

Statement by Mr M Nash – App. No. 20 00685 FUL

Dear members of the planning committee.

I wish to express my enthusiastic support for the proposals to create a permanent village shop and 'Hub' in an modest extension to Wethersfield Village Hall.

These proposals have been through many iterations, in order to satisfy both safety and design criteria, and these criteria are now satisfied. The proposals will enhance the appearance of the Village Hall, which has been criticized by Place Services as being in need of a facelift, and the small shop, plus other community assets that this modest extension will bring, will reach all members of the local community.

I am fully aware that there has been some local objection to the proposals on the grounds of safety, and confusion about the status of the pop-up shop that was set up on the basement club at the start of the lock down.

On the traffic and safety side the applicant directly consulted ECC Highways in this case. They have had input into the proposals and their guidance has been followed to the letter. I have confidence in their assessment that a small, mainly walk-to facility, added to the village hall will not create an undue hazard, and focusing three essential community facilities (hall, club, & shop) in one centrally located building makes best use of a location that village members already know well and routinely use.

The existence of the Pop up shop in the basement of the village hall has confused locals into thinking they need to chose between one shop location and another. However, the basement location is not viable long term, and does not have suitable access, aside from other statutory approvals that are currently lacking. It could however provide an temporary solution to bridge the gap between now and a permanent properly designed facility. One thing the pop up shop has proven to me, is that a shop within the village hall envelope, has been both popular, and has carried out its trade without any safety incidents occurring.

The proposals have been through multiple rounds of refinement with the collaboration and input of the council's officers and Place Services, to make it acceptable in terms of style, size and Conservation criteria, and now represents a most welcome addition to the village street scene.

This is a proposal designed to serve the needs of the wider community - serving the many, not the few, and so the council is respectfully urged to follow the recommendation of their officers and allow this much needed facility to proceed by granting Planning Consent.

Mick Nash
MRTPI