



**Report for Eversdens Parish Council in respect of community
consultation on provision of a Public Works Loan of £50,000 to the
Eversdens Recreation Area Charity**

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About Cambridgeshire ACRE

Cambridgeshire ACRE is an independent organisation, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. We are part of the national ACRE Network of 38 similar organisations in England.

Our vision is to have thriving rural communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We therefore strive for positive change and work with others to improve the lives of those living and working in rural communities.

Our action-driven approach is supported by our team of staff who are experts in their field and not influenced by any other body. Communities can therefore have peace of mind knowing that their ambitions are in the best possible hands.

Our aim is to help rural communities seize opportunities and drive their projects forward, which includes improving their accessibility to services, information and funding. More information on Cambridgeshire ACRE's work with rural communities can be found at <https://www.cambsacre.org.uk>.

Where local organisations and communities need additional, in-depth support, we offer a consultancy service where we make a charge for the support delivered. We have developed this service by building up our skills, knowledge and competencies using our experiences from across our work and also bringing in expertise from external associates where we believe it will add value. You can see examples of the consultancy assignments we have delivered on our website at <https://www.cambsacre.org.uk/what-we-do-cambridgeshire-acre/partnership-consultancy/>

Background

In August 2022, Eversdens Parish Council approached Cambridgeshire ACRE for advice on how to take forward issues concerning community facilities in Eversden parish.

Following discussion, the Parish Council asked Cambridgeshire ACRE to undertake a consultation exercise with the community to establish if residents would be in favour of the Parish Council taking out a Public Works Loan of £50k to be passed to The Eversdens Recreation Area (Charity number: 1111729) as a grant to help meet the costs of redeveloping the Pavilion.

A consultation pack (including a letter from the Parish Council, further information on the planned redevelopment of the Pavilion and a response form) was sent to all 348 residential addresses in The Eversdens on 24 January 2023.

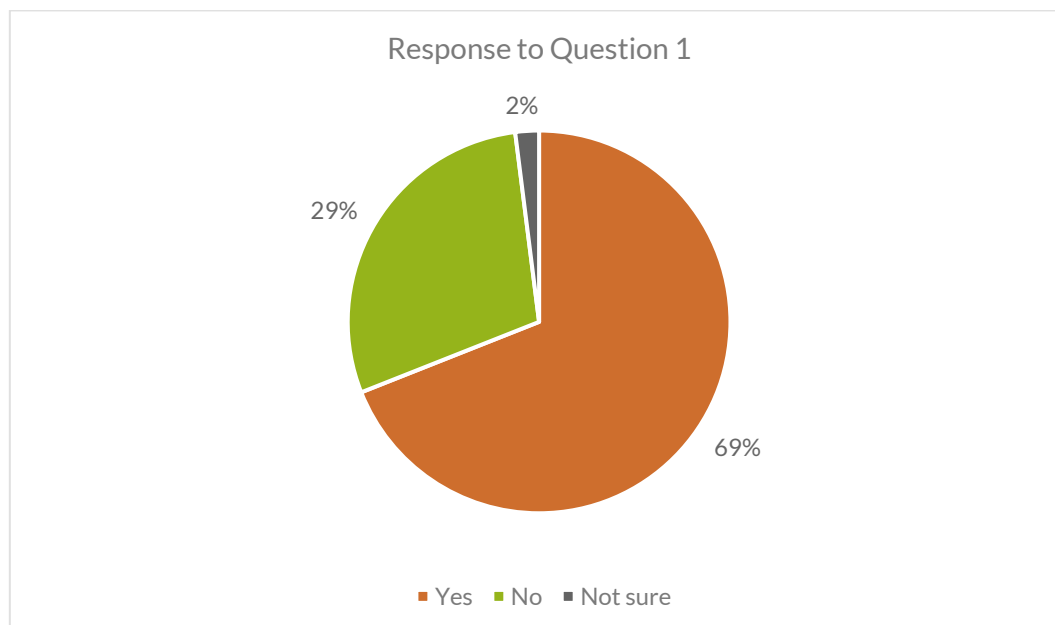
A closing date for return of responses was set as 10 February 2023, but late responses received up to and including those received on 15 February were analysed to ensure all residents had had the opportunity to give their views.

A total of 131 responses were received, meaning the consultation achieved a response rate of 38%.

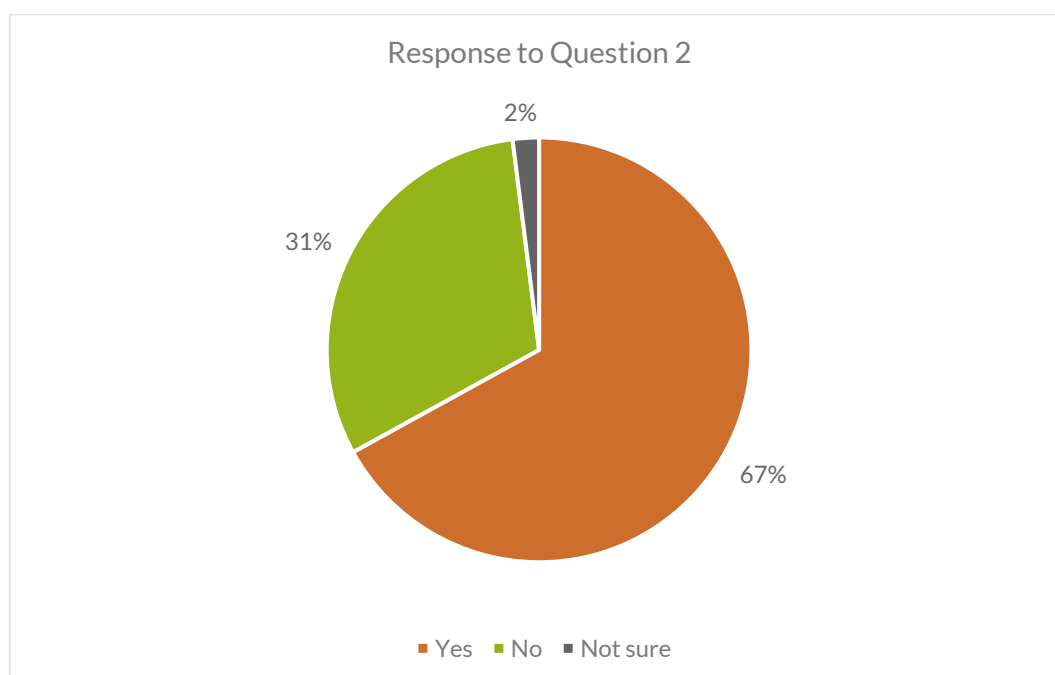
This report summarises the consultation responses received.

Consultation Results

Q1. Is your household in favour of the Parish Council taking out a Public Works Loan of £50,000 to pass to The Eversdens Recreation Area (Charity number: 1111729) as a grant to help meet the costs of redeveloping the Pavilion?



Q2. Is your household in favour of the Parish Council taking out a Public Works Loan of £50,000 to pass to The Eversdens Recreation Area (Charity number: 1111729) as a grant to help meet the costs of redeveloping the Pavilion, if it includes a council tax precept increase of an estimated 9% (equivalent to £9.90 a year for the average household) for the purpose of the loan repayments?



Additional comments

A number of respondents included additional comments with their response forms and these are set out below verbatim:

- No, unless the charity runs an open bar in the Pavilion
- The proposed new pavilion is not what is needed by our community. The community has not been properly consulted on this proposal. All that the new pavilion will effectively provide is luxury football changing facilities. In a village survey conducted a few years ago, less than 10% of residents expressed an interest in local sporting activity. The function room idea that is attached to the plans for the new pavilion will only divert activity and funds from the Village Hall which is in a similar state of disrepair to the existing pavilion. The new pavilion will accelerate the demise of the Village Hall. I am completely opposed to this project which is, in my opinion, a waste of public funding. What we need is a purpose-built community hub to serve both the recreation ground and the village hall needs.
- It would benefit relatively few in the village. The available space would be better used by creating a decent village hub to include, for instance, a café and a small shop.
- Combine the Recreation Ground and Village Hall into one facility to serve all purposes. No need for both to run separately then we would be in favour.
- I cannot see the point in taking out a loan for a project that has not been properly costed nor funding arranged for the majority of the cost.
- A bus or a shop!!! This is all about rich people! We need a bus and a shop!!
- It would still have been better to sell the Village Hall and have one central hub for both Great and Little.
- In the documents sent there is no reason WHY. There is no identified need. And bizarrely the proposal suggests that there may be two underused village halls. There are no identified benefits. Penultimate para indicated £90,000+ capital repayments for no social or business benefits.
- With the current cost of living crisis as it is, we do not agree. We do not use the recreation ground. We will not be forced to pay for it. We apologise but it is not the right time to ask people for money.
- Unsure, too few details about proposed development. Haven't see any plans. Can't see the need for hugely increased parking.
- The proposed pavilion is a vanity project. It is not what the community wants or needs. The community has not been properly consulted on the proposal. All the new pavilion will effectively provide is luxury football changing facilities. In a village survey conducted around 8 years ago, only 8% of residents expressed an interest in local football activity. As it stands at present, the majority of youth footballers using the recreation ground during the winter months are from other villages. I am not convinced that young footballers will even use the new changing facilities because of parents' concern about safety. Parents tend to turn up to matches with the kids already in kit and return home to shower and change. The inadequate function room attached to the plans for the new pavilion will only serve to divert activity and funds from the Village Hall, a Grade 2 listed building in a similar state of disrepair to the existing pavilion. The new pavilion will accelerate the demise of the Village Hall. I am completely opposed to this project that, in my opinion, is a waste of public funding.
- Given the rising cost of living, we feel it is difficult to ask a village to contribute extra funds towards something that will not have wider community benefit. The pavilion, from what we can see, whilst being a good sporting venue, is possibly a missed opportunity to combine various other community spaces with both villages to create something that would benefit our whole community and create a lasting legacy. It is one

thing to build a new building but we should be looking a vision to consolidate our assets to sustain a high quality building into the future that the whole community and future residents can enjoy and benefit from.

Conclusion

In conclusion:

- The consultation achieved a response rate of 38% (131 out of 348 households surveyed). This should be considered a good response rate; most community consultations achieve somewhere between 15% and 20% in Cambridgeshire ACRE's experience.
- Over two thirds of those households who responded (69%) are in favour of Parish Council taking out a Public Works Loan of £50,000 to pass to The Eversdens Recreation Area as a grant to help meet the costs of redeveloping the Pavilion.
- This percentage drops very slightly to 67% in favour, if taking out the Public Works Loan means a council tax precept increase of an estimated 9% (equivalent to £9.90 a year for the average household) for the purpose of the loan repayments.

Eversdens Parish Council must now consider the public consultation response and decide on whether to take out the proposed Public Works Loan.

Appendix – A note on the data collected

The data collection spreadsheet into which all returns were input for analysis can be made available to the Parish Council upon request.

The original response forms will be retained by Cambridgeshire ACRE for a period of six months and then destroyed, unless the Parish Council would like these posted to them for safekeeping in the longer term.