Educational Foundation Property Strategy 2023-2033

1. Summary

This document reviews the current state of Foundation properties and maps out the maintenance and development challenges that the Foundation faces over the next 10 years.

In the years 2010-2022 over **£315,000** was invested in the re-development of School House and Chelveston Village Hall. This was financed by **£174,000** of grants and **£141,000** of accumulated reserves and in-year income. On the surface, we now have a modern, well-equipped venue and School House is delivering high rental yields which underpin our charitable operations.

However, it is becoming clear that there are big maintenance and development projects in the pipeline for both properties, at a time when the financial headwinds are becoming stronger. The Foundation will not be able to finance the work needed from operational and investment income. Grants will be needed.

The Foundation has been very fortunate to have built a good working relationship with local grant making bodies, but has always presented them with discrete grant applications rather than a long term plan. Grant funding and operating income streams are likely to contract over the coming years as the economy struggles to recover from the COVID pandemic. The Foundation therefore needs to prepare a clear development and maintenance plan which will guide grant applications and investment decisions.

Development costs are difficult to estimate and inevitably increase over time with inflationary pressures. The Trustees therefore need to set broad development budget targets and build reserves which can be used to apply for matched funding grants in advance of the projects commencing. This document presents some target figures and time frames.

2. Historical context 1864-2010

In 1864, the then Lord of the Manor donated land and materials to build a new school and school master's house for the parish. The land and buildings were donated to the Trustees of the ***Educational Foundation of Abgail Bailey and Ann Levett***, a charity formed by the sisters of his predecessor in 1760 to educate the children of the parish.

The school closed in 1967 as pupil numbers fell. School House was let commercially to private tenants and the school building had a number of unsuccessful short term commercial lets.

In March 1970 the then Village Institute, (situated next to the then Chelveston Garage on Higham Road - now JST Forklift Trucks) collapsed in a snowstorm. With no other social venue in the Village, a committee of residents was formed to explore the feasibility of using the old school as Chelveston Village Hall.

The Trustees of the Foundation granted a 7-year internal repairing lease on the school building. Rent was set at £1 per annum initially, rising to £40 per annum by 1977. The ***Chelveston Village Hall Association*** was formed as a separate charity in December 1977 and was granted another 7-year internal repairing lease on the school for use as a Village Hall, at rent of £40 per annum.

In 1984 a new internal repairing lease of 21 years was agreed at a rent of £300 per annum. This lease expired in 2005 and was not renewed. Nevertheless, the Village Hall Association continued in operation, even redecorating the Village Hall for the dedication of the new war memorial in 2007.

Throughout these leases, the Trustees of the Foundation were required to spend large sums on maintaining the exterior of the building without sufficient rental income from the lease. Only the rent from the School House kept the Foundation afloat.

By 2010, the Village Hall Association had ceased functioning as a charity and the Village Hall was operating at an annual loss, despite having substantial cash reserves built up in its earlier, successful years. The Hall was then used for only 12 hours a month. The Parish Council facilitated the merger of the Village Hall Association into the Educational Foundation to create a single charitable foundation with responsibility for both the buildings and their operation as a community venue. This is the Foundation that exists today.

3. Legal position of the Foundation and its Trustees

The Foundation is a registered charity (number 309769) regulated by the Charity Commission of England and Wales. Its current activities are governed by the charitable scheme of 1977[1], as modified by the 2010 charitable scheme.[2]

The endowment of the Foundation consists of the two properties, School House and the old Chelveston School, their gardens, and the land which now comprises the car park and amenity paddock.

The School House, old Chelveston School and their gardens were part of the endowment provided by the Lord of the Manor in 1864. The car park and amenity paddock were purchased in 2012 using endowment funds which originated from the sale of land in Hargrave in 1908. This land was part of the original endowment of the Foundation by Abigail Bailey and Ann Levett in 1760.

Although these assets notionally "belong" to the Trustees for the time being, their title is vested in the Official Custodian for Charities.[3] This means that they can never be disposed or leased out commercially without the involvement of the Charity Commission. This is an important consideration. There was extensive talk in the 1980s and 1990s about selling the old School to fund the building of a new Village Hall in the fields nearby. This would only be permitted in extreme circumstances.

The objectives of the Foundation are clear from clause 3 of the 2010 charitable scheme:

> ***The Trustees will provide and maintain a combined Village Hall/Educational Institute in the Chelveston School premises for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Chelveston-cum-Caldecott and surrounding environs without distinction of political, religious or other opinions for meetings, lectures and classes, and for other forms of recreational activity with the object of promoting the education of and improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.***

This has been the driver for the works undertaken over the last 10 years, creating a well equipped venue for clubs, societies and classes. The Trustees subsidise the hire of the venue for all organisations that serve an educational purpose and especially for those which serve children.

Clause 4 of the 2010 charitable scheme places an important additional duty on the Trustees:

> ***The Trustees shall apply the clear income of the Charity in the first place so far as requisite for the development and maintenance of the property of the Charity not required to be kept in repair by the tenants thereof.***

The primary duty of the Trustees is to maintain and develop the properties to support the charitable purpose of the Foundation. The goals of the Foundation are then clear:

1. **To ensure that the Village Hall is an attractive, comfortable, well equipped community building which is efficient to run and has comparable hire fees to other venues in the vicinity.**
2. **To ensure that School House is an attractive rental property which delivers an annual surplus to underpin the charitable purpose of the Foundation.**

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[1] 1977 Charitable scheme https://villagehall.chelveston.org.uk/governance/309769-Charity-Scheme-1977-300dpi
[2] 2010 Charitable scheme https://villagehall.chelveston.org.uk/governance/309769-Charity-Scheme-2010-300dpi
[3] Official Custodian https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-official-custodian-for-charities-land-holding-service-cc13/the-official-custodian-for-charities-land-holding-service

4. Re-development of facilities from 2010-2022

With a new mandate in 2010, the Trustees of the Foundation were able to use the cash reserves of the defunct Village Hall Association and substantial grant income to undertake a bold re-development plan. The achievements are shown in Table 1 below:

Year	Development Projects	Development Expenditure	Grant Income	Grant Awarding Bodies
2010	Redecorating School House New fuseboard School House New Village Hall guttering	£10,439		
2011	Extension planning New sewage treatment plant	£6,521		
2012	Land purchase	£9,194		
2013	Car park development	£22,930	£ 10,297	Garfield Weston Foundation; Friends of St John the Baptist
2014	Extension build and fit out	£120,437	£ 64,068	BIFFA; East Northamptonshire Council; Chelveston Wind Farm Trust
2015	Extension build and fit out	£39,011	£ 26,102	BIFFA; Chelveston Parish Council
2016	Village Hall garden remodelling Lawn tractor and shed	£10,878	£ 4,894	Chelveston Wind Farm Trust
2017	School House refurbishment Replace Village Hall windows Village Hall corridor panelling	£69,717	£ 34,090	Chelveston Wind Farm Trust; Foulger Trust
2018	Car park drainage Village Hall sound system Car park lighting enhancements Hedge replacement	£8,893	£ 6,528	Chelveston Wind Farm Trust; Foulger Trust
2019	Car park lighting enhancements Sound system enhancements Security system improvements	£2,504	£ 749	Chelveston Wind Farm Trust; Foulger Trust
2020	Network improvements COVID measures	£3,791	£ 10,900	Chelveston Wind Farm Trust; East Northamptonshire Council
2021	COVID measures Electric vehicle charger Network enhancements	£9,408	£ 16,333	North Northamptonshire Council
2022	Flag pole flood light Sound system enhancements Detailed building survey	£1,683	£ 12	Amazon Smile Charity
Totals		**£315,408**	**£173,974**	

Table 1 - Development projects and grant income 2011-2022

Educational Foundation of Abigail Bailey and Ann Levett
Contact us: chelveston.village.hall@gmail.com

5. 2023 – Supposedly a year of planning and planned minor maintenance works

No major projects were planned for 2023 as 2022 had been a difficult financial year. The Foundation's 2022 annual operating surplus (used to finance development) fell by nearly 75%. The 2022 Village Hall operating surplus was only £700, which was insufficient to cover even the minor project work undertaken that year. With energy costs increasing by 300%, and a reduction in demand (due to a 50% increase in hire fees), a large operating loss of £2,900 was predicted for the Village Hall in 2023. A modest surplus from School House was expected to cover this.

The 2023 budget therefore allowed for only £5,000 maintenance works for both properties. Unfortunately, an unexpected issue arose with School House requiring major unplanned expenditure. As a result, the Foundation made an overall operating loss in 2023 of £8,857.

5.1. School House gable end chimney restoration 2023

One of the 2023 expected maintenance tasks was the re-rendering of the School House chimney on the gable end. In 2022, a large slab of render from the other chimney was dislodged in a storm, falling into the garden. An insurance claim largely financed the re-rendering works. The result was not ideal as the new render contrasted badly with the old, but at least the building was safe and watertight.

Aerial drone inspections revealed that the other chimney was also showing signs of bad wear and tear, with large cracks in the render. The Trustees could not ignore this, and commissioned re-rendering work in September 2023 ahead of expected winter storms. The aim was that the chimney would be made safe and that the result would match the other chimney, all within the £5,000 maintenance budget.

Unfortunately, the rendering works quickly uncovered a 40-year-old problem. Concrete render had been applied to both chimneys and the gable end in 1984 to stabilise the stonework during a re-roofing project. The roofers had found that both chimneys were unsafe, but the then Trustees were not prepared to rebuild them. Instead, £200 was spent on stabilising the chimneys with unsuitable concrete render.

Over the following 40 years, water had penetrated behind the concrete render and had dissolved the underlying stonework. The brickwork above the stonework had shattered though ice damage. Immediate demolition of the gable end chimney was required to safeguard the tenants and the general public.

With a hole in the roof the only option was to rebuild the chimney very quickly. Our village stonemason was appointed and asked to solve the problem, with the aim of delivering the best long-term outcome for the Village. Aerial photographs from 1984 showed the original building design. The base of the chimney was in local stone and above the plinth was brick with clay chimney pots. The Trustees authorised necessary rebuilding work to the original 1864 design and the result is a huge enhancement to this heritage building.

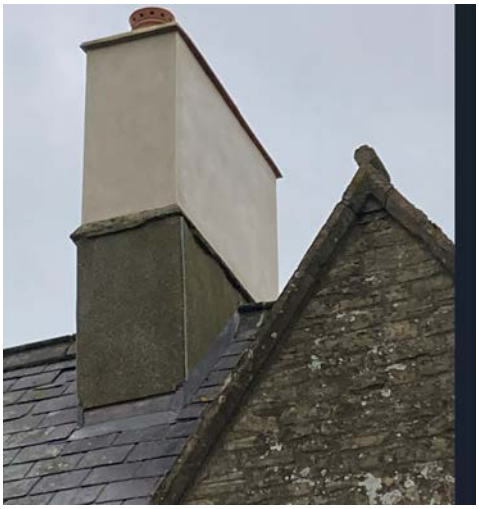	
2022 insurance repair of render to left chimney	2023 rebuild of gable end chimney

Figure 1 - School House chimneys compared

Educational Foundation of Abigail Bailey and Ann Levett
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School House is one of the gateway buildings to the Village, immediately visible for anyone visiting or travelling through the Village. It sets the tone for the type of Village to which residents aspire. Indeed, in 2017, the Foulger Trust financed the external enhancements to School House on the grounds that the whole Village would benefit from the enhanced street scene.

This principle will continue to guide the Trustees. Every project relating School House must either enhance the Village street scene, or improve the rentability of School House, improving its ability to contribute towards the charitable purpose of the Foundation.

5.2. Village Hall maintenance Works 2023

No major maintenance works were planned for the Village Hall in 2023. Some of the outside lights needed replacing and some internal décor needed refreshing, but these were minor matters.

Two challenges quickly emerged:

1. The reduced usage of the amenity paddock had allowed rabbits to undermine the roadside fence and had forced the sacrifice of up to 5 metres of the paddock to prevent hirers tripping in burrows.
2. The chimney works at School House had dislodged a roost of cluster flies which re-colonised the Village Hall. Fumigation was needed.

The cluster flies needed professional eradication. To carry out a previous eradication, holes were cut into the ceiling. These were capped off temporarily with unsightly black plastic. A longer-term solution is needed. During 2023 various options were explored.

6. Village Hall maintenance/development challenges and remedial projects

Ten challenges have been identified:

a. Cluster flies colonise the roof space each year, and fumigation of them needs roof space access.
b. The LED car park/garden floodlights on the roof keep failing.
c. Rabbits and moles have colonised the amenity paddock losing 9 metres of space.
d. There is limited storage space in the Hall for bulky rarely used items of equipment.
e. The paddock can no longer be used between the end of October and early May because the ground is too wet.
f. Energy usage is too high in the winter and the Hall cannot be kept cool in the summer.
g. There is inadequate ventilation of the main Hall.
h. One of the 24-year-old gas heaters has failed in the main Hall and cannot be repaired.
i. The main Hall floor has evidence of an active word worm infestation.
j. The 2014 plastering of the interface between the old hall and new extension has failed.

A series of projects need to be planned to address these issues:

6.1. Improved access to the roof space above the Village Hall ceiling

Problem statement

In 2021 the cluster fly infestation became intolerable for hirers. Attempts to control them by the caretakers had failed. Six holes were cut into the ceiling panels to allow for a thorough professional fumigation. Cutting these holes was a dangerous job using ladders over 18ft (5.5 metres) high, but was urgent.

Once the fumigation was completed, the holes were covered with black plastic to prevent debris coming down in the wind. The result is unsightly and does not work very well. It was difficult to seal the plastic in place and so there are gaps through which dust and plaster still blow.

In October 2023, cluster flies returned, having been displaced from School House during the chimney renovation works. The black plastic had to be ripped down to allow a further fumigation. With no safe way of replacing the plastic, the remains have been pushed back into place to block the holes as best as possible.

Although the ceiling needs to be replaced and insulated in the longer term, it will be several years before this can be scheduled. Funding needs to be secured and a temporary Village Hall will be needed, as the closure for works could last 4 months. A medium-term solution is needed to deal with the damaged ceiling.

Figure 2 - Holes in Village Hall ceiling

Proposed solution

It is proposed to install three hatches at the gable ends, with hinged doors which drop down. The latches would be "push and click" which could be activated using a pole from the ground. This would remove the need to use ladders. The other three holes would be filled in. The works would need a scaffolding tower, plastic floor covering and some boards to reinforce the floor near the work location and to allow the tower to be rolled around the Hall. Whilst the scaffolding is in place, further inspections and surveys of the roof space could be undertaken.

These hatches would smarten up the Hall. They would also allow access for inspection during the planning for the long-term insulation works, and access for further fumigation. The cluster fly problem has been around for over 8 years and will not disappear until the roof is insulated and sealed.

The hatches and filler panels would all need to be freshly painted white, standing out against the older discoloured panels, last painted in 2007. The ceiling is generally in a poor state of decoration as the joint tapes are peeling away exposing bare wood. Whilst the tower and floor covering are in place, it makes sense to paint the whole ceiling to refresh the décor, as was done with the lower walls over the last 3 years.

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timing

Solves:	Challenge 6a – roof space access for fumigation
Estimated cost:	£1,300
Duration:	7 days (2 working weeks allowing for contingency)
Proposed timing:	Easter 2024
Source of funds:	Maintenance budget
Operational impact:	The Hall would need to close for 2 weeks
Loss of hire income:	£400

6.2. External lighting refurbishment/replacement

Problem statement

The original external fluorescent lighting was installed in 2014/2015 with the extension. This lighting was extended down the car park in early 2018 using the LED equivalent units which were more energy efficient and provided a better emergency light during a loss of power. In late 2018, the original fluorescent units were replaced with LED equivalents. Fortunately, as the casing was the same, this was a simple job of swapping out the internal units.

Mid-range LED flood lights (**£30.00 each**) were installed on the roof of the extension in 2019 to illuminate the garden, car park and bin area.

One of the floodlights failed within a month and was replaced under guarantee. Two of the others failed within a year and were replaced under guarantee. Frustratingly they always failed during cold weather and the job of disconnecting and rewiring in their replacement was a difficult one, involving climbing on the extension roof.

By mid-2021, two of the floodlights had dropped to half power. They were outside their guarantee period, and unlike older halogen flood lights, there are no replaceable parts. The whole unit needs to be replaced and the wiring altered to adapt to the new models.

By early 2022, industry reports of poor LED floodlight reliability had begun to emerge. Electricians were finding that suppliers were happy to replace failed units, sometimes for up to three years after manufacture. However, the labour costs of replacement always fell to the electrician. We have held off replacement until a proven solution appears. Commercial grade LED floodlights are now on the market with a 5 year warranty. These units cost **£72.00** each.

Similarly, some of the new car park LED lighting units have begun to fail. In some units the LED strings failed completely, leaving the lamp dark. In others the individual LEDs were failing leaving gaps in the light pattern. Again there are no replacement parts.

Some replacement units were ordered, with the same model number as the originals. However, on arrival it was clear that the manufacturer had completely redesigned the internal units and the casing. Rewiring and remodelling of the units was needed to get them to fit the original casing. This was clearly impractical.

During investigations the emergency lighting function was tested and one original battery was found to have failed. This was replaced with one from the new units purchased.

Proposed solution

A means has now been found to unsolder the LED strings in the failing units and replace them with modern LED tapes. Five units have been repaired in this way. Another 11 will need attention within 12 months. The work can be done in the workshop on a spare unit. This can then be taken to site to be swapped out, giving the next unit to work on. Four units a day can be repaired in this way.

It is proposed that we purchase a stock of LED tape sufficient to repair all the LED lights at least once. This would cost around **£3.00** per unit, totalling around **£50.00** with delivery.

It is also proposed that we purchase one commercial grade flood light as a test unit and reconfigure the existing units to make best use of the ones that still work. Some minor wiring changes may be needed with the overall cost being **£150.00** with one day needed for the work.

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timing

Solves:	Challenge 6b – failing external lights
Estimated cost:	£200
Duration:	4 days
Proposed timing:	Easter 2024
Source of funds:	Maintenance budget
Operational impact:	None – work would be done during daylight hours
Loss of hire income:	None

6.3. Rabbit fencing, additional storage and mesh reinforcement for the amenity paddock

Problem statements

The Foundation purchased the "L-shaped" piece of land adjacent to and behind the Village Hall in 2012 using endowment funds generated from the sale of land in Hargrave in 1908. The car park was developed in 2013, but the remainder of the land behind the Hall was left undeveloped as a basic amenity paddock. Apart from regular cutting of the grass, and installing stock fencing, no other work was done. Extending the Hall was the priority at the time. The paddock is 44 metres long and 20 metres wide. It was reasonably flat when purchased, apart from the 4 metres near the road which was rough ground with a few rabbit burrows and mole hills.

The paddock has since been used for the annual dog show, dog training, military vehicle displays, camping by local scout groups, horse tack sales, and for caravans brought in by families hiring the Hall for a weekend. Unfortunately, the surface cannot be used for vehicular or pedestrian access between the end of October and early May as it is too soft. Even the dog training over the winter churned up the surface.

The dog training was useful, as the presence of dogs deterred the rabbits from extending their warren based in the B645 ditch. Unfortunately, the dog training did not restart after the pandemic and the rabbits are now colonising the field at the rate of nearly 2 metres a year. They have now undermined the B645 stock fence creating gaps beneath it and loosening one post. Their burrows now extend over 9 metres into the field. The burrows are a hazard for pedestrian access and the lawn tractor cannot safely be driven over the area to cut the grass. 20% of the amenity paddock is therefore now unusable and coned off. The rabbits now run freely out of the paddock into the car park. They cannot burrow through the car park mesh surface, but there is nothing stopping them hopping through the car park fence into the Village Hall garden. They have been seen doing so and are now creating new burrows in the garden.

The paddock is registered as an Asset of Community Value, as the only fenced public green space in the Village. It is potentially the future site of play equipment, something that residents have long requested. It would also be a suitable site for a large marquee for civic or private functions. However, the current surface of the paddock is not adequate for this in all but the driest months, and the unusable area is too dangerous to allow unsupervised access.

The Village Hall also needs additional storage space to store bulky equipment which is only used occasionally:

- Long ladders
- Display boards
- Flip chart easel
- Café tables
- Outside PA system

Currently this equipment is stored around the Hall walls or is crammed into the two cupboards we do have. The cluttering detracts from the Hall, and some hirers have restored to piling it all into the storeroom during functions. This is not safe as it prevents access to the electrical distribution boards and the ventilation control panels.

Proposed solution

A three phase solution is proposed for these problems, allowing the use of the paddock to be maximised:

Phase A: Deal with the rabbit infestation by installing buried rabbit fencing around the perimeter of the paddock and down the fence between the car park and the Village Hall garden.

Phase B: Install a new high security shed in the corner of the amenity paddock. This would be used to house the grounds maintenance equipment which is currently stored in the shed in the Village Hall garden. This would then free up the existing shed to house the bulky equipment from the Hall. Lighting would be installed in the original shed to permit evening access.

Phase C: Strengthen the paddock surface with grass mesh like that used in the car park to create an all weather surface, usable as an overflow car park for Church or Village Hall events.

The works for each phase are described below:

Phase A - Installing rabbit fencing.

A turf cutter would be used to remove a 600mm strip of turf around three sides of the paddock. A trench would then be excavated in front of the existing stock fence at the B645 ditch, at least 450mm deep and 300mm wide. This would break into the current warren dispersing the rabbits. Rabbit mesh would then be buried in the trench and backfilled, with the rabbit mesh going across the surface and lapping up the new fence by 800mm. The purpose of this mesh is to stop the rabbits finding a way under the stock fencing. Once the mesh is installed, the turf rolls would be replaced and rolled flat. This process would be repeated for the other paddock boundaries to prevent rabbits from running across the surface of the paddock into the School House and Village Hall gardens. Whilst the work is underway, the opportunity would be taken to install a lockable pedestrian gate from the School House garden into the paddock. The new gate from would make garden maintenance much easier. Garden tools and mowers are currently stored in the Village Hall shed and it is necessary to carry or push them out on to the Caldecott Road around both properties. The gate could also be used for access by the lawn tractor to allow the School House grass to be mown more efficiently. This cannot be done at present as the tractor is uninsured and unlicensed to travel on the public highway or footway.

Along the boundary of the Village Hall garden and paddock to the car park, rabbit mesh would be clipped to the fence and turned out at the bottom onto the car park mesh where it would be pegged down to allow grass to grow through. This would prevent rabbits from finding gaps where the grass mesh of the car park has sunk.

The rough ground in the paddock would then be graded using a digger bucket and rolled using a heavy-duty agricultural roller to even out the surface and consolidate loose ground around the burrows. After reseeding if needed, we will recover nearly 20% of the paddock area for amenity use.

Phase B - Installing additional storage.

Once the rabbit fencing is completed, a 150mm deep foundation pad would be excavated in the corner of the paddock. The trench will then be filled with type 1 hardcore and consolidated using a vibrating plate. A high security shed will be purchased and installed.

Once the works are completed, the gravel on the car park track will need to be refreshed and consolidated after disturbance by delivery lorries.

Phase C - Installing grass protection mesh.

Once a full season has elapsed, we can evaluate the success of the rabbit fencing and consider the next step of the project to create an all weather surface for the amenity paddock. A medium/heavy grade grass protection mesh[4] would be pegged down across the whole of the paddock. This is the same mesh that was used on the car park and the verge to the right of the School House driveway. It offers a good all-weather surface in all but the wettest of conditions. This can be used by all foot traffic and medium duty vehicular traffic. Once bedded in after a season, the mesh largely disappears as the grass grows through it. Grass cutting is necessary within a month of laying the mesh, and then continues as normal.

The creation of a mesh reinforced area would permit year-round use of the paddock for amenity purposes. It would also allow the paddock to be used for occasional overflow parking during Village fayres and festivals. This would be particularly valuable during the autumn and winter months catering for the Christmas Fayre at the Church in November and the Snowdrop Festival in February. The project would add 28 parking spaces. During festivals, we currently need to close the Village Hall as there is insufficient parking capacity in the existing car park. For the rest of the year, the paddock gate would remain locked to prevent its unauthorised use. It would be opened only for stewarded parking.

[4] Grass protection mesh https://www.green-tech.co.uk/ground-reinforcement/grass-and-turf-reinforcement-mesh/grass-protecta-heavy-145mm

At the wettest times of year, the main car park can become muddy after heavy use, as it is not well drained. With a grass mesh reinforced paddock, we could divert cars away from the worst areas of the car park allowing it to recover. This would avoid cars getting stuck and minimise the mud brought into the Hall.

The overall solution incorporating all three phases is shown in figure 3.

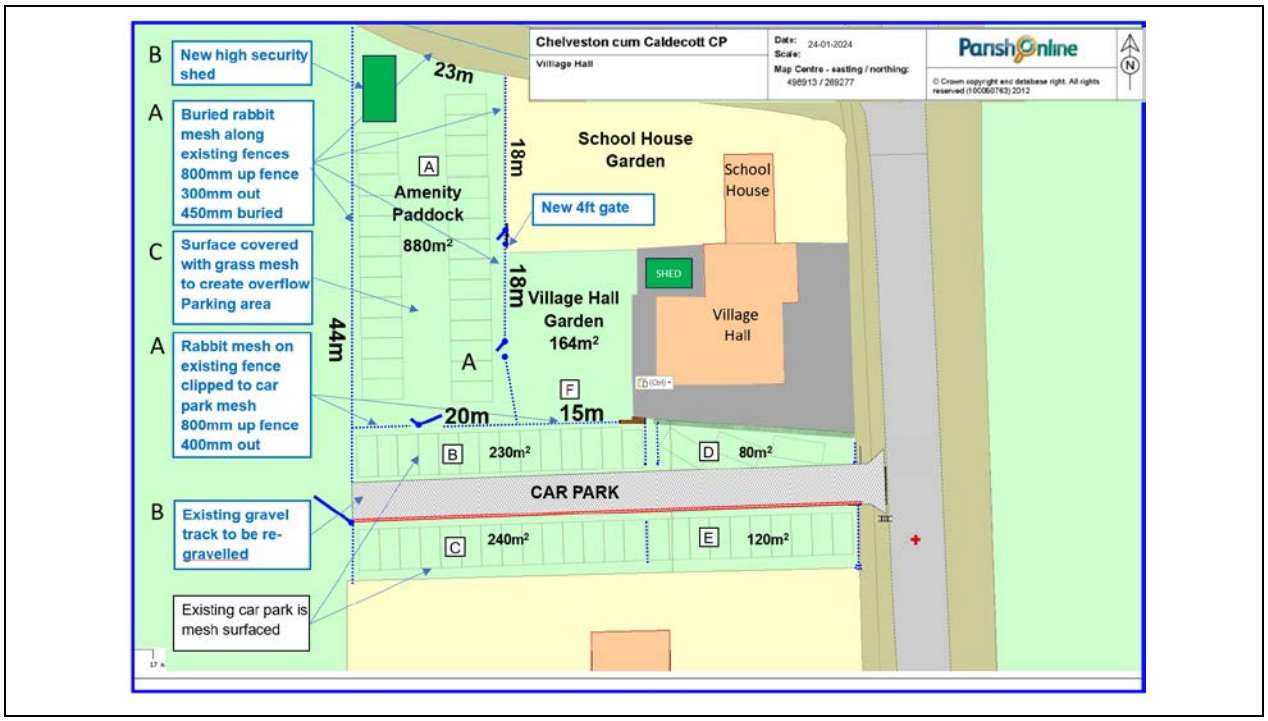

Figure 3 – Rabbit mesh, gate to garden, shed and overspill parking for 28 cars on all weather grass mesh

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timing

Phase A – Installing rabbit fencing

Solves:	Challenge 6c – rabbit and mole infestation removing 20% of usable space
Estimated cost:	£3,500
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2024
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

Phase B – Installing additional storage

Solves:	Challenge 6d – shortage of storage space for bulky equipment
Estimated cost:	£5,106
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2024
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

Phase C – Installing grass protection mesh

Solves:	Challenge 6e – paddock unusable, October-May.
Estimated cost:	£10,900
Duration:	1 week
Proposed timing:	May 2025 – contingency on rabbit fencing being successful
Source of funds:	75% grant funding, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	None – machinery would arrive and depart outside class times
Loss of hire income:	None

6.4. Insulating, heating and ventilating the Village Hall

Problem statement

Ventilation:

The Village Hall was built as a school in 1864. Ventilation was provided for the classrooms by low level hopper windows in the centre of each gable window, hopper windows at the base of the two smaller east facing windows and three small hopper windows at the top of the gable ends. Two coke stoves heated the building and created a "draw" pulling air in under doors and through the gaps in the opening windows.

After the conversion of the school to a Village Hall, window repairs were undertaken which removed the opening windows replacing them with fixed panes. A false ceiling was also fitted cutting off access to the gable end hopper windows. The chimneys were also removed, effectively sealing the building apart from gaps under the two outside doors.

During the COVID pandemic, careful attention was paid to the building ventilation. Measurements were taken and it was discovered that the natural ventilation of the building is inadequate, falling well below the levels recommended for safe operation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Even before the pandemic, the HSE guidelines required ventilation of 8-10 litres of fresh air per person per second to maintain a healthy environment. The current natural ventilation achieves less than 5% of that level. During some functions, carbon dioxide levels have exceeded 2000ppm (parts per million). At these levels Hall users experience drowsiness. Although there is no retrospective requirement to improve ventilation in old buildings, grant applications for refurbishment would expect modern building regulations to be followed.

Heating/Cooling/Insulation:

When it was a school, the building was heated by two coke stoves. During the late 1970s, these were replaced with domestic gas air heaters, which were themselves replaced in November 1999 with four commercial gas air heaters, each delivering 9.5kW. One of these heaters failed in 2021 and parts are no longer available for its repair. The three remaining heaters deliver 28kW which is just enough to bring the Hall up to a usable temperature within 20 minutes of a class or party beginning.

With no insulation at all, the Village Hall temperature falls quickly when unheated, and is usually only 5^{o}C above the ambient outside temperature. During prolonged cold spells, particularly over Christmas/New Year, the water pipes can freeze at the mains, even though the pipes are insulated.

At the height of summer, the black slate roof absorbs heat, and the Hall temperature quickly climbs to above outside ambient temperature. On two occasions, the Hall has had to close as it was too hot for classes to take place.

The extension erected in 2014 had the highest level of insulation recommended by the building regulations at the time. The floor slab and roof are highly insulated with 200mm of insulation. The walls are 400mm thick with 100mm of high specification cavity insulation. The extension is largely heated and cooled by an air source heat pump which only delivers 5kW of usable heat. This is all the insulated corridor and kitchen need. The toilets are heated by fan heaters which come on for 1 minute when people enter the room. Water heating is all electric with timed heaters which only operate when the building is in use. During cold periods, even when the Hall is unused, the extension temperature has never fallen below 10^{o}C.

During 2017, the single glazed windows in the Hall were replaced with argon filled double glazed units. This had an immediate impact on condensation levels. Even on the coldest days, moisture now condenses on the outside of the windows, confirming that the inside temperature is higher than outside and that heat losses through the large window areas have been minimised.

However, the heat losses are still too large, originating in four areas (in order of decreasing priority):

1. Losses through the ceiling and roof – even when the building is heated to a comfortable temperature, the hot air rises. Hot air accumulates near the ceiling. If the heating is turned off, the hall cools within 30 minutes, with all heat lost.
2. The floor temperature can be 10^{o}C below the room temperature. The floorboards are suspended on joists but there is no insulation beneath. Below that there is only soil. Scout camps sleeping in the Hall have reported that the floor "sucks" heat from their sleeping bags.

3. The two original external doors are only 45mm thick and have poorly fitting frames. Draughts beneath and around the doors can be easily felt.
4. The walls are solid stone, some 750mm thick in places. However, there is no insulation in them. They are huge heat sinks, taking a long time to heat and cool. Unfortunately, they are not a useful thermal mass. Owing to the intermittent use of the Hall, they never reach a useful temperature, and they always acting counter to the desired heating/cooling requirement. In winter, they absorb heat quickly from the heaters. In summer, they continue to heat the building long after the ambient temperature has fallen.

Problem Analysis

Ventilation:

Extensive research into ventilation options was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only two solutions were found.

1. Installing ventilation fans into the gable ends. These would be controlled by a sensor, only operating as required, but there would be some associated noise and ongoing running and maintenance costs.
2. Installing ventilation turrets in the ridgeline. These use the wind to draw stale air from the building, replacing it with fresh air. The internal shutters are controlled by a sensor which detects when the air needs refreshing. These units are silent and have no ongoing running cost.

Figure 4 - Passive ventilation using turrets on Lympstone Village Hall

Both solutions would need access to the roof space.

Fan solution:

The fan solution would involve removing the false ceiling so that air could circulate freely.

The holes cut into the ceiling for fumigation have allowed the roof space to be surveyed. It was found that there is a traditional vaulted ceiling above the false fibreboard ceiling. It appears that lath and plaster was originally installed between the rafters. This has clearly deteriorated badly leaving the sarking felt visible in many places. It is not surprising that cluster flies can find a way in, and there are many cracks in which they can roost for the winter. The false ceiling is suspended from new softwood joists, with supporting purlins set into wall pockets on the gable ends. The plasterwork above the ceiling on the gable ends is in a very poor state as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5 - Showing vaulted roof space and deteriorating plaster on gable end

Turret solution:

The turret solution could be installed from the roof, but ducting would be needed to move stale air from the false ceiling upwards, and to bring fresh air down. Access above the false ceiling would be needed to install this.

There is a historical precedent for the turret solution. The coke stove chimneys were part of the original design from 1864 and were only removed in 1984. The building has had turrets for 75% of its life. Re-instating them using the turrets shown in figure 4 would not detract from the setting.

1950s photograph of the school building with ventilation chimneys

1983 photograph showing them still present before the building was re-roofed and the false ceiling installed

Figure 6 - Historical precedent for roof mounted ventilation

<u>Problem Analysis Continued</u>

Heating/Cooling/Insulation:

We have two problems to address:

1. How to heat/cool the building when the current gas heaters fail.
2. How to minimise the building's energy consumption.

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Gas heating: It is possible to buy replacement commercial gas heaters[5] at a cost of around £1,500 + VAT each. A piping upgrade would be needed during the first installation at a cost around £2,000 + VAT. The Hall has four 9.5kW gas heaters (one not working), currently delivering 28kW. The replacement heaters deliver 11.5kW each, and so three would be required with the current poor levels of insulation. Obviously, these heaters provide no cooling option in the summer. However, there is also a long term question about the gas network given the 2050 Net Zero carbon emissions commitment. Gas is probably not the way forward for heating the Hall, even though it is currently cheaper per unit. It is unlikely that grant applications for gas heating would be successful.

Lower carbon heating/cooling: Two options have been explored – ground source and air source heat pumps. Installing a ground source heat pump would involve digging up the paddock with 1 metre wide trenches, 1.2 metres deep. Refrigerant pipework would be installed in these trenches and then the trenches would be backfilled and reseeded. Pipes would then run in a trench through the Village Hall garden to an external heat pump unit. This would then drive heating/cooling cassettes built into the ceiling or mounted on the walls of the Hall.

An air sourced heat pump is currently used to heat and cool the extension. Air source heat pumps are larger in size than the equivalent ground source heat pump as they have big fan units which extract heat from the air. Locating additional units may be a challenge, but there will be options behind the shed. Ground source heat pumps are more efficient in the long term, but the purchase and installation costs are much higher, often by a factor of 300%.

Based on the sized of the building, at least £35,000 would be the basic cost for a ground source heat pump installation. An air source installation would be around £18,000. The existing heat pump was financed by the Chelveston Windfarm Community Benefit Fund, on the grounds that it was contributing towards decarbonisation. It is likely that a grant application to complete the job for the rest of the Hall would be successful. However, it would only be granted if the building was more energy efficient overall.

Solar panels: To power a lower carbon solution, the installation of solar panels has been explored with a supplier of 3-phase commercial installations. They have recommended the installation of 15 panels on the extension roof with a generation capacity of 6kW and a 9.2kWh battery. The cost of this installation would be of the order of £25,000, including scaffolding and electrical modifications. A full structural survey would be needed as the panels need to be mounted on weighted frames to resist wind pressure. Fixing down into a flat roof is not recommended as it is impossible to guarantee that the roof would remain watertight.

Proposed panel positions

Production vs consumption

Figure 7 - Solar proposal

Modelling of solar generation shows that we could generate around 4,630 units of electricity (4,630 kWh) from these solar panels in year 1 (with a 0.5% reduction in efficiency each year). Even before the installation of electric heat pumps for the main Hall, our annual consumption is 6,600 units (averaging 18 units a day). Most of this consumption is in the late afternoon or evening hours, whereas the generation is focused during the daytime. On a bright day, most of the generation would be exported as the 9.2kWh (9.2 units)

[5] Vulcana Gas Heaters https://www.vulcanagas.co.uk/products/powered-flue-fan-assisted-heaters/kestrel-400/

battery would be quickly charged to its maximum. The installation of solar panels would not be a good investment, as the payback would exceed 12 years.

Door insulation: Draught exclusion and insulation of the two external doors should be an easy win. However, these are original doors from 1864 with curved frames. All previous attempts at draught exclusion have failed. Specialist advice may be needed as "off the shelf" solutions would spoil the period features. Furthermore, sealing the doors would remove the only ventilation for the room, creating an unhealthy environment.

***Ceiling or roof insulation*:** Insulating the ceiling or roof is clearly the big opportunity. All the heat created in the building by the gas heaters currently rises quickly to the ceiling and then is lost into the void above, out into the environment. Insulation would save a large proportion of this.

Figure 8 shows an annotated photograph of the Village Hall ceiling construction. Figure 9 shows the Hall construction in diagrammatic form.

The existing false ceiling is approximately 18ft (5.5m) from the ground. It was installed at this height to clear the gable end windows. Modern venues would normally have a ceiling height of around 13ft (4 metres), which corresponds to the height of the trefoiled pelmet at the top of the wall plate around the Hall.

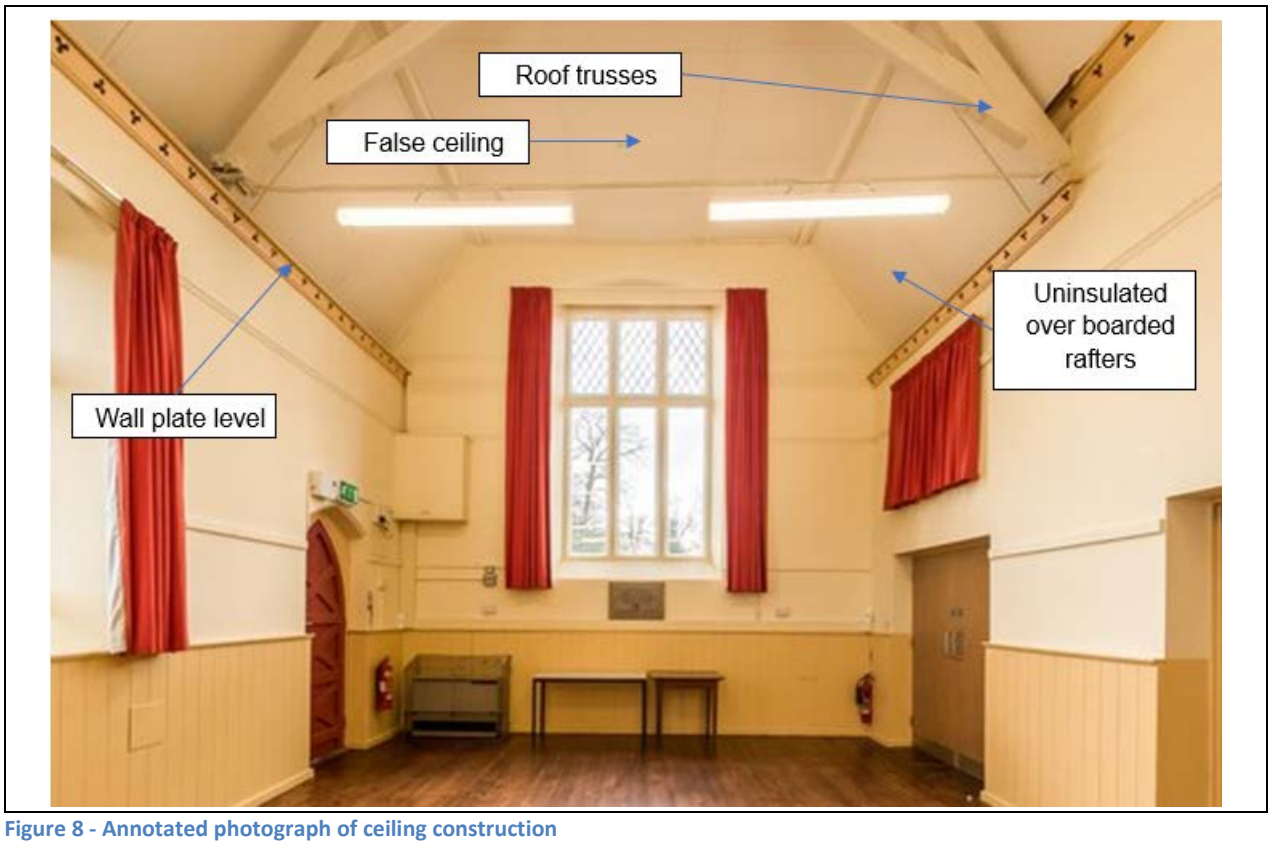

Figure 8 - Annotated photograph of ceiling construction

Any hot air above 4 metres (113 cubic metres of dead space) is effectively wasted as Hall users below derive no benefit from it. Above the false ceiling there is another 102 cubic metres of void which absorbs the heat from below. This is also being unnecessarily heated.

Some venues use automated destratification fans to counter the dead space. These fans create forced vertical air circulation. When the ceiling temperature rises above a set level, the fans are activated, forcing the warm air downwards to displace the colder air that has settled at ground level. Other venues use ceiling heating cassettes which point downwards to force hot air down into the colder layers.

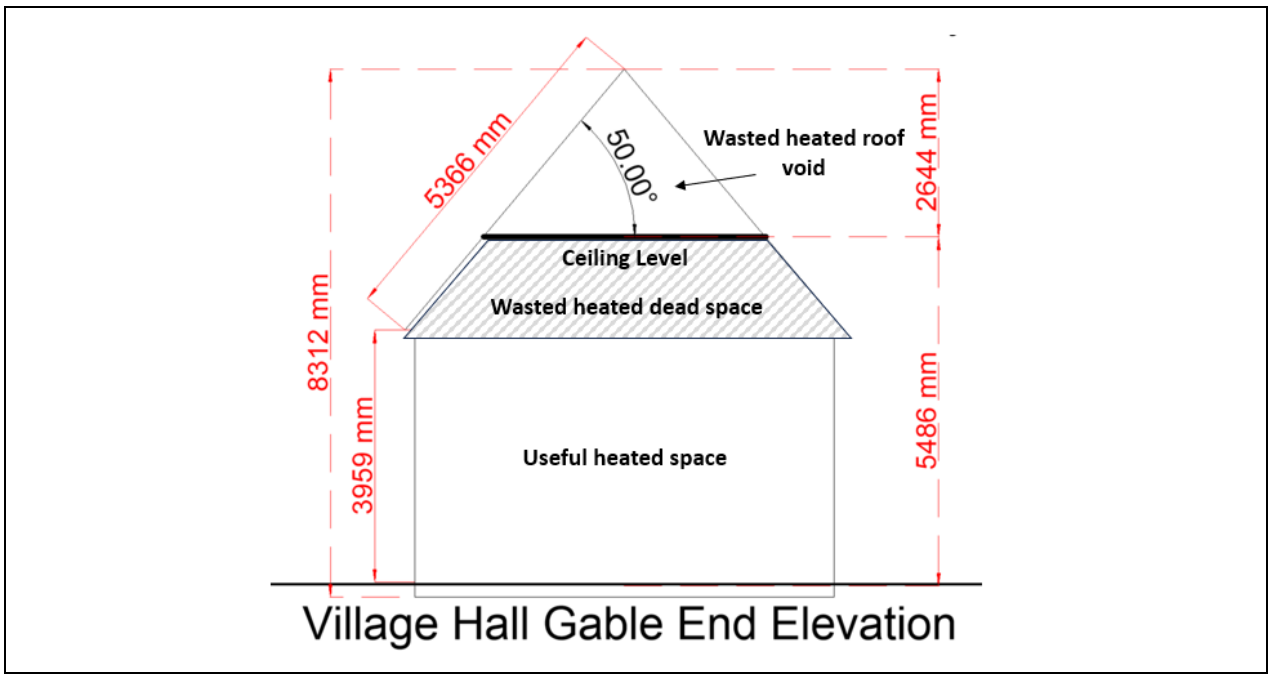

Figure 9 - Diagrammatic elevation showing dead space and roof void

There are two options for ceiling/roof insulation:

1. Remove the false ceiling to reveal the original vaulted roof space and then insulate the whole length of the rafters, before over boarding the insulation at rafter level.
2. Insulate at the false ceiling level, including the currently uninsulated visible rafters.

Option 1: There is no doubt that revealing the original vaulted roof space would look impressive, restoring the building to its 1864 design. However, this would require heating an additional 20% of roof space, which in turn could not be insulated to the same level as a false ceiling. In addition, this arrangement would require fans to be used for forced ventilation and destratification fans to be suspended from the roof vault. The work would also need a full structural survey with engineering calculations to confirm the rafters can take the weight of additional insulation and over boarding.

Option 2: The current false ceiling is low density fibre board and clearly needs to be replaced. It is supported by a network of softwood joists and purlins installed in the 1980s. Removal of this ceiling would permit access to the roof void for the installation of heating and ventilation ducts. A new false ceiling comprising 200mm foil backed insulation board would then be installed. This would be sealed and taped at all joints and junctions before being over-boarded with plasterboard or fire-resistant materials. Sealing is particularly important to eliminate gaps for cluster flies to enter.

Floor insulation: The current Village Hall floor is softwood planking probably installed in the 1970s on the existing 1864 joists. There is evidence that some of these joists have been repaired over the years as they have rotted, or their supporting brick piers have subsided. There is a ventilated 450mm void beneath the floor. Below that is compacted hardcore on earth. There is evidence of a live woodworm infestation in the floorboards but it is not known whether this has moved into the joists.

It is important that the air gap is maintained below the floor to provide ventilation. However, the floor and any insulation should be wind tight, and prevent moisture from the warm air above migrating down into the colder timbers.

For an old building with irregular joists, the gaps between joists are best filled with natural insulation batts which are breathable and flexible. These are cut slightly larger than the gaps between the joists and are squeezed into place to overcome any irregularities. Modern insulation boards could not be cut to an exact

fit and would not have the flexibility to deal with floor movement. Air gaps would appear, creating cold spots on the floor. An example of a solution for a heritage building is shown in Figure 10[6].

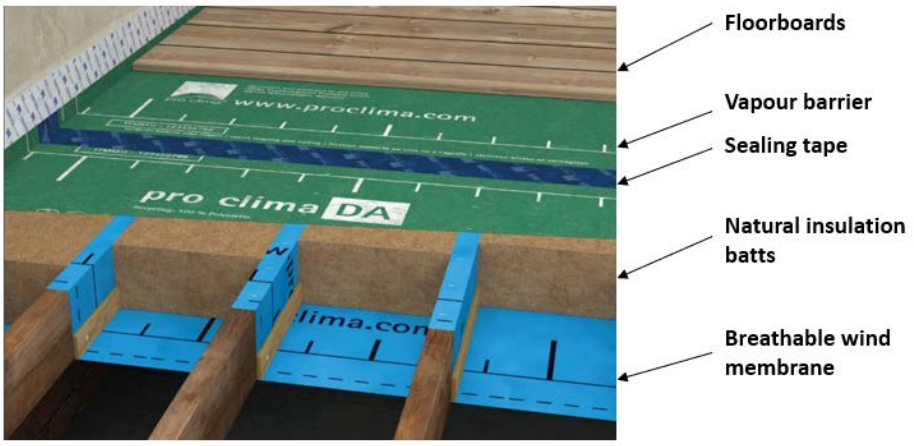

Figure 10 - Insulating the floor

Overall proposed solution for heating/cooling, insulation and ventilation

This will be a major undertaking with a programme of works lasting 3-4 months, involving the closure of the main Hall. The work would be undertaken from late spring to the end of summer, allowing for the use of a temporary marquee erected in the paddock to allow regular classes and meetings to continue.

The programme would be approximately as follows:

1. Move the shed forward to create an area for the bank of heat pumps.
2. Create foundations for the new heat pumps, moving the existing one if required.
3. Create drainage access to the storm or foul sewer for cooling cassette condensate.
4. Plan routes for mechanical and electrical services to heating/cooling and ventilation systems.
5. Install a floored marquee in the paddock with temporary heating and lighting, and a covered walkway to the toilets and kitchen.
6. Scaffold the outside of the Hall to provide safe access to the ridgeline of the roof.
7. Cover the existing floor with boards to spread point loading from scaffolding, mitigating the risk of woodworm induced floor failure.
8. Scaffold up to just below the wall plate level to create a working platform.
9. Remove existing suspended lighting and replace with work lights.
10. Create two “table top” scaffolds in each room which can be moved around as needed to reach the false ceiling and rafters above.
11. Remove the existing false ceiling and debris above it.
12. Rewire existing ceiling routed internet and audio connections as necessary.
13. Remove remaining loose plasterwork to minimise future debris. Make good as required.
14. Review the layout of the softwood supporting joists and adjust as needed to support a new insulated false ceiling.
15. Install frames for access hatches in the false ceiling joists.
16. Install frames for heating/cooling cassettes in the false ceiling joists.
17. Install frames for ventilation ducting in the false ceiling joists.
18. Create two holes in the existing ridge line of the Hall and create leaded formers to support the ventilation turrets.
19. Install electrical services for heating/cooling and ventilation in the roof space.
20. Install the external heat pump units.

[6] Ecological Floor Insulation - https://www.ecologicalbuildingsystems.com/post/suspended-timber-floor-insulation-best-practice-installation-guide

21. Install the heating/cooling cassettes.
22. Install the ventilation turrets.
23. Install 200mm minimum of insulation at the false ceiling level and over the rafters below that, sealing all gaps.
24. Overboard the insulation with fire retardant material and decorate.
25. Install new LED lighting fittings.
26. Commission the heating/cooling and ventilation systems.
27. Remove scaffolding inside and out.
28. Re-plaster the wall between the main Hall and extension and re-decorate.
29. Remove the protective boarding from the floor.
30. Remove the existing gas heaters and arrange for the supply to be disconnected.
31. Lift the existing floor boarding and survey for woodworm in the joists and wainscot panelling. Replace joists and panelling as required.
32. Insulate the two external door frames.
33. Insulate between the joists and install membranes as required.
34. Install new hard-wearing flooring.
35. Decommission the temporary marquee and re-open the Hall.

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timings

Solves:	Challenges 6a, f, g, h, i ,j – from cluster flies to ventilation and heating costs
Estimated cost:	It is impossible to estimate the overall costs of the programme at this stage but £200,000 seems a reasonable estimate. Estimates are being gathered for each phase of the programme.
Duration:	4 months
Proposed timing:	Spring 2033
Source of funds:	75% grant application, 25% reserves
Operational impact:	Significant, we would need to close the Hall and move functions to a marquee
Loss of hire income:	Minimal

7. School House maintenance/development challenges

7.1. Energy performance improvements

School House was extensively refurbished in 2017, inside and out. Only the double glazed windows were left untouched. Although the windows were nearly 30 years old and showing signs of wear, they were at least serviceable. The available budget was spent replacing the Village Hall windows which were single glazed and broken in places.

Prior to the refurbishment, the Energy Performance Certification (EPC) for the property was 39E, just one point above band “F”. In 2018 new regulations were introduced for rental properties requiring a minimal certification of band “E”, with more stringent targets in all categories. Whereas 100mm of loft insulation was rated as good in 2013, 300mm was needed to achieve the same rating in 2018.

As it stood the house would have failed to meet the band “E” threshold. To achieve the higher rating, we needed to increase the level of insulation in the loft and replace the whole heating system with a high efficiency combination boiler. At the same time the front and rear doors were replaced with modern insulated units. The current EPC rating is 51E and the certificate is valid until September 2027.

As the UK pushes towards the Net Zero 2050 target, it is likely that rental properties will need to achieve a minimum EPC rating of band “C”. This had been proposed for enactment in 2028, but it is likely that the forthcoming 2024 election will delay this by 2 years. However, by the time the next certificate is required, the standards will have increased and it likely that the assessed score will fall. Given the extensive works that will be needed, we need to be aware of the options and plan them into our long term budget.

The existing EPC[7] lists four areas of weakness in the insulation (listed in areas of decreasing priority).

1. The solid sandstone walls
2. The double glazed windows
3. The solid floors in the hallway, kitchen, reception room 1 and cloakroom
4. The suspended timber floor in reception room 2

The certificate suggests a number of improvements to reach the band "C" certification:

No.	Improvement	Costs (adjusted for inflation since report)	Rating change
1	Internal or external wall insulation	£6,000-£18,000	+18 points to 69C
2	Suspended floor insulation in reception 2	£1,200-1,800	+2 points to 71C
3	Solar water heating	£4,000-£6,000	+1 point to 72C
4	Solar panels	£5,000-£8,000	+8 points to 80C

Table 2 - EPC improvement options

Research has shown that items 3 and 4 are impractical. School House is oriented East/West and there is no unshaded roof space for solar panels or solar water heaters.

Proposed programme

Internal wall insulation:

There is no practical way to insulate the outside of the stone building. Internal wall insulation is therefore required. The work is unlikely to be practical in the bathroom, kitchen or utility room as these are too small to accommodate the loss of 100mm on two sides. However, there are two single skin alcoves in both front bedrooms that would benefit from 100mm of insulation. This would require moving the two radiators forward and fitting a new window ledge.

The opportunity should be taken to improve sound insulation of the party wall between the Village Hall and School House in the adjoining reception room and bedroom. The current levels of insulation restrict our ability to hire out the Hall for evening functions which seriously disturb the tenants. Insulation could be installed either side of the chimney breast with little loss of amenity.

The cost of this work would be around £3,000.

Reception 2 suspended floor insulation:

The Village Hall solution shown in figure 10 would be used for this suspended floor. The floorboards would be removed and checked for woodworm and rot (the room is adjacent to the Village Hall where infestation has already been detected and the underfloor voids are connected.) The appropriate insulation and membranes would be installed before the wall insulation. Floorboards would then be re-installed or replaced as required.

The cost of this work would be around £1,500 if done at the same time as the wall insulation in that room.

Windows:

Although the double glazed windows are not suggested as an improvement option, they are only rated as "Average" in the report. They are 30 years old and already beyond their useful life. Some warping has taken place and draught excluder has been installed to fill the gaps. They will eventually need to be replaced anyway. Advice taken suggests that installing modern triple glazing at the next refurbishment could be an option, especially if this is pointed out carefully to the assessor, to achieve additional EPC points.

The opportunity should also be taken to choose a frame profile which is more in keeping with the heritage building. With triple glazing, the cost of this improvement would be around £12,000. Installing replacement double glazing would only reduce the cost by around £2,000.

[7] https://find-energy-certificate.service.gov.uk/energy-certificate/8713-6021-8570-3159-9992

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timings

Solves:	Deteriorating 30 year old window frames and poor energy performance
Estimated cost:	£18,000
Duration:	2 months
Proposed timing:	Spring 2027 at the latest
Source of funds:	Our local charities are unlikely to assist with internal upgrades to a private residential property. Some limited assistance may be available from the Great British Insulation Scheme. We have applied for the property to be assessed.
Operational impact:	The work could only be undertaken on a tenancy break.
Loss of hire income:	£2,570 - 2 months rental income

7.2. Left hand chimney restoration

Section 5.1 discussed the 2023 restoration of the gable end chimney. The costs are shown in table 3. The result is a triumph of craftsmanship, restoring the gable end to its 1864 design.

Supplier	Services	Cost
AJ Thurlow Plastering	Initial demolition and aborted rendering	£1,920
Prestige Scaffolding	Scaffolding erection, hire and reconfiguration	£4,740
Prestige Scaffolding	3rd party hoist hire (including fitting)	£1,572
G&M Roofing	Supply and fit lead flashing to whole gable end roof	£1,015
Michael Farrow Ltd	Labour and materials for full demolition and chimney rebuild	£8,478
Charles Orlebar	Rent rebate to tenant	£1,470
	Total	**£19,195**

Table 3 - Gable end chimney restoration costs

It is clear from the photographs in figure 1 that the building would benefit from similar work on the other (left hand) chimney. That restoration would require scaffolding to be installed on both sides of the building. Theoretically, there is less stonework to be restored. However, it would be prudent to allow a similar budget to that required for the gable end, allowing for unforeseen issues.

Whilst this work is not essential for the building to be used safely, the difference in the chimneys is noticeable and detracts from the street scene. This will ultimately affect its “street appeal” on the rental market. It makes sense to schedule in the work during the next tenancy break (avoiding a rent rebate).

Estimated costs, impact and proposed timings

Solves:	This will be an enhancement to the building, improving the street scene
Estimated cost:	£19,000
Duration:	4-6 weeks
Proposed timing:	Next tenancy break after spring 2030
Source of funds:	75% grant, 25% from reserves
Operational impact:	The work could only be undertaken on a tenancy break.
Loss of hire income:	Up to 2 weeks (£625) if a new tenancy is delayed

8. Property strategy 2023-2033

8.1. Summary of the proposed projects

Project Ref	Project Title	Project Description	Total Cost (including loss of income)	Grant funding	Reserves/ operating budget	Proposed timing
S1	Restoration of gable end chimney	Restoration of gable end chimney to 1864 design	£19,195	£12,300	£6,895	Completed, grant application pending
V1	Improved Village Hall ceiling access	Install access hatches and redecorate ceiling	£2,000		£2,000	April 2024
V2	External Village Hall light refurbishment	Replace or refurbish failing LED units	£200		£200	April 2024
V3a	Paddock fencing	Install rabbit fencing	£3,470	£2,610	£870	May 2024
V3b	Additional storage	Install a high security shed in the paddock	£5,110	£3,830	£1,280	May 2024
V3c	Paddock mesh reinforcement	Install surface reinforcement mesh	£10,880	£8,160	£2,720	May 2025
S2	Energy performance improvements to School House	Internal wall and floor insulation, and replacement of windows with triple glazing	£18,000	£6,000	£12,000	Spring 2027 at the latest
S3	Restoring left School House chimney	Restoration of the chimney to the 1864 design to match gable end	£19,000	£14,000	£5,000	Spring 2030 during tenancy break
V4	Insulating, ventilating, and heating Village Hall	Installing ceiling and floor insulation with air source heat pumps	£200,000	£150,000	£50,000	Spring 2033
		Summary	**Total Project Costs**	**Grant funding**	**Reserves/ operating budget**	
		Proposed totals 2023-2033	**£277,855**	**£196,900**	**£80,965**	**71% grants**
		Inflation adjusted totals 2010-2022	**£412,757**	**£227,017**	**£185,740**	**55% grants**

Table 4 - Summary of projects 2023-2033

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8.2. Financial implications

Whilst the 2023-2033 proposals appear ambitious, their overall scale is modest when compared to the works undertaken and funded in the previous decade. From 2010-2022 grants provided 55% of the necessary funding. The balance was drawn from reserves and operational income. For the next decade, we are proposing that 67% of the necessary funds would be provided by grants.

Caution for the next decade is dictated by the current reserves position and the operational headwinds that we face following the pandemic and energy crisis. The relevant figures are shown in table 5 adjusted for inflation.

Period	Starting reserves	Starting Village Hall Income	Starting School House Income
2010-2022	£123,600	£3,100	£6,640
2023-2033	£41,300	£14,000	£15,060

Table 5 - Inflation adjusted reserves and income

The benefit of the £413,000 investment since 2010 is very clear as shown in figure 11. Each major investment kick started a growth in income.

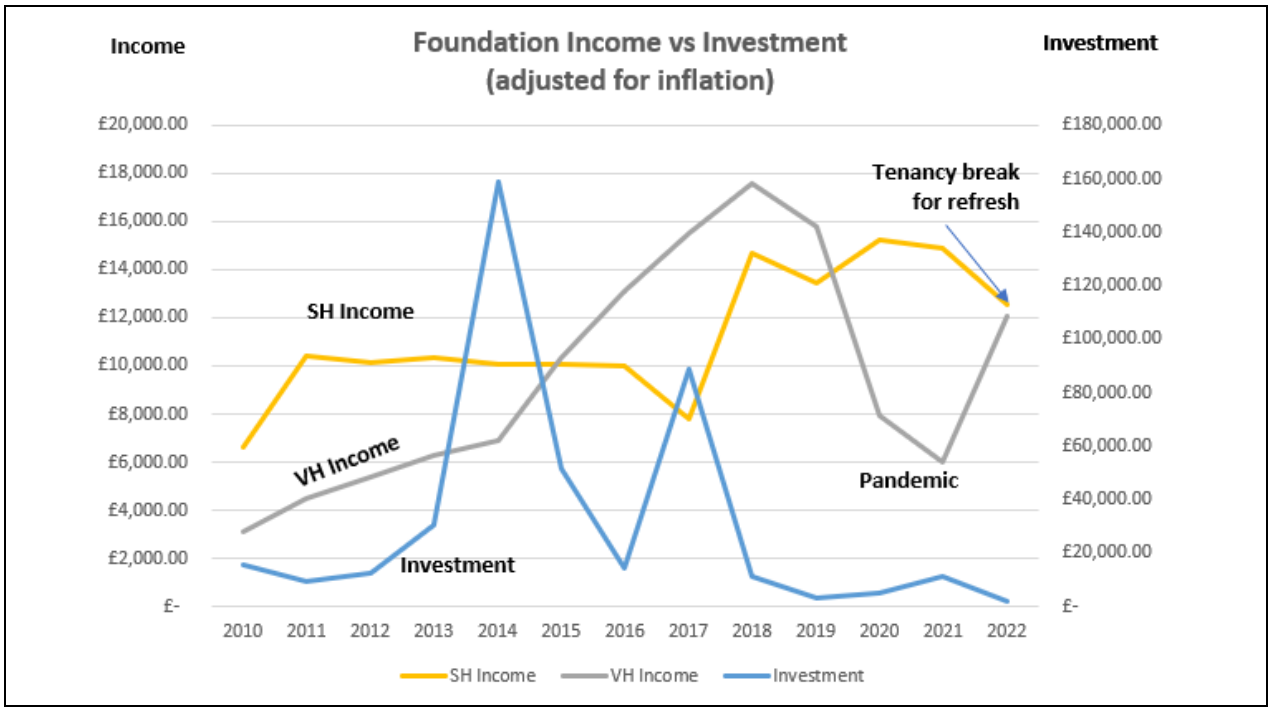

Figure 11 - Impact of investment on income

School House continues to perform well and is generating the highest yield ever, with the 2024 income projected to be £15,060 if the tenant stays the full year. In terms of operating surplus, School House can easily yield a rental income surplus of 60% in a full year of tenancy (£8,800). Even in a year of décor refresh between tenancies (e.g. 2022) the rental income surplus is around 20% (£2,500). These surpluses build reserves and subsidise the charitable hires of the Village Hall.

By contrast, the Village Hall is struggling to recover from the pandemic years and from the energy crisis. The Hall is highly reliant on its "anchor" hirer, Ruby's Ballet Academy. Many other classes have not restarted after the pandemic, and others are struggling with the increase in hire fees. The Ballet Academy now accounts for 45% of all hire income. They are running 3 fewer sessions a week when compared to the peak year of 2018 because parental demand has fallen. The operating surplus for the Village Hall peaked at £2,963 in 2018 (20% of the £14,112.) In 2023 there was an operating loss of £440 on an income of £14,018.

8.3. Project phasing

School House:

To attract the best rent in a competitive market, School House must be an attractive, energy efficient property which is well maintained by the caretakers. No major works are required in 2024-2025 (unless the tenant vacates) and so this period should be used to build reserves, ready for the energy efficiency improvements and window replacements proposed for 2026 (Project S2).

The restoration of the left chimney (Project S3) is not urgent and is planned for 2030. However, if our local grant funding partners have capacity, then this project could be brought forward to a suitable tenancy break before then. With planning it could take place during the insulation phase of S2 with the window replacement taking place once scaffolding is down.

Village Hall:

The focus of the next few years must be on maintaining the usability of the Hall by ensuring that it is attractive and well maintained both internally and externally. Our hire fees are now at the upper end market and we need to do everything we can to ensure that this does not deter potential hirers.

It will not be possible to host large evening functions as the disruption is too much for the School House tenants. We therefore need to attract more regular classes and society hirers and capture as much of the local children's party market as possible.

Given the 2023 operating loss, we plan to hold hire fees at their existing level for 2024 and should aim to maintain this level for as long as possible for existing hirers. Further increases would impact on the viability of their classes and risk the Hall losing their business. Specific discounts may be needed to assist with the some classes at risk of closing. There is no evidence that the existing hire fees for parties are a problem and so these can be maintained at current levels.

Projects V1 and V2 (ceiling access/redecoration and external lighting repairs) need to be undertaken as soon as possible. The current state of both the ceiling and lights does not reflect well on the Hall. Both projects are scheduled for Easter 2024 when the Hall will be closed for 2 weeks.

Project V3a (paddock rabbit fencing) has a similar objective. The rabbit burrows are unsightly in the paddock, requiring part of it to be fenced off. They are also encroaching on the Village Hall garden. The car park track needs to be re-gravelled in 2024, and potholes filled, but this should not be undertaken until machinery needed in the paddock has left.

Project V3b (new storage shed) will allow us to declutter the main Hall, removing equipment which is infrequently used and freeing up wall space. This will improve the Hall's usability and appeal.

Project V3c offers a marginal improvements to the Hall's usability, but is not critical to the Hall's profitability. Adding mesh reinforcement to the paddock surface will allow it to be used for longer periods of the year and will allow areas of the main car park to be "rested" if they get too wet. It is proposed that project V3c be re-evaluated at the beginning of 2025.

The heating and ventilation project V4 is not urgent. The usability of the Village Hall is only partly dependent on its heating efficiency, provided that it still can be warmed up sufficiently and quickly. Energy costs made up 12% of hire charges in 2019, climbing to 35% in 2023. This severely impacted on hire charges, significantly reducing demand from hirers. Energy costs will fall to 22% of hire charges in 2024 and our tariff has been fixed for 3 years to provide some certainty.

Project V4 has therefore been scheduled for the end of the planning period (spring 2033), prioritising School House projects and allowing reserves to be generated. However, if another one of the existing Village Hall heating units fails, then this will need to be reconsidered, or a temporary solution found.

8.4. Conclusions

The next few years will challenging ones for the Foundation. There will be many financial challenges to overcome and several complex projects to manage, all against the backdrop of a changing body of Trustees and volunteers. Most of the existing Trustees and volunteers will be stepping down at some point during

the period covered by this strategy as their terms of office come to an end. Securing the input and support of a new generation of volunteers is an important task for 2024.

This strategy aims to provide an initial road map for those who follow. It proposes investing £81,000 of accumulated reserves over the 11-year period 2023-2033 (at 2023 prices.) This will require School House to perform at its peak and for the Village Hall to at least break even each year. Good operational management of both properties will be essential to achieve this.

The strategy also requires £197,000 of grants to be secured. This will need a trusted relationship to be developed with our local grant making partners, and a track record of good project delivery to be maintained.

Researched and written by:
Adrian Dale
Clerk to the Trustees
January 2024