



Mendlesham Community Centre Charity



We would like to say a big “thank you” to all our parishioners and local organisations that completed the survey about what our new village hall should offer.

Your opinions will help to shape the building and its amenities.
A summary of the various views is on the following pages.

We are also most grateful to those people who have offered to help further and if you have expertise in any field that could help us to succeed please get in touch with Amy, the Parish Clerk at:
parishclerk@mendlesham-pc.gov.uk

Many thanks,

Andy Davey

Chair of the Mendlesham Community Centre Charity

Mendlesham Community Centre Charity

Public Consultation April – May 2026

Introduction

A well-attended public meeting was held on 25th February 2026 to discuss the development of new community facilities prior to the sale of the existing community hall. The meeting was also prompted by the availability of the URC chapel as a potential village amenity. There was a clear preference for a new building on the playing field to cover all the community's needs.

As a follow up, a short survey was distributed to community groups and to all households in the parish to ask what features and facilities the new building should have.

131 responses were received, with 125 from individuals/households (representing about 17% of the households in the parish), and 6 from groups or organisations in the parish.

Key outcomes from the survey are summarised on the following pages and these will contribute to shaping the design and operation of the community centre.

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Preferences from Individuals / Households

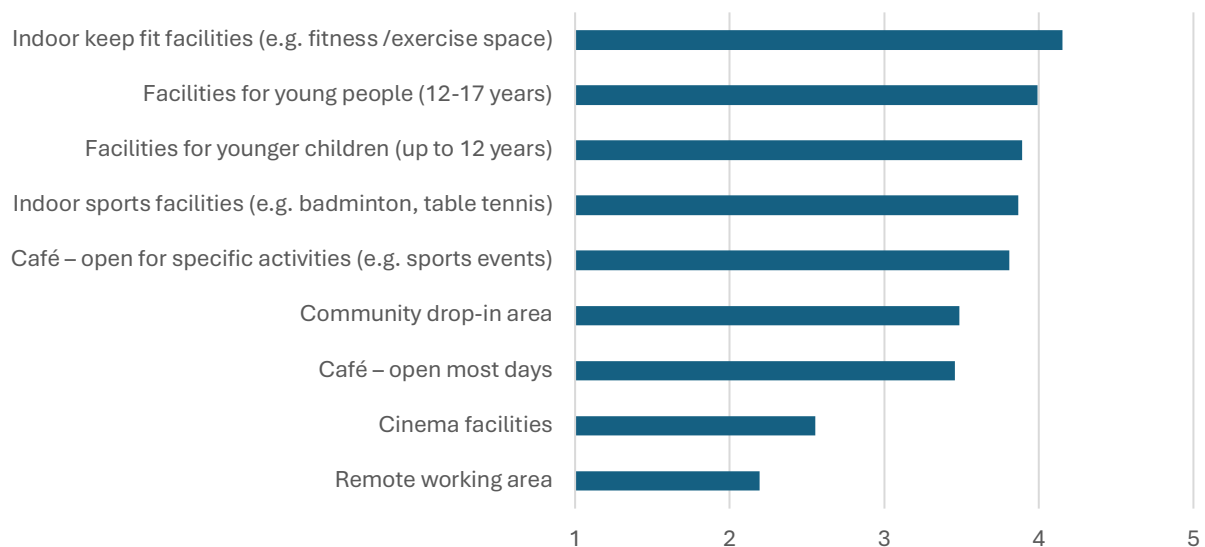
There were three preference questions in the survey. Respondents ranked various features from least to most important (on a scale of 1 to 5). The results are presented below, ordered from those seen as most important at the top to least important at the bottom.

Note that the mid-point of the scale is 3, so above that are seen as more important / desirable and below that as less important / desirable.

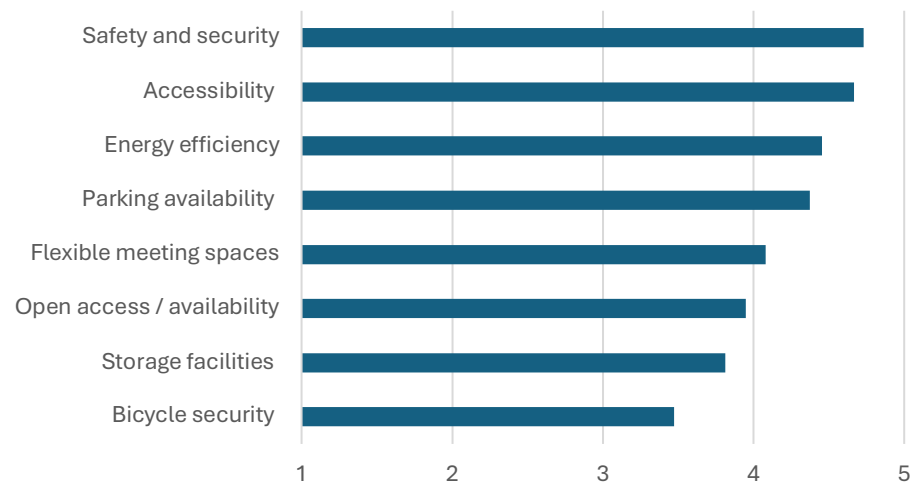
Physical features



Potential uses



Building design features



Building Operation and Community Engagement

There were four questions in the survey relating to the operation of the building and gauging support for the staffing and development of the building.

How should the building be operated?

Accessed only by booking	80	67.2%	
Open access	39	32.8%	

Responses 119

If open access – how should it be staffed?

Salaried employees	43	55.8%	
Volunteers	34	44.2%	

Responses 77

Would you / your organisation volunteer to staff the building?

Yes	13	11.7%	
Maybe	43	38.7%	
No	55	49.5%	

Responses 111

Are you willing to contribute to planning group?

Yes *	31	25.2%	
Maybe	53	43.1%	
No	39	31.7%	
Responses	123		

* Those expressing a willingness to contribute to a planning group were prompted to contact the Parish Clerk.

Free text comments from Individuals / Households

For each of the questions above there was an opportunity to add free text comments. There was a considerable number of contributions, totalling over 3,500 words.

The responses were analysed with the following emerging as prominent themes. The themes are ordered broadly by emphasis placed on them, with the most prominent at the top.

Theme	Summary of comments
Kitchen, Bar & Social Facilities	Kitchen facilities and bar access were among the strongest-rated features. Numerous respondents emphasised that a fully equipped, catering-standard kitchen is essential for large village events. Several noted the importance of a bar, particularly considering the possible closure of the pub. A café was broadly welcomed, with many supporting café availability tied to specific events or activities. Some questioned the viability of opening daily.
Sports & Active Facilities	Sports facilities attracted strong support; changing rooms and showers for football were frequently cited as essential. Indoor fitness space (keep fit, exercise classes, yoga/Pilates) received high scores. Caution was raised about badminton courts requiring costly high ceilings. Storage for sports equipment (tables, chairs, carpet bowls, football kit) was a repeated concern.
Accessibility, Safety & Energy Efficiency	Respondents stressed that the building must be accessible for all ages and abilities. Energy efficiency came with specific suggestions including solar panels, battery storage and air-source heat pumps. CCTV and alarm systems were frequently mentioned under safety.
Facilities for Children & Young People	Facilities for under-12s and 12 to 17-year-olds received strong backing in the comments. Several respondents called for youth clubs, after-school social spaces, and supervised activities. A café was seen as a potential informal drop-in for teenagers. Outdoor play provision for younger children was mentioned in the context of the growing village population. Some raised safeguarding considerations and the need for paid youth workers.
Design Flexibility & Parking	A recurring theme was the need for flexible, subdivided spaces rather than one large, fixed hall. Respondents wanted rooms that can be configured for different group sizes and activities. Parking was a significant practical concern, especially for larger events and at school pick-up times. The 50-50 shop relocation was seen as a practical necessity but not a driver of design.

Theme	Summary of comments
Operational Model & Financial Sustainability	A majority preferred a booking-only model, though many acknowledged a hybrid approach could work. The strongest operational theme was financial sustainability: respondents stressed the need for a business plan, income generation strategy, and awareness of staffing costs. The bar, café and room hire were seen as primary revenue streams.
Community Identity & Inclusion	Many respondents expressed enthusiasm for the project as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity. The centre was widely seen as potential community hub to replace social functions currently dispersed across the village. Inclusion across all age groups was emphasised.
Features Viewed Less Positively	Cinema facilities, remote working areas and a craft/gift shop received the lowest mean scores. Several respondents felt a cinema room, dedicated remote working space and permanent retail unit would reduce flexibility, add cost and serve too small an audience to be worthwhile.
The URC Chapel	A small but notable thread of comments concerned the United Reform Chapel as a potential complementary or interim community space. Respondents suggested it could be repurposed for smaller groups (WI, Over 60s, Brownies, coffee mornings) rather than duplicating all functions in the new centre. Some viewed preserving the chapel as an important heritage consideration for the village.
Process & Communication	Several respondents expressed appreciation for the consultation process and urged regular community updates as the project progresses. A minority expressed frustration at the lack of progress. One respondent advocated for a dedicated steering group. Others flagged the importance of a business plan, gap analysis of local facilities, and clear decisions about whether this is a community centre, sports pavilion or both before further design work proceeds.

Responses from Groups and Organisations

Of the six groups and organisations that responded:

- 2 had up to 15 members, 3 had 15 to 30 members, and 1 had 61 to 100 members.
- 4 groups met weekly, and 2 monthly.
- 4 currently meet in the Old School Room with the others meeting at a variety of other locations including the current community centre hall.
- 4 were very likely and two somewhat likely to use the new community centre.

Preferences from Organisations and Community groups

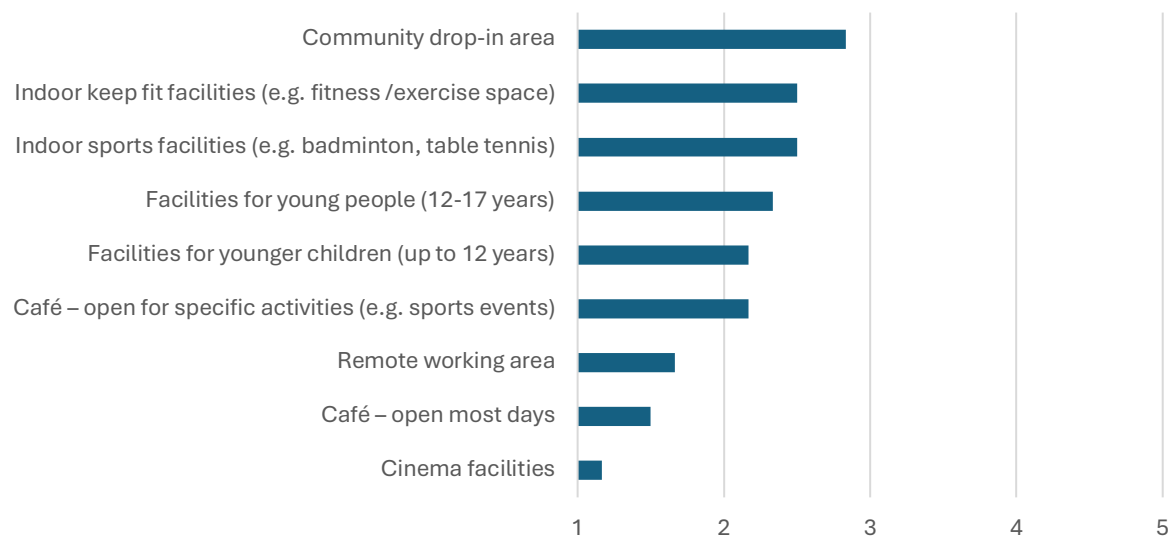
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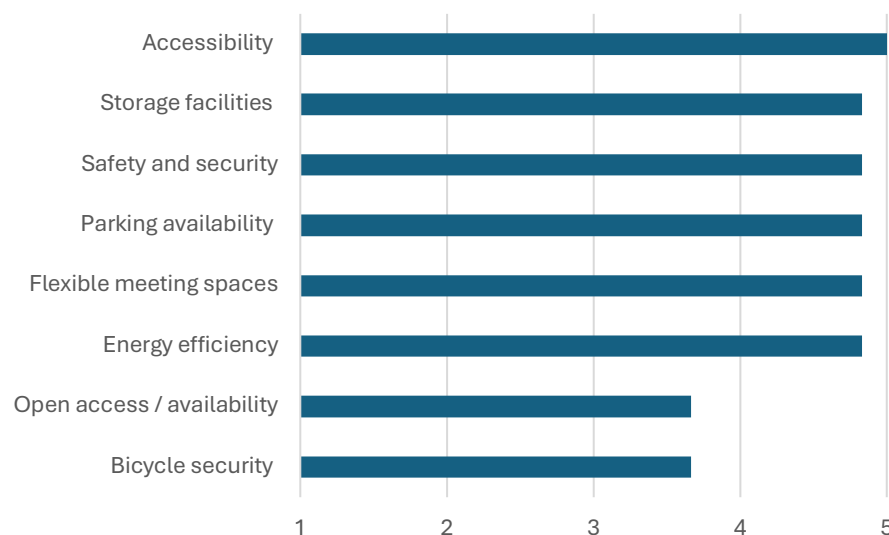
Physical features



Potential uses



Building design features



Building Operation and Community Engagement

There were four questions in the survey relating to the operation of the building and gauging support for the staffing and development of the building.

Of the six groups and organisations that responded:

- 5 preferred access only by booking, with 1 open access preferred
- 4 preferred staffing by salaried employees, with 1 preferring volunteers
- 2 suggested that their members might volunteer to staff the building if open access, with 4 saying that theirs would not volunteer
- 3 respondents were willing to contribute to the group developing plans for the new community centre, and 3 might be willing to contribute.

Free text comments from Organisations and Community groups

With only 6 responding organisations a thematic analysis of free text comments is not practical.

Reproduced below are verbatim key responses relating to organisation and group requirements.

Summary of comments

Use of outside space adjoining to be included when hiring hall

Sport changing rooms with toilet and shower facilities including for match officials are vital to enter the leagues we play in. A bar would be great for use of match days and training evenings.

In addition small meeting room would be used for committee meetings, with larger are utilise to run large club events such as presentations evenings, and the annual race night which regular get 100-120 people in attendance.

Are people numbers based on seated or standing?

A multi purpose space that could be divided according to need would be practical.

Toilets separate to any sports area

Darts. Clubs or groups for younger people would be important but not sure of facilities required.

Open access might mean building mainly used for public toilets.

Good lighting in area important for security.

Free high speed broadband , wifi, projector and large screen are pre-requisites for this group. Safe storage e.g locker specifically for this group.

As a football club, there is specific funding that we can access through the FA for development of new facilities. There are also specific FA and league requirements in terms of space for changing areas and shower facilities.

We are keen to work alongside yourself to ensure all facilities are fit for purposes now and further proofed.

In the event of closure of the pub in the village then this will affect decision around bar opening hours and the need for a steward/manager

The space needs to be secure.

We have to ensure that if a group books the space that others are not walking in to use toilet facilities etc. the safety of our members is the highest priority