

A rare opportunity exists in Mildenhall to bring together a range of public services on to one site, making access easier and cutting costs. A project group, involving the potential partners, is now exploring the possibility of creating a 'Mildenhall Hub'.

Mildenhall is well-served by public facilities, but some buildings are either coming to the end of their planned lives, or need major investment. As the town grows, demand for these facilities will increase. And as the map inside shows, the facilities are also spread across the town.



Mildenhall
College



Forest Heath
District Council



Those currently involved in exploring the idea of a Mildenhall Hub are:

- Mildenhall College
- Forest Heath District Council
- Mildenhall swimming pool and The Dome (Anglia Community Leisure)

The Suffolk Constabulary, County Council and those who provide health and other facilities in the town are also interested in the idea of a public service hub and will be involved in the discussions over the coming months. Other partners may also wish to be involved.

A new website www.mildenhallhub.info is now available which will be updated by partners as the project progresses.

PLANNING AND HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS

Part of any proposal would be demonstrating how the Hub could meet planning and highways requirements, and be a good neighbour to nearby residents. Careful design and public engagement will therefore be an essential element of any project. The partners are also making public their aspiration for a hub at this time so the idea can be considered (and tested) in the next stage of consultation in the Site Allocations Local Plan for Mildenhall, which starts in autumn 2013. There will be plenty of opportunities for people to find out more and comment on any proposals that may come forward.

NEXT STEPS

At this stage, the Hub project is simply a concept that the various partners would like to explore. There is a long way to go in terms of developing a viable scheme, consulting the local community and seeking the necessary approvals. However, the partners believe that by aiming high at the outset, something exceptional can be achieved for Mildenhall and the surrounding villages in terms of the future delivery of public services in the town.

Next steps include:

- identifying the full range of partners who could be involved in phase one of the Hub;
- agreeing how to manage the project;
- developing and agreeing a detailed business case;
- securing support and funding from partners and other agencies;
- ensuring any Hub proposal is integral to any adopted plans for the future of Mildenhall.

CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

Information will be shared at all stages of the project, and there will be many chances to get involved and have your say.

We will keep you up to date as we progress on
www.mildenhallhub.info,
or email: natasha.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk



Where it is practical, many public organisations in Suffolk now look to share sites with their partners. This allows them to share property costs while improving customer access and service delivery. Bringing sports facilities, education, council and potentially also police, health and library services into one location makes access simple and convenient for residents as well as saving taxpayers' money.

The partners are looking at whether the College's Sheldrick Way site (the site of the former Riverside Middle School) would be feasible as a location but at this stage the Mildenhall Hub is simply a bold concept.

OTHER SERVICES

The strength of the Hub concept is that it can be flexible enough to accommodate other partners from the public, voluntary, community and private sectors at the outset, or in the future, as needs change.

PARKING AND PUBLIC ACCESS

Making sure people can easily get to services at the Hub, and that any impacts on the surrounding areas are kept to a minimum, will be an essential element of the project. Roads, car parking, bus and cycle routes, and access for pedestrians from the town centre will all need to be considered carefully.

WHY SHELDRIK WAY?

In relation to the council services and police, the Hub concept might be viable at other locations in the town. However, the 'Riverside' site at Sheldrick Way is the only one which offers the chance to provide education, leisure and public services all in one place.

VACATED SITES

If the Sheldrick Way scheme goes ahead then the existing sites occupied by the partners elsewhere in the town may not be needed. Any proceeds from their sale may need to be put towards the cost of the Hub. And any redevelopment of these vacated sites would be subject to normal planning processes.



POLICE

Suffolk Constabulary are involved in the early stages of the project so that it can inform their future property plans.

HEALTH

Health providers are also involved in early-stage discussions about the plans for a single public service hub.

SPORTS AND LEISURE

A new sports centre facility, operated by Anglia Community Leisure. This would include a six-lane swimming pool, modern fitness facilities, as well as a sports hall and grass and all-weather pitches (shared with Mildenhall College). This would replace both the existing swimming pool and The Dome complex.

COUNCILS

A shared building which will provide customer services, office facilities and meeting space for Forest Heath District Council. Suffolk County Council and its partners may also wish to share the building. We will also look at whether the meeting areas could be available for community use outside of office hours. The taxpayer will benefit from the savings achieved from a single, modern, energy-efficient building.

LIBRARY

There may be an opportunity for a new and modern town library, with strong links to the College, which will be explored.

MILDENHALL COLLEGE

Mildenhall College is currently split across two sites, with years 7 and 8 based at Sheldrick Way, and years 9-13 at Bury Road. The college needs to be located on one unified site, where it can improve the quality of its existing teaching facilities. It also wants to develop its educational offer to the wider community. If successful in its bid to convert to academy status, Mildenhall College and its partner, the Academy Transformation Trust, wishes to develop sixth form and further education provision to a new level with local training facilities for both young people and adults, including lifelong learning opportunities for the whole community.

