

'Hands off our green' demand to council

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by DOUGLAS WYTHE



Residents sign up to fight the community centre plan

RESIDENTS strode out on to Hythe's green to deliver the resounding message: "We don't want a community centre here."

At least 150 people turned up at a gathering organised by Hythe Green Preservation Society.

Chairman Gary Muers announced: "We represent the people for whose benefit the green was given in trust."

"Our need for recreational open space was recognised more than 100 years ago and that need is even greater today."

"We are totally opposed to any building or other development on Hythe green or any use that would deprive us of our right to use the green as public open space for the recreation and enjoyment of all."

Deplore attempt

"We deplore Hythe council's attempt to build a community centre on the green which, in any event, we and many other residents say is not appropriate in the form proposed and not needed."

"There are many under-used buildings in the town that are far more accessible to those for whom community centre facilities are needed, such as the less well-off, the elderly and young people."

Mr Muers said the preservation society deplored the failure of Hythe council to properly consult with residents in the green area.

Some society members have asked the council for a town meeting on the community centre issue. A date has not so far been set.

Mr Muers concluded: "Finally, we wish to draw Hythe council's attention to both the wording and intention behind the terms of the bequest of Hythe green to the people of Hythe and call upon the council to honour both to the letter."

"Any lesser action is unacceptable to us and we will oppose it with all the vigour at our command."

Local councillors Wendy Harris and Chris Capon were at the open meeting.

Cllr Harris said: "It is nice to see such a wide selection of local people united over the issue."

Cllr Capon confirmed his view that there was no need for a community centre anywhere in Hythe.

Further research

He said: "We have 17 halls and I would rather see the money involved in a community centre invested and spread among them."

Hythe council has issued a statement updating its position on the community centre project.

It points out it has researched further into the history and ownership of the green "to dispel some of the myths of it having been left in trust".

The council has sought legal advice on the interpretation of the covenant by the corporation entered into on November 9, 1853, and the subsequent releasing covenant of February 12, 1862.

An application for outline planning permission for a community centre to be built on the green has been submitted.

The council has received nominations from five prospective major users — the Rotary Club, Hythe Civic Society, Hythe Chamber of Commerce and Industry, St Leonards Players and Hythe Townswomen's Guild — as members of an administration committee.

Nominations have also been received for town councillors Maurice Maisey and Geoffrey Partridge and a retired solicitor.

The community centre administration committee will have its first official meeting later this month. It is intended that at that meeting a grant application will be approved for submission to Kent County Council and Shepway council.