaddon village hall accounts. If a renewable system is installed (e.g. a heat pump or solar panels) with the benefit of a grant then there is scope for a significant reduction in these figures.
9. It is assumed that a broadband connection will be required for administration and customer purposes
10. An allocation of £500 has been made for initial marketing and publicity purposes.
11. It is felt desirable to create a sinking fund for cyclical maintenance purposes such as the painting of the exterior woodwork and this figure is intended to create a fund of £10,000 every 10 years.

## The Limes - Break even analysis

The purpose of this table is to indicate the level of utilisation of the building which is required in order to cover the costs of running the building based upon three alternative hire rates

This break even analysis is based on the four full years from 2021/2022 to 2024/2025. The half year 2020/2021 has not been included as it is unrepresentative with exceptional non-recurring costs.

	Hire Rate		
	£5 per hour	£10 per hour	£15 per hour
1 Average annual cost less offset by savings for the 4 years to 2024/2025	8,400	8,400	8,400
2 Chargeable hours of lettings needed annually to fully absorb costs (annual costs divided by hire rate)	1,680	840	560
3 Chargeable hours of lettings needed per week to fully absorb costs (row 2 ÷ 50)	33.6	16.8	11.2
4 Hours available per week ( assume 10AM to 8PM 7 days a week)	70	70	70
5 Percentage chargeable occupancy needed to break even (row 3 as % of row 4)	48%	24%	16%

## NOTES

1. The above assumes that the costs are primarily fixed. In practice some of the costs will have a degree of variability ( such as heating) and if this was reflected in the figures it would reduce the break-even level and produce a more favourable result
2. The Bassingbourn Community Library will be relocated elsewhere in the building and therefore should not impinge upon the time or the area available for letting.
3. It will be seen that even at an artificially low hire rate of £5 per hour it is possible to break even with less than 50% utilisation of the building. At the more realistic and competitive level of £10 per hour this falls to 24% or 1.6 days per week. This is considered to be achievable bearing in mind that there are already committed users (over 60s, Limes residents etc) but will need to be delivered.

### APPENDIX 3: THE LIMES RISK ANALYSIS

	RISK	CONSEQUENCE	UNMITIGATED RISK	MITIGATION
1	The building proves to be in far worse condition than expected	Substantial remedial expenditure	Very low	a) a survey has been undertaken to confirm the condition and any major concerns should be taken up with the DC before finalisation of the lease b) details (specifications and invoices) of the work carried out by the DC when they acquired the building to be obtained to secure assurance that any major defects were addressed at that time. Also details of inspections and maintenance carried out in the intervening years.
2	The building is allowed to deteriorate during the course of the lease	Substantial repair expenditure Costs exceed budget	Very low as long as any repairs are carried out promptly	An inspection should be carried out every year in early autumn on the roof, gutters etc to ensure no water penetration and a detailed inspection carried out every 4 years
3	Planning issues arise which mean that the use is restricted and the original intention cannot be carried out	Loss of income to defray expenditure	Low	A pre app enquiry should be made with the DC to obtain clearance for the range of activities envisaged
4	Parking proves to be a major issue	Loss of goodwill from residents Potential restriction on activities	Very low	Parking should not be allowed in the sheltered scheme (The Limes and Limes Close). This has not been a problem in the past as there is reasonable provision in Knutsford Rd, Spring Lane and the High St but an "audit" should be carried out of nearby parking provision and provision for any larger events considered (e.g. an arrangement with The Hoops). As the building is so centrally placed many people are likely to walk. Also the size of the events/meetings is unlikely to be much different from now though likely to be more numerous

5	Riotous & unruly behaviour by users	Loss of goodwill from residents Potential restriction on activities	Very low as long as managed	Types of groups using The Limes need to be managed and ground rules established. Teenage parties need to be handled carefully and discouraged where there is a risk
6	Damage to the building by user groups	Unexpected costs for repair	Low risk but manageable	Make clear that the user group is responsible for any damage and a deposit obtained in certain cases
7	The building is poorly managed	Loss of income and loss of goodwill Costs may exceed budget	Very low	A management committee needs to be established with committed and experienced members with clear lines of reporting to PC
8	Poor administration	Financial Costs may exceed budget	Very low as long as a good system set up	An electronic booking system needs to be set up and a simple but clear bookkeeping system established (probably just a manual cash book) with regular bank reconciliations and hire income reconciliations. It is envisaged that the booking system will initially be with the Clerks. Annual audit needs to be considered
9	Costs prove to be significantly greater than anticipated	Financial Costs may exceed budget	low but not possible to predict all future costs; unlikely to be a major factor	a) Costs have been obtained from DC when they were running The Limes for the last three years b) an examination has been done of the costs incurred by village halls in adjacent villages c) The figures are being critically scrutinised to tease out any costs which do not feature under a) or b) but which may be unique to the PC administration d) grants / fund-raising may be considered
10	The legislative environment changes making it more difficult to run village halls	Reduced scope of operation with adverse impact on costs	Low	All major parties have given support to local groups running facilities such as The Limes and this is unlikely to change
11	Expectations of hire income prove to be too optimistic	Financial Costs may exceed budget	Low as income should be readily achievable	The business plan has been drafted conservatively to indicate a lower than likely outcome. A Facebook page indicates a level of support far in excess of draft income in business plan Also comparison with Litlington and Whaddon accounts ( both much smaller than Bassingbourn) indicate gross income comfortably in excess of Bassingbourn business plan estimates

	RISK	CONSEQUENCE	UNMITIGATED RISK	MITIGATION
12	Competition with existing rooms in the village	Hire rates are squeezed and become uneconomic	Some competition but unlikely to invalidate economic case – risk therefore low	Existing rooms are for different purposes and not directly competitive a) the church room and the nonconformist chapel are both much smaller and not as well located as the old school b) the village college is available but the hire rate is considerably more than the proposed rate for The Limes c) The Knutsford Road building is a community room for the sheltered scheme and therefore suffers from the same restrictions and limitations as The Limes and is not directly competitive. The DC have said verbally that they do not intend to market the building as a hire venue and it would be helpful to have this confirmed in writing. d) There are suggestions that the Parish Church may one day be available as a venue but this is a very large space and is much more likely to be available as a reception area for events connected with the church such as funeral and wedding receptions for which The Limes is unlikely to be suitable anyway, so it is not directly competitive/ e) There is talk that the pavilion could be used as a sort of village hall but the rebuilding has not yet happened and the current move is for the building to be used primarily by the sports clubs so any other use is only incidental to that function and there is likely to be a conflict with other proposed uses as the peak demand from the sports clubs and other users is likely to be weekends so this is not thought to be a realistic threat.

	RISK	CONSEQUENCE	UNMITIGATED RISK	MITIGATION
13	Major external "act of god" event causes considerable damage to the building at some stage during the life of the lease especially arising from climate change	Financial	Low to medium	The risks are insurable and care needs to be given to the terms of the insurance to ensure that all risks are covered There is a small stream adjacent to the headmaster's house but it has not created a flooding problem in the past. The building is one of the tallest in the village and a lightning conductor may be beneficial to mitigate against storms After mitigation, the major residual uninsurable risk is low
14	The PC breaks the terms of the lease and it is forfeited	Loss of the use of the building as a village hall	Remote	Close scrutiny of the draft lease should minimise this likelihood if safeguarding clauses are there. Within the control of the PC.
15	District Council foreclose on the lease to raise cash	Loss of the use of the building as a village hall	Low	Review lease terms Consider nomination as Asset of Community Value
16	Loss of people from village hall organization	Inability to operate the building as a village hall	Medium	Ensure strongly constituted village hall committee with members from the village hall and the community

## **APPENDIX 4.1: DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATION**

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) approached the Parish Council in March 2018 with a view to transferring The Limes to the Parish Council. Various discussions took place during the early part of 2019 with different options being put forward by SCDC including leasing or the outright purchase of the building.

A working group consisting of Elaine Douglas, Mike Hallett, Mike Ridsdale Hilary Hodge and Nigel Cathcart was setup on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019. It was then agreed that Councillors Hallett and Hodge should meet with Kate Swan from SCDC to discuss these proposals in greater detail, which took place on the 31<sup>st</sup> October with our SCDC Councillor Cathcart in attendance.

Kate Swann said that there had been a proposal that perhaps the Parish Council would like to buy the freehold for £400K. On behalf of the Parish Council it was made clear that there was a strong preference for a long lease at a peppercorn rent and various arguments were put forward as to why this should be accepted. Kate Swan agreed to take this back and present our arguments to SCDC to be discussed in the closed part of the December meeting of SCDC cabinet. However, the item was not discussed at that meeting.

The Parish Council was then contacted at the beginning of January with an offer to meet Liz Watts, the new Chief Executive at SCDC on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Councillors Hallett, Hodge and Douglass together with the Clerks and District Councillor Cathcart attended the meeting.

Liz Watts stated that if SCDC were to offer the Parish Council The Limes on a long lease at a peppercorn rent then there needed to be some reassurance that there was a clear vision, capability to deliver and that SCDC would need to have no future involvement. SCDC would also expect the Parish Council to contribute 50% of the costs of the transfer which, including the repainting of the outside, would amount to no more than £18K between the two authorities.

At the end of the meeting the Chief Executive said that she now felt confident, having met with us, that she was able to recommend to SCDC that in principle this transfer should go ahead on the basis of these discussions. She subsequently confirmed this in writing.

The Councillors confirmed to the Chief Executive that the case would be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> January and a resolution would be tabled. This would give her sufficient time to prepare the agenda item to take to the March Cabinet meeting. It was also made very clear that should the Parish Council not agree in principle to take on the building then it would be sold and the village would lose a critical community amenity.

## **APPENDIX 4.2: PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 21ST JANUARY 2020**

At the Parish Council meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> January a paper stating the case of need and an assessment of the initial revenue costs, which amounted to about £10K was presented. This was based on the financial information provided by SCDC. Initially, apart from accommodating the clerks within the building, the activities currently catered for were projected to continue with no immediate major changes envisaged other than to encourage greater use of the building.

SCDC had a Valuation Report done by Carter Jonas which commented that “the buildings appeared to be in a generally reasonable state of repair commensurate with their age and use”. This suggested that taking on the building did not present an obvious risk, although until a structural survey was obtained it wasn’t possible to make meaningful projections as to likely future capital requirements.

It had not been possible to work up a full business case in the time but with the information available the Parish Council took the decision to accept the proposal from SCDC to take on The Limes on a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent subject to a satisfactory lease being agreed. The resolution “that subject to an acceptable lease the Parish Council agreed to take on the lease for a 99 year period at a peppercorn rent” was passed with one abstention. Councillor Cathcart emphasised that had the Parish Council not made that decision the building would definitely have been put on the market and sold for redevelopment.

The alternative was to lose the building and for SCDC to go ahead with its sale. Not only would this have been a massive lost opportunity but it would have deprived the local population of facilities which it currently enjoyed. The decision allowed the Parish Council to show that at last “it had ambition and vision for the future” which it had been accused of lacking in the SLCC report (para12.4)

At the March 2020 Cabinet meeting, a unanimous vote to transfer the building to the Parish Council was passed, with an acknowledgement that it represented a significant benefit to the local community.

### **APPENDIX 4.3: BUILDING SURVEY**

A building survey was commissioned from Brown and Lee, Chartered Surveyors on the 28th February 2020 and the building was inspected on the 9th March, but due to the Covid19 epidemic the report was not delivered until June. As would be expected of such an old building a number of defects and shortcomings were identified, but it was found to be structurally sound. Considerable work had been carried out by SCDC in the early 1990s including to the roof.

Members of The Limes Working Group used the list compiled by the surveyors to inspect the building on 29th June to prioritise the work needed, to provide a basis for discussion with SCDC as to what could be achieved before the transfer and what needed to be built into a longer term plan.

#### **APPENDIX 4.4: LEASE**

The appointment of Solicitors Mills Reeve was agreed at the Parish Council meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020. A draft lease from South Cambridgeshire District Council is being provided to Mills & Reeve.