

The PRA Committee has applied to Mole Valley District Council to keep the School as an Asset of Community Value. It's been a community hub for around 11 years and is sorely missed.

**If we're successful OPS could remain a community hub.**

**To support us please:**

❖ **Sign one of our petitions:** online link via our website / paper at your door

❖ **Write to MVDC** - Development Manager, Pippbrook, Dorking RH4 1SJ

Use reference MO/2024/1306/ACV

Either post it or drop it through letterboxes at 21 Downs View / Flagman's House, 54 Pixham Lane / 35 Leslie Rd.

OR

❖ Send your comments online using the MVDC Planning portal

The application was registered on 22/8/24. Use reference MO/2024/1306

**CLOSING DATE**

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024.**

### **What's it all about?**

You might have seen the MVDC notice on the lamp-post outside OPS. It refers to the PRA's ACV application.

We recently discovered the Asset of Community Value (ACV) scheme. It's to keep community buildings in use as such when they're threatened with closure or sale.

Local Councils can add such a building to their ACV register. If they do this for OPS, we'd have first chance to buy when OPS is next on the market. [Assets of Community Value \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

MVDC might possibly refuse the application to convert OPS into a dental surgery, or the company who's bought it might realise the costs of conversion and try to sell it on. We would then have first chance and OPS would be protected. Although unlikely, this could happen.

If we get the chance to buy:

- a) We'd have to raise the asking price, possibly around £300,000. We'd be eligible for govt funding for capital projects: [Community Ownership Fund round 4: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). We'd still have to raise a lot of money and would start by asking local businesses to contribute and having various fund-raising campaigns.
- b) OPS as a community centre would need:
  - i) A clear vision of how it could best serve the community and appeal to all residents and those in the wider area.
  - ii) A 5 yr business plan.
  - iii) A group to establish and run it.
  - iv) Grant-seeking & fund-raising to bring the building up to standard. This would be possible as we wouldn't be tied to a rolling lease.
  - v) Extensive publicity to raise the profile of OPS & get bookings.

Once we have received MVDC's decision (which we can't appeal) we will know how to proceed. We would need to set up a working group of interested Pixham people to establish i) and ii) at an early stage, before any fundraising.

## How you can help

- a) **Sign our online petition by Wed 25<sup>th</sup> September:** [Petition · SAVE OLD PIXHAM SCHOOL FOR THE COMMUNITY - United Kingdom · Change.org](#)



- b) **Help spread the word** by door-knocking / delivering information leaflets throughout Pixham / emailing friends with this information and encouraging them to sign the online petition.
- c) **Sign our paper petition** or volunteer (contact Pat via [chairpra@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chairpra@yahoo.co.uk)) to take a page and get signatures from friends & groups you know.
- d) **Write to MVDC (see the poster).**
- e) **Discuss** with friends, relatives and local people.
- f) **Contact Pat** on [chairpra@yahoo.com](mailto:chairpra@yahoo.com) if you'd like to form a working group (at this stage just to discuss (i) above to create our vision of OPS). Or with any questions / comments.

## Our application:

An excerpt:

### *4.1 Please set out your reasons for nominating the asset*

Old Pixham School (OPS) closed for community use on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024. Since then the PRA has tried to find satisfactory and sustainable venues for their many activities but these have been unsuitable in one way or another. Old Pixham School is central to the village and provides inclusive and easy access for all to use this facility.

Closure of OPS means that many community activities have closed down, had to move away from Pixham or been curtailed. Popular, well-attended family events such as the Pixham Summer Fete and Hallowe'en happenings, both examples of annual treats based at Old Pixham School, have been cancelled, probably for ever.

The long-established Film Club 'Shiny Side Down' will either fold or have to move out of Pixham. The 'Shinies' had installed screen, speakers and other equipment to make OPS an excellent venue for films.

Old Pixham School has been an invaluable community hub and without it, our community lacks focus and is fading despite our best efforts. Now that it has closed, opportunity for the nurturing and enhancement of community cohesion and connection across the generations is jeopardised. The impact this could have on the physical and mental health of individuals and families due to social isolation and community disconnection is well documented.

Visitors and residents alike have often commented on our wonderful community feeling and without OPS we do not see how this will continue.

The building itself is historic, founded in 1880 by local benefactor Miss Mayo and built on land donated by a local resident Mrs Hope. It occupies a central position in Pixham, adjoining the sports field, and its playgrounds allow a small parking area and flexibility for events to move outside in suitable weather. We have access to school registers etc and a history of the school is included in 'The Running Stream', a history of Pixham.

Many of our events are attended by former pupils of the school and they speak with great affection of their memories. We had hoped to hold a special reunion event in September to raise money for OPS.

Another factor is the imminent development of the Aviva site with approx. 450 dwellings but no social centre. This would more than double the size of Pixham, making it more important than ever to have a community hub.

Many thanks for reading this.

Please comment or respond via the website or via [chairpra@yahoo.com](mailto:chairpra@yahoo.com)