

Community Shop and Cafe
Morgan's Field, Cradley

REVISED - Design & Access Statement

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full Planning Application for a new, sustainable, community shop and cafe along with recreational space and parking on Morgan's Field in Cradley. The proposed project is known as Heart of the Village. It has been prepared with reference to the CABE guide on design and access statements. We have also studied the relevant planning policies published by Herefordshire Council and consulted with the Council's Planning Officer Fernando Barber-Martinez and Development Control Area Engineer Dave Davies prior to submitting this application. We have also had protracted discussions with the Highways Department of Herefordshire Council.

A separate Planning Statement will also accompany this application.

Background:

Several elements within Cradley inspired Heart of the Village:

- losing our Village Store and full-time Post Office in 2013
- the increase in housing
- not having a central focal point to the village
- a desire to bring the two halves of the village, along with the wider community, together
- the opportunity to give residents more access to green space and the brook

Impact:

- Morgan's Field is centrally located between the two distinct areas of Cradley
- Morgan's Field is adjacent to the AONB and Conservation Area. The proposed building would be visible from a very small section of both, however, it is intended the building will be of high quality and enhance its environment.
- Morgan's Field is surrounded by a mature hedgerow, which will mitigate visibility into the site.
- As the site is between the two distinct areas of Cradley it is in walking distance of the majority of residences and as such is a sustainable location
- The site is on the bus route to Bromyard, Ledbury, Worcester and Hereford on the 405, 417 and 674 services.
- Areas of Morgan's Field are within the flood plain, however, the site of the proposed building is outside of the flood zone.
- The site is on the Mathon Road and is under a mile from the village of Mathon which currently has no services

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Outline Brief:

- Timber and glass construction with high thermal efficiency, build quality and airtightness
- Sustainable technologies: passive solar gains with solar shading, ground source heat pump, mechanical ventilation heat recovery, and solar panels.
- A shop and cafe, along with recreational space and parking
- Additional overflow parking for large church and village hall events
- To be wheelchair accessible
- To be owned and run by the community for the community through a Community Benefit Society

Location:

Access to Morgan's Field is located 100m north east along the Mathon road from its junction with Kingsbridge.



Status:

Morgan's Field is approximately 4 acres. The field is currently used as pasture. The field has been offered as a gift to Heart of the Village by a member of the community. There is an agricultural tenant on the land but the tenant has agreed to relinquish the tenancy.

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Justification:

For over 100 years, people from the neighbouring villages of Cradley, Mathon and Storrige had a local shop and post office to call their own. In July 2013 this social and business hub was closed by its owners. Some weeks after the closure Alan Eldridge, a local business owner, had an idea to create a new Heart for the three villages of Cradley, Storrige and Mathon. He became passionate about the concept and brought together a small team to lead the project forward. In August 2014, having gained support from Cradley Parish Council, the team organised a gathering of 200 villagers to discuss the proposal.

Following on from the village meeting in August 2014, and with the assistance of various Community Support Groups, the team created a Community Benefit Society – Heart of the Village (Cradley) Ltd. The team held other parish meetings and distributed a questionnaire to the community to establish the level of support for the project. The questionnaire results were very positive. Of the 226 respondents from Cradley and Storrige Parish 84% were in support of the project. An additional 21 responses were received from people in neighbouring villages – people who work in the area, or have children at the school - these responses were 100% in support. 45% of respondents also indicated that they would be interested in volunteering on the project and 83% were interested in buying shares in the project.

The team have kept the community abreast of developments through articles in the Parish newsletter, a website and via social media. Although there are a few members of the community who are not supportive, the evidence to date shows there is strong community support for the proposal.

The need for a community shop has been highlighted one again with the only remaining retail facility in the village being put up for sale and the last village pub closing.

Community shops are a new and viable business model. A statement from the Plunkett Foundation explains:

“Community shops are sustainable, democratic forms of businesses that succeed where commercial ventures have failed. In a climate that sees around 400 commercial village shops close each year, community-owned shops not only represent a better form of business, they directly respond to some of the key challenges facing rural communities today like lack of services and isolation.

They are businesses, but they trade primarily for the benefit of their community. They are controlled by the community, and they have open and voluntary membership, actively encouraging people to get involved by becoming members. They do this by offering shares in the co-operative, the cost of which are set at a level that the majority of people will be able to afford.

Community co-operatives are set up on a one member, one vote basis, rather than one share, one vote. This is important because it means that all members have an equal say in

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how they want the co-operative to be run, regardless of how many shares they've bought or how much money they've invested. In this way, they are truly democratic forms of business.

Like any business, a community co-operative must be profitable. But their primary trading purpose is to provide benefits for their community, and profits are primarily reinvested back into the business or into the local community. Many co-operatives choose to support local projects or groups through small prizes or raffle prizes, or invest in general community improvements.

A really important aspect of community co-operatives is that the majority of them offer additional services that benefit the community. These include things like Post Office facilities, allotments or growing spaces, library services, childcare services, IT provision, cafes and meeting spaces and much more."

The Concept:

The concept is to develop a building incorporating the shop, cafe, storage, restroom facilities and community space. There will be an outdoor seating area to the southwest with children's play area adjacent. A small parking area will provide off-road parking in addition to a larger 'green' parking space to accommodate occasional overflow parking from events at the nearby Church and Village Hall. Pathways will cross the field giving easy access on foot. Landscaping will include a community orchard.

The Proposal:

The proposal is to create a Heart that will generate a spirit of support for the people, community groups, businesses and charities based in the surrounding villages and rural area. It will provide a central focal point that will allow people to regularly come together to meet, exercise, shop and eat. Its stimulating and creative environment will enable local people to become fitter and happier – and to know each other better.

An area of 'green parking' will provide overflow parking for large events at the Church and Village Hall which will alleviate the current excessive and dangerous roadside parking at such times.

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The new focal point will have to work in conjunction with existing community facilities. There is huge scope for partnership but in the end, the new project will only be a success if it is driven by village need and used by people living and working close by. The HoV team have met with local businesses:

1. Blue Ginger Art Gallery and Cafe

Sue Lim, the owner, has been a firm supporter of the project from the outset. We met with her early on in our project and she said that as long as we did not become a centre for selling Art she would fully support us. We fully agreed to this request.

Sue feels that another vibrant local business will only increase the success of other local businesses and there is huge scope to work together on promotion and support.

2. The Butchery

We met with Pete and Lynn Hodgkiss for a joint meeting right at the outset of our project in 2014. We wished to discuss how we could work together to the advantage of both businesses. Before its closure in 2013, The Cradley Stores and Post Office had existed for many years in conjunction with The Butchery. There had never been an issue having two shops, albeit of different types, in the village and competition was not perceived as a problem. We discussed ways of jointly working with Pete and Lynn, such as using The Butchery meat and meat-products exclusively in our cafe, and selling The Butchery meat and meat-products exclusively in our shop, both ideas which were received with interest.

We discussed the possibility of having a designated counter for The Butchery in the shop or the possibility of The Butchery moving to the HoV site completely. All these suggestions are viable options. Alfrick Community shop works well in conjunction with Legges of Bromyard who supply them with vacuum-packed meat and meat products. There is a thriving butchers shop right next door to a community shop in Dorset that supplies both the community shop with all their meat and meat products and also supplies two other local community shops. Close cooperation and working together can benefit us all. We want nothing more than for both businesses to thrive and to support each other.

We also discussed that The Butchery has always sold groceries and how this part of their business has expanded somewhat since Cradley Store and Post Office shut. The Hodgkisses, however, said at our meeting that they felt they would lose few customers to a shop at Morgan's field as the majority of their current customers are generally from very near their shop or passing traffic. The Hodgkisses pointed out that the new proposed Pixiefield development of up to 60 new houses is right on their doorstep.

Since our last meeting with the Hodgkisses, The Butchery has been put on the market. We fully understand that there is no intention of closing down The Butchery in the future, and HOV and the Hodgkisses all want to see its continued success. After The Butchery was put on the market,

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the Hodgkisses seem to have withdrawn their initial goodwill towards our project. A number of objectors to our project have raised the issue of potential damage to The Butchery as an issue. This is not our aim and neither is it inevitable - we believe strongly that the HOV project and The Butchery could work well together in the future and there is huge scope to help mutually the viability and sustainability of both ventures by close cooperation and support. It is of note that the objection letter sent by Pete Hodgkiss is only a copy of the same standard letter issued by one particular objector, and does not mention any competition concerns at all.

3. Crumpton Hill Farm Shop

This Farm Shop, run by the Harrington Family, started trading just after we launched our project. It is on the edge of Storridge on the Malvern road, 2 miles away from our site. The Harrington's have said they will not object to our project if we agree not to market our project as a "Farm Shop" and not to make local farm produce the major part of our business, i.e. not set our project up to be in direct competition with them. This is something we fully understand and agreed to. They do have concerns about a community shop, staffed by volunteers, trading in the same parish as their businesses but, like the Butchery, we want to see all businesses thrive and work together. Impacting an existing business would be detrimental to our community which is completely against the ethos of our project.

4. The Red Lion Inn

This old Inn is on the main A4103, well away from the centre of Cradley. The pub has had a troubled time over the last few years with several tenants and has only just re-opened again.

Detailed Proposal:

The building has been placed centrally within the site so that it visually bridges the gap between the two disparate halves of the village. The intention of the scheme is to create a place where the two halves of the village can come together and the placement and design of the building seeks to reflect and reinforce that.

The overall image of the building is intended to be welcoming in a contemporary vernacular style. A low slung single storey pitched roof building with a recognisably agricultural, rural form.

The building is rectangular in shape with the long side parallel to the road frontage. It is positioned opposite the site entrance for easy of accessibility. The building is entered centrally through a recessed entrance with weather protection provided by the over-sailing roof.

Internally the building is split into two equal halves, to the right is the village shop and behind it to the north lie storage areas and kitchenette facilities. A central serving counter functions for both the shop and the cafe and enables the building to be operated by the minimum amount of people.

In addition to one full time paid member of staff the facility will be manned by a rolling programme of 60+volunteers. The shop can be screened off from the cafe in the evening so the opening hours for the two spaces do not have to be identical.

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To the left is the cafe area with sliding glass doors out to the terrace and children's play area to the southwest and views northwest towards the brook. The whole space is open plan to encourage people who have come in to shop to drift into the cafe and visa versa.

To the rear of the building are fully accessible toilets complete with baby change facilities, further storage and a small room for a rolling programme of community uses, pop-up barber chiropodist etc.

The principal structure will be a load bearing timber frame which will be expressed (i.e visible) externally. This will be infilled with either aluminium glazing (cafe and shop front) or highly insulated panels (storage areas, wcs, rear of shop etc) clad in vertical timber boarding.

The roof will be a standing seam metal roof with fully integrated solar panels on the south facing roof slope. All rainwater goods will be galvanised metal.

Accessibility:

The site has chosen as it is equidistant between the two communities and therefore within walking distance for most people.

Pedestrian access to the site will be enhanced increased by the creation of new access points by Kings Bridge and at the Cradley church end and will be linked by a new pavement.

On-site parking is provided for both the shop and the cafe as well as secure cycle storage.

The creation of a village shop will reduce car movements and food miles overall for the local community as more shopping can be done without trips further afield to Ledbury or Hereford.

Additional 'grasscrete' parking provides parking for church events and will improve safety and accessibility for churchgoers.

Full disabled access will be provided with dedicated disabled parking in close proximity to the shop / cafe, level access and disabled standard wc facilities. New pathways to be created at gradients less than 1:20

Landscaping:

- The open greenfield character of the site will be preserved and enhanced.
- Native hedgerows around the road perimeter will retained and enhanced where necessary. A portion will be translocated within the site.
- The boundary treatment will be reinforced by the planting of specimen trees to the south and west.
- Unimproved grassland in the northeast quadrant will be preserved and strengthened.
- A new community orchard will be planted in the southwest half of the site encircled by a new footpath linking King's Bridge to Cradley.

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Flood Alleviation:

An updated flood risk assessment and mitigation strategy has been prepared by Hydro-Logic Services and is enclosed as part of this application.

The Flood Risk Assessment incorporates a surface water management plan that will manage the entire runoff from the building via an attenuation pond located within the community orchard.

Ecology:

An updated Phase I Habitat Survey and Protected Species Survey and new Habitat Enhancement and Mitigation Plan by Bearwood Associates Ltd is attached to this application. We also include new reports on White Clawed crayfish site visit by Focus Ecology and Water Vole and Otter Assessment by Teme Ecology.

Neighbourhood Development Plan:

The Cradley NDP is currently waiting to go to Referendum. Our project sits perfectly with the NDP on three counts:

1. The NDP states that development, except for public open space (and other exceptions), will not be supported in the strategic green gap. The HOV project opens up the part of the gap known as Morgan's Field for use by the community. An area that was previously inaccessible and only viewed from a couple of vantage points will become a public open space. Only a small percentage (less than 2%) of the overall site is building development. Thus the project can be supported.
2. The NDP states the development that which will visually diminish the openness of the gap when viewed from publicly accessible locations will not be supported. The HOV project taken as a whole will not diminish the openness of the gap but in fact does the opposite; it opens up a large part of the gap as a public open space and allows further much wider viewing of the upper part of the gap and the Cradley Brook from this new fully publicly accessible location. Thus the project can be supported.
3. The NDP states the voluntary and community sector will have a very important role to play, particularly in terms of local community infrastructure, events and village life. HoV is a community founded project. It will be run as a Community Benefit Society, by the community for the benefit of the community - and with the exception of a paid manager will be run by volunteers. It's hard to conceive of a project that would fit this statement more closely.

Conclusion:

Taken collectively these proposals offer the opportunity to create a community hub for the people of Cradley, Storridge and Mathon.

The facilities the site offers will be able to host a wide range of community events both inside and outside for young and old alike. Provision of parking will help support existing community use of the Church and Village Hall.

We trust the enclosed meets with your approval and we look forward to hearing from you in due course.