



Chichester City Council

## COMMUNITY SPACE IN THE SOUTH: REQUIREMENTS AND LOCATION REPORT

### 1. Summary

While developing its plan for the period 2024-29, Chichester City Council surveyed residents asking them to prioritise 44 project proposals.

One of the high scoring project proposals was the delivery of a community space in the South Ward. The need has been raised before but no project has proceeded.

Building on the Council Plan survey, this report documents further work to evaluate the case for a community space in the Chichester south ward; the facilities it should offer; and the best location.

The project is being overseen by a working group comprising all the elected representatives for the south ward on the City, District and County Councils and they are agreed on the conclusions of this report:

1. There is a need for additional community space in the south ward;
2. To meet the needs of residents two spaces are needed- one in the east of the ward in the Florence Park area and one in the Kingsham/Whyke area to the west
3. No viable site in the Kingsham/Whyke area is available in the near term (next three years) but there are two promising sites which the City Council and other elected representatives will press to include a community centre when development proposals are formulated.
4. In the Florence Park area further work will be undertaken on a community centre on the site currently occupied by the Chichester and Selsey Sea Cadets which will meet the needs of the community and, possibly one or more local charities as well as the Sea Scouts.

### 2. Current state

Chichester South has insufficient access to community venues for group activities and functions. The list below represents the resources currently available and details the challenges each venue presents.

#### Current offer in South Ward

**St George's Centenary Centre** – Medium community space available for hire. Space is limited in use due to “L” shaped structure. Would lend itself to support groups and parent groups.

**Scout hut** – Small Scout hall in central position within the South Ward. Hall was refurbished in 2010 and has a small domestic kitchen and changing facilities. The venue can be hired by community groups and public. Space would only be sufficient for small group activities.

**Regnum District Guide Hall** – This small hall is limited in size. Hire of the hall is not widely advertised.

**Sea Cadet Hall** – This facility needs upgrading because of its age and is not suitable in its present form. However, plans are in place to develop a new hall on this land and this project will deliver a small space which could be available for community use.

**Charles Avenue Community Hub** – This is a small space which is available for community use. However, it is too small to be viable for the needs of this project.

**One O Four** – This is a modern, commercial venue space, popular used by both the commercial and voluntary sector. It is mainly used for meetings and performance/ presentation style events and

has only limited catering facilities. Its location on the Northern boundary of the South Ward and located within a commercial area limits its accessibility for residents of the ward.

### Spaces in proximity to the South Ward

**Christian Science Society Hall** – Private Hall which does not promote hire of the venue as a community space. Recently, planning proposals were submitted to develop retirement accommodation on this site. However, these were unsuccessful predominantly due to access, proximity to the Roman Amphitheatre and lack of resident support.

**New Park Centre** – A thriving community centre that maintains a full diary of activities. Plans are being worked up to enlarge centre.

### Conclusion on Current Provision

As outlined above, residents of Chichester's South Ward do not have easy access to community spaces. The few spaces that are available are highly sought after and closer to the City Centre rather than the residential areas in the south.

This supports the conclusion from the Council Plan survey that there is a need for additional community space in the South Ward.

## 3. Work Programme

To take matters forward, the City Council established a working group comprising City, District and County Council elected representatives for South Ward and officers.

The Group's work programme has included:

1. Desk and "on the ground" reviews of potential and existing community spaces
2. Meetings with landowners and stakeholders
3. A community engagement event
4. A survey on residents' views on locations and facilities

### Residents Survey

The resident's survey was live between 7<sup>th</sup> February and the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025, during this time we received 229 responses. Using the household figures from the 2011 census this represents an 8% response rate for Chichester South. Full results of survey can be found on the Council's website.

Key findings from this survey are:

- 74% of responses would be happy to walk for up to 20 minutes to get to a community centre.
- The percentages of the most likely use of a community space is as follows:

Community Café	70%
Wellbeing activities	61%
Fitness Activities	57%
Sports facilities	51%
Club Activities	49%
Arts facilities	49%
Venue hire	47%
Community Meetings	45%
Library/Study space	40%
Family Activities	34%

### Community Forum

Chichester City Council's Community Forum was engaged to discuss with community groups the needs and requirements of a community space in the South.

Key findings from this event on the requirements of a community space are:

- Meeting rooms
- Commercial grade kitchen
- Fully Accessible

- Storage for community groups
- Indoor multi-sports space
- Adaptable spaces to allow multiple uses

The results of the community forum and survey will drive the design of the community space in the next phase of the project.

#### 4. Site Selection

##### Site Identification

A desk-based survey identified the following sites that could potentially be used for delivery of a new community space.

- Christian Science Society
- Florence allotment
- High school site
- Kingsham primary school
- Police recreation ground
- Regnum district guide hall
- Site north of Florence Park
- Wickham Arms
- Whyke oval

These sites offer an opportunity to provide a variety of different community spaces, and each one has a range of different Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). As such a SWOT analysis of each site has been carried out (Appendix 1). Using this analysis the sites have been assessed through a Red, Amber and Green (RAG) review detailed in the table below.

##### RAG Table

Christian Science Society		This site would lend itself to development but the New Park and One O Four are too close for a community space on this site to make a significant addition to facilities in the City, particularly when compared to other site options
Florence Allotment		This site would be too close to the planned sea-cadet space
High School Site		The High School site ground is identified as a strategic site by CDC and therefore will be delivered as a mixed-use development in the future. CCC will actively promote the inclusion of a community centre as part of development proposals.
Kingsham Primary School		A small site currently in multiple ownership meaning that site assembly would be complex and costly. Access is poor and there would not be space for parking on the site adding to pressure on Whyke Oval
Police Recreation Ground		The police recreation ground is identified as a strategic site by CDC and therefore will be delivered as a mixed-use development in the future. CCC will actively promote the inclusion of a community centre as part of development proposals.
Regnum District Guide Hall		Does not lend itself to development due to its size and current use.
Site north of Florence Park		There may be opportunities to work in partnership with the Sea-Cadets.
Whyke Oval		This is not supported by the residents around the Whyke Oval.

## Observations on deliverable sites

### High School Site

The High School Site is due to be developed as part of CDC's Regeneration plan and has been identified as being viable for a housing-led scheme. A valuation based on an alternative use for housing would make this site prohibitively expensive for a community space other than as part of a wider development. Chichester City Council could lobby for a community centre to be delivered on this site as part of a wider development with the developer delivering the space as part of their S106 commitment.

This site is around 1.5 miles from Charles Avenue, i.e. a walk or around 30 minutes.

### Police Recreation Ground

As above, the Police recreation ground is available as part of wider city plans and has been identified as being viable for a housing-led scheme. Again, this would make this site prohibitively expensive to deliver a community space without working within a wider development. Chichester City Council could lobby for a community centre to be delivered on this site as part of a wider development with the developer delivering the space as part of their S106 commitment.

This site too is on the western edge of the ward around 30 minutes' walk from Charles Avenue.

### Sea Cadet Site

Following extensive discussions with the Sea Cadets and CDC, it has been identified that the site to the North of Florence Park could be developed as part of a wider scheme with the Sea Cadets. The opportunity to combine land would provide a large site that could be used to develop a well-conceived community centre.

### Kingsham Primary School Site or Site Near Kingsham Primary

This site would augment a sliver of neglected land to the rear of Hay Road residences owned by Hyde Housing Group with a small section of the Kingsham Primary School site owned by West Sussex County Council and leased to the University of Sussex Academy Trust.

Kingsham Primary School is supportive but would need to retain their orchard.

Assembling a site in multiple ownership would be complex. And it would be expensive as both landowners would be constrained to sell at or near market value.

Moreover, there would be limited if any parking on site placing further pressure on Whyke Oval.

## 5. Conclusions

The research and community engagement carried out for this study has confirmed the need for additional community space to service the South Ward of Chichester. Community groups and residents agree that a versatile space for the community is essential for this area.

The survey showed that a majority of residents would be prepared to walk for up to 20 minutes to reach a community space. However, the two viable options in the west of the ward are around 30 minutes' walk from Charles Avenue. We have therefore concluded that two community spaces are desirable for the South Ward: one to support the Northeast quadrant (Florence Park and Charles Avenue) and the other to support residents in the Southwest quadrant (Whyke and Kingsham) of the ward.

The sites in the Southwest quadrant are only viable as part of developments envisaged but not yet planned. The City Council and other elected representatives will press for the inclusion of a developer funded community centre when development proposals are brought forward.

The site that lends itself to direct action from the City Council is the site to the North of Florence Park. Work will be carried out to draw up plans for the delivery of a new community centre that will meet the needs of the Sea Cadets and the community. Detailed work will now be undertaken to develop an affordable design, which will include:

- A hall which can be used by the Sea Cadets for parades and by the community for sports and larger meetings
- Smaller multi-use rooms
- A café

We are also evaluating the possibility of a larger building which would meet the needs of a one or possibly two local charities.

## **Appendix 1 – SWOT analysis for identified sites.**

### **Christian Science Society, Whyke Lane**

#### **Strengths**

Large site that could be redeveloped as a community space.

#### **Weakness**

Planning has previously been rejected for a development of retirement accommodation. The access from Whyke Lane is restricted and development of this site has historically not been supported by residents. The site is also at the Northern edge of the South Ward making the site relatively remote for residents in much of the South.

#### **Opportunity**

Opportunity to improve current site and make it more accessible to the local community. This site could be used to enhance the amphitheatre site and create a feature of this historic feature of the City.

#### **Threat**

The site is just over the south ward boundary and sits within the Chichester Centre ward. Close proximity to the centre would mean this site would compete with the New Park and the One O Four.

### **Florence Allotments (South end of Florence Park)**

This site explored is part of the allotments that currently cannot be used due to contamination of the ground. It would not affect the established allotments.

#### **Strength**

The site is owned by CCC.

#### **Weakness**

The available site is small and would require negotiation with CDC to allow use of the old Care Line building's car park. The site is also designated as Allotments and as such would require permission from the Secretary of State to delist the allotment prior to development.

#### **Opportunity**

Good location for community space with access to Florence Park.

#### **Threat**

If the Sea Cadet site is progressed the allotment site there would be 2 community spaces within proximity.

### **High School Site**

#### **Strengths**

Large site scheduled for housing led redevelopment

#### **Weakness**

If available, the cost would be prohibitive due to the inherent land value due to the site being designated for housing. A community centre could be delivered through a S106 requirement on developers.

#### **Opportunity**

Maintained discussions with planning and landowners to see the delivery of a community space in this development.

#### **Threat**

The delivery of a community space on this site will be dependent on the developers, planners and landowner. Therefore, we cannot guarantee delivery of this site as part of our City Plan.

#### **Land between Kingsham Primary School and residences on Hay Road**

This site is a small area of land partially owned by Hyde Housing Group and WSCC (under lease to Chichester University Academy Trust). It is bounded by the rear of residential properties to the North and a small Orchard on South.

##### **Strengths**

Convenient location in the heart of the Whyke area.

##### **Weakness**

Restricted access to site and secluded location would limit use to the Whyke/Kingsham area. The site would also be limited in the ability to provide adequate parking facilities.

##### **Opportunity**

Location next to school may present opportunities to work in partnership with the school community.

##### **Threat**

To create enough space land would need to be sought from 2 landowners (UCAT and Hyde). They would have to sell at market value which would consume a significant proportion of the budget.

The additional risks posed by safeguarding primary school students would have to be factored in which could add significant costs and physical restrictions in the form of fencing and security gates.

#### **Police Recreation Ground**

##### **Strengths**

Large site scheduled for redevelopment.

##### **Weakness**

If available, the cost would be prohibitive due to the inherent land value due to the site being designated for housing. A community centre could be delivered through a S106 requirement on developers.

##### **Opportunity**

Maintained discussions with planning and landowners to see the delivery of a community space in this development.

##### **Threat**

The delivery of a community space on this site will be dependent on the developers, planners and landowner. Therefore, we cannot guarantee delivery of this site as part of our City Plan.

#### **Regnum District Guide Hall, Whyke Lane**

##### **Strengths**

Site is already used as a community space.

##### **Weakness**

The site is small, and redevelopment or renovation would not provide additional resources for the community.

##### **Opportunity**

Opportunity to improve current site and make it more accessible to the local community.

##### **Threat**

The optics of using public money to refresh a site that is limited by its physical footprint may seem

wasteful.

### **Sea Cadet Site**

#### **Strengths**

Good location with local amenities that can be used by visitors to the community space.

#### **Weakness**

The site is located to the north of the South Ward which limits access to the space from residents in the South and West of the Ward. However, the site is within a high population area with easy access from Charles Avenue, and Florence Park Areas.

#### **Opportunity**

The current site is restrictive in size and redevelopment, or renovation would only allow for a similar sized structure as the current provision. Larger development would require more land.

However, by combining the sea-cadet site with part of the wider Florence Park site (owned by CDC) a larger site could be created to deliver a community space that contains community office space, a café, sea-cadet space and further rooms available to the community.

The necessary CDC land would be obtained via a community asset transfer.

### **Wickham Arms**

The Wickham Arms was looked at as potential site for a community hub. However, the property is no longer on the market.

### **Whyke Oval**

The Whyke Oval has been looked at historically as a potential site for a community centre. However, this was opposed by the immediate local community and no further work was undertaken once it was confirmed that this opposition remained.

The site is also restricted by planning policy which would require that playing field/public open space lost, due to new development, is replaced.