

No 3: ELSWICK VILLAGE GREEN

Description of Scheme: Background

Despite a range of 20th century development and that of a more recent origin, Elswick is a longstanding Fylde village with a long history. The high street originally contained a series of farms making it quite a unique settlement within the Borough. High Street contains an attractive mix of development types and with extensive landscaped frontages presents a rural village character. The cross – roads of Roseacre Road and High Street is a natural confluence and village centre with views of the church, trees, hedgerow and the open paddock combining to create a distinctive rural character. The local store located at this point.

The community has been involved with assessing village character and how its local environment may be improved for some time. Fylde Council Regeneration and Design Team were requested in about 2005 to undertake a village appraisal and draw up some ideas for enhancement. This was undertaken. At around the same time, a Parish Plan was produced, which, included assessments through questionnaires, meetings, discussions, analysis and the drawing together of a number of ideas.

The former village design study proposed the creation of a 'focal point', with the natural location being around the cross-roads as referenced. The potential for a village green, located on the paddock adjoining the church was considered but at the time, the church's governing body wished to keep the land within its ownership. The Parish Plan also endorsed the idea. The village design plan is still relevant and the idea of the village green remaining as a long term ambition.

More recently, a fortuitous meeting with a church representative resulted in the issue of the village green being raised. This was partly as a result of an on-going problem for the church with flooding in the basement and the discussion as to how this might be remedied. With the assistance of colleagues from Lancashire County Council, a number of investigative surveys into the land drainage for the area seems to indicate the problem drainage might be the result broken pipes but the problem could not be pinpointed. However, an idea to divert the pipe around the site and in doing so creating a 'balancing pond' within the adjoining paddock may well resolve the issue. The pond could of course form a centrepiece for the site and the potential for the village green re-emerged as a topic for discussion. On the basis that the drainage scheme could be undertaken as part of the design scheme, this has resulted in officials from the URC agreeing to the opening up of the site and its use for public access. This is to be applauded.

The Regeneration Team has drawn together a village green scheme, partly because Section 106 commuted payments had been negotiated and as such it was always anticipated that the public realm contributions would help achieve enhancements as set out in the Village Design Guide. The Section 106 agreement attached to planning permission 08/0829 (Elswick Trading Estate, High Street, Elswick), secured the payment of a sum of £140,000 to be used for *"the purposes of affordable housing in the district of the Council and public realm works in Elswick in such proportions as the Council considers appropriate from time to time"*. It has previously been agreed that the £105,000 of the monies should be used for affordable housing provision, leaving £35,000 for public realm works. The scheme under consideration here is to improve the public realm of the village of Elswick and so in line with the terms of the legal agreement.

The scheme is considered to be one which should be supported as it offers a unique opportunity to provide a village green in the tradition of some of the villages and towns of Fylde which makes them unique. The idea has been well received by the local community with numerous letters of support and particular support from the Parish Council.

The scheme has yet to receive planning permission but from a design and conservation point of view it is supported.

It will be seen that the village green scheme has been fully costed in detail and it is envisaged that the scheme would start as soon as all of the relevant agreements are in place. The village green has been designed such that it could be phased for example, put in place the pond and basic ground preparation. However, as with schemes of this nature, it would be far preferable if the scheme was delivered as one phase, thus maximising its visual and use impact as well as being more cost effective from a constructional point of view. This would include all of the key infrastructure. Incidental items of seating, historical information etc. can be layered onto the scheme later quite easily.

The 'quantified' scheme as designed to include all aspects is estimated at £131,000. The scheme cost as outlined on the table below, excluding benches etc. is £120,000. Whilst contributions are available from various sources, including the parish council itself, there is a funding shortfall if the full scheme is to be realised.

A detailed breakdown of the funding strategy is detailed below –

Capital cost plan:

Cost Heading	Description (Detailed layout plan prepared)	Total £
Section 106 Contributions	Committed (08/0829)	35,000
Elswick Parish Council	Committed	10,000
Lancashire Environment Fund	Bid to be submitted shortly	30,000
Ministry Pocket Park's Initiative	Ditto	15,000
Fylde Council	Capital Reserve Contribution	25,000
Total		£115,000

Outputs (i.e. details of what the investment will specifically deliver):

Village centre green with access to the new public space
Pond to enhance nature conservation of the site
Footpaths to provide enhanced linkages and circulation
Opens out enhanced views of the listed church
Safeguards the fabric of the Church from water ingress damage – as a key listed building
Provision of events space for church and other events
Increased lengths of hedgerow and trees
Visual enhancements to the part of the village

Contribution to corporate objectives (how does the proposal achieve or help deliver priorities within the Corporate Plan?)

- Value for Money. The scheme would deliver a significant community benefit with the land in effect being gifted for public use. In so far as Fylde Council is concerned it requested contribution would equate to 21% of the budget total but would ensure a sustainable long term amenity benefitting local residents and visitors.
- A Great Place to Live. Enhancing the local village centre with access to a centrally located amenity facility.
- A Great Place to Visit. Enhancing the character and appearance of the village centre in the heart of rural Fylde complimenting other attractions of the locality.

Budget Resource Requirements - Breakdown of initial capital costs and future revenue implications				
Estimated Total Capital costs of bid (£000's): £25,000				
Annual future additional Revenue costs arising from the bid as applicable (£000's): The village green will become the subject of a long lease arrangement between the Parish Council and the United Reformed Church. It will be maintained by the Parish Council and so there will be no on-going revenue implications for Fylde Council				
Value and phasing of bid (amend dates as necessary):				
2020/21 £25,000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	Total £000
Existing resources in the Capital Programme relating to this scheme (as applicable):				
2020/21 £NIL	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	Total £000
Estimated timescales for the bid:				
Project Start Date : Financial Year 2020 – 21. Start date dependant on grant awards and legal agreements			Project Completion Date: March 2021	

Project Risks (outline any risks to delivery of the project and how these will be mitigated)		
Risk	Impact	Mitigating Action
The key risk for the Council is a financial one where the funding to be committed and the scheme not go ahead or, if sufficient match funding was not forthcoming.	The scheme would not go ahead and or the Council could invest in the scheme and the scheme would not be delivered or the land not secured for the long term.	It is recommended that the Council agrees to the match funding on the following provisos. In principle: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the funding would only be made available should all the other funding bids be successful sufficient to enable the scheme to go ahead. 2. That the appropriate consents are in place. 3. That a long term lease of at least 25 years is agreed and signed by the main parties – the Parish Council and the United Reformed Church 4. That other legal checks are made and resolved where appropriate. 5. That the funding in made available just prior to the contract of the work being commenced or 'staged' at an appropriate time commensurate with procurement procedures of The Council.