

**A STUDY ON FACILITIES  
NEEDED FOR THE COMMUNITY  
IN WEST ST LEONARDS, EAST SUSSEX**

# Towards a new community centre

Nick Wates Associates

Commissioned by Hastings Trust

On behalf of West St Leonards Community Association

Funded from the Single Regeneration Budget  
and European Objective 2



**Towards a new community centre;**

a study on facilities needed for the community in West St Leonards, East Sussex

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**Photographs**

Cover: Seventh anniversary fête of the West St Leonards Community Association, West St Leonards Community Centre, 30 August 2003.  
Appendix front and back cover: As above – initial findings of this study were displayed for comment and people continued to fill out questionnaires – plus other images of facilities in the area.

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# 1 Executive summary

- 1.1 This study has taken a broad look at the need for community facilities in West St Leonards with a view to providing a sound basis for proceeding with developing new facilities as part of the overall regeneration of the area.
- 1.2 The process included mapping existing facilities, holding discussions with interested parties and conducting a survey of local views. *(See Section 3, page 7)*
- 1.3 The most active local groups in the central part of the area are the West St Leonards Community Association and the West Marina Society. Both these groups have proved their competence and staying power and will have a key role in developing new facilities. But a number of other interests have been identified which also need to be included in the development process. *(See Section 4, page 8)*
- 1.4 The area has a variety of natural and built facilities but has a disjointed feel as an urban area and there is little knowledge of, let alone coordination of, provision. Existing facilities are mostly in poor physical condition. *(See Section 5, page 10)*
- 1.5 Local people have many different visions for the area, some of which are conflicting. There is a strong desire to see a whole range of new facilities. In particular, there is strong support for:
  - a. Building a new community centre to replace the existing West St Leonards Community Centre in Bexhill Road;
  - b. Improving the seafront.*(See Section 6, page 12)*
- 1.6 The main facilities people travel out of the area for are swimming and the gym. Others include outdoor play, sailing, theatre and cinema. *(See Section 7, page 14)*
- 1.7 A large menu of facilities perceived to be missing from the area has been provided and is a useful agenda for future planning and development activity in the area. *(See Section 8, page 15)*
- 1.8 A clear vision of a multipurpose community centre is provided by a previous survey by the West St Leonards Community Association of its members. The main elements are a social club primarily for the elderly, children's facilities, function hall, sports and a variety of services and activities. The survey provides data which will be useful when drafting a brief for designers. *(See Section 9, page 17)*
- 1.9 West St Leonards is potentially the part of Hastings subject to the greatest transformation during the current regeneration process. There are five major future developments, all of which will have a significant impact of the development of new facilities. These are: the Old Bathing Pool site; road plans; Millennium Community site; new rail stations and the proposed new Countryside Park. *(See Section 10, page 21)*

- 1.10 A number of potential sites and buildings have been identified as locations for new facilities. The two main areas focus on the Old Bathing Pool site and the area around the junction of Bexhill and Filsham Roads. *(See Section 11, page 22)*
- 1.11 No immediately available pots of funding have been identified. But there are a number of potential sources which need to be pursued and there will be considerable scope for harnessing support from the public, private and voluntary sectors once a clear vision is established. *(See Section 12, page 23)*
- 1.12 There is considerable local support for establishing a local forum to coordinate regeneration activity. The local authority and Sea Space (the company established by the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force) have also indicated that they would find this useful and be prepared to assist with setting it up. *(See Section 13, page 24)*
- 1.13 The main conclusions of the study are:
- a) It will be hard to attract investment for development on individual sites until blight is removed by agreeing an overall development framework for the area and this needs to be progressed as soon as possible. *(See Section 14.1, page 26)*
  - b) In the meantime there are a number of initiatives that can be taken to improve and coordinate existing facilities. *(See Section 14.2, page 26)*
  - c) There appears to be demand for two significant new community building projects: first; a new facility near the site of the existing community centre catering for the activities currently taking place there as well as some additional ones; second, new facilities on the seafront focussing on the arts and seafront activities. Design options should be prepared for these. *(See Section 14.3 – 14.10, page 26)*
  - d) Mechanisms for involving and empowering the widest possible spectrum of the community need to be developed with the establishment of a local forum as a first immediate step. *(See Section 14.12, page 27)*
  - e) A professional fundraiser should be engaged to tap the many potential sources of funding and harness local enthusiasm. *(See Section 14.13, page 27)*
  - f) This study should be followed up as soon as possible to maintain momentum. *(See Section 14.14, page 27)*

## 2 Introduction

*“Nothing appeals to us as a family in this area.”*

*“We have been promised new facilities for a good number of years and we want to have some actions and some answers.”*

*“My hope is that the community as a whole will come to life again, we have become the forgotten part of town.”*

Quotes from survey – see Appendix 2

- 2.1 This report is the result of a study to assess the community facilities needed in West St Leonards, now and in the future. The boundaries chosen (see map on flyer – page 28) coincide with the area of benefit of West St Leonards Community Association (WSLCA), a registered Charity (No 1062119).
- 2.2 The impetus for the study came from the need to resolve the future of the West St Leonards Community Centre. For over 8 years the Community Association has been running a very successful Centre in the canteen of the former West St Leonards School, the remainder of which was demolished some years ago. The building is in need of repair, it lacks the space needed for the Association to expand its activities and the future of the site itself is uncertain.
- 2.3 New facilities of some kind are widely agreed to be necessary. But what kind of facilities? Where should they be located? How should they be financed? Who should be doing what to take things forward? These questions need to be answered in the light of the proposed new developments in the area, the nature of which have not been finalised. The area contains several sites earmarked for new development, it is part of the Hastings Millennium Community, a major new country park is proposed and there are plans for altering the road and rail networks. Securing funds for new facilities is more challenging than in some other areas of the town because, despite having pockets of considerable deprivation (10% of residents over 16 claimed income support in 1998) West St Leonards does not have Neighbourhood Renewal status.
- 2.4 This study was therefore undertaken to look at the needs of the area as whole and in the light of the changes that are likely to take place. It is hoped that the report will help provide a clearer sense of direction for those involved and lead rapidly to the next steps in the process which are developing the organisational and financial capacity to move forward.

## 3 Process adopted

3.1 The process for the study was designed to:

- Build up a picture of existing facilities, interests, needs and aspirations.
- Give everyone living and working in the area the opportunity to contribute and communicate their hopes for the future.
- Help generate momentum for action.

3.2 Key elements included:

1. Establishing a steering committee of some key community interests – and securing the support of some advisors from key regeneration organisations – to guide the process.
2. Physically mapping the area and holding informal interviews to plot existing facilities and organisations and gather background information.
3. Producing a full colour flyer containing provisional mapping results and a questionnaire to stimulate interest and to assist with gathering information and local views (see page 28 and Appendix 1). 7,500 flyers were printed. 6,500 were distributed door to door throughout the area between Friday 8 August and Thursday 14 August 2003. They were also given to key organisations and were available at a number of local outlets (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire results form Appendix 2.
4. An Open day on 30th August at the West St Leonards Community Association's seventh anniversary fête where provisional results were displayed and discussed and further questionnaires were completed.
5. Transcribing and assessing the questionnaire results and the results of a survey, one year previously, by the West St Leonards Community Association (WSLCA).
6. Discussion of a draft report by the steering committee, advisors and others.
7. Final report circulated to key parties and made available on the Hastings Trust website.

3.3 111 completed questionnaires were received and have been analysed. Many were from members of the WSLCA but there was also a good spread from throughout the area and from different interests and age groups. Together with the informal interviews, discussions during the open day and the WSLCA survey results, it is considered that they provide a good sample of considered local opinion for the present purposes.

3.4 This study is clearly only the beginning of a process which will continue for many years. The material gathered has been set out in such a way that it will be easy for those involved to build on it in the future.

## 4 Interested parties and groups

4.1 One aim of the study was to establish what organisations and groups might have an interest in new facilities and an interest in being involved in taking things forward. A provisional list of interested parties was published in the flyer. This prompted other suggestions.

### **FINDINGS**

4.2 There is no readily available, up to date source of information on groups active in the area. This in itself is something that could usefully be rectified.

4.3 Community groups currently active in the heart of the area include the following:

- a) West St Leonards Community Association. The Association currently has over 200 members.
- b) West Marina Society. The Society currently has almost 200 members.

4.4 Community groups currently active on the fringes of the area include:

- a) Burtons' St Leonards Society
- b) Wishing Tree Residents Association
- c) Gensing & Central St Leonards Community Forum

4.5 Active special interest groups in the area include:

- a) Flood Action Group
- b) Marina Allotment and Horticultural Association
- c) South Saxon Wetlands

4.6 Active residents associations include:

- a) Marina Estate Residents Association
- b) Marina Park Residents Association

4.7 Dormant or disbanded groups (or for which no up to date information has so far been obtained) in the area include:

- a) Filsham Valley Residents Association



- b) Grosvenor Gardens Residents
- c) Harley Shute Residents Association
- d) Seaside Road Residents Group
- e) West of Haven Beach Huts Association
- f) West Hill Road Residents Association
- g) West Marina Partnership

One of the reasons given for groups becoming dormant or disbanding is frustration with the lack of tangible regeneration progress. There may be scope for reactivating some of them if mechanisms are in place to move things forward.

- 4.8 At least two initiatives of note have taken a view of the bathing pool site. Firstly, the West Marina Society developed a plan for the site funded by Hastings Borough Council. More recently, the West Marina Partnership developed a community plan for the old bathing pool site which received considerable local support but also some opposition.
- 4.9 The local authorities are Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council. Neither has as yet identified any specific financial or other resources available for developing community facilities in the area. The Local Plan however states that the West St Leonards Community Centre should not be demolished without a replacement being available.
- 4.10 The area falls within the area of interest of Sea Space; Hastings & Bexhill Renaissance. This is the company set up by the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force to pursue the regeneration of the area. The company is focussing initially on the town centre and Ore Valley.
- 4.11 The MP for the area is Michael Foster who has put in writing his support for building a new community centre in the area.
- 4.12 The Leader of Hastings Borough Council, Jeremy Birch, has also publicly stated his commitment to secure a new community centre in the area.
- 4.13 Interested parties will include all those managing facilities or potential facilities such as schools, pubs, cafés. At present there does not appear to be any mechanism for these people to talk to one another or coordinate activity.
- 4.14 Regeneration will mean new residents moving into the area, perhaps with different needs and aspirations to those already there. Change in housing tenure patterns recently has already signalled the start of change.

## 5 Existing facilities and amenities

- 5.1 The study has looked at a broad range of facilities because it is the overall balance that affects the quality of life.
- 5.2 Existing facilities have been mapped and are shown on the map in the flyer (page 28 and Appendix 1). Additional facilities identified as a result of the survey and open day are indicated in Appendix 2, section 8. Notes on some of the key community facilities form Appendix 5.

### FINDINGS

- 5.3 The area is well served with natural open spaces, and will be even more so once the Countryside park has been established. But much of the natural open space is not immediately apparent and in some cases hard to access. The beach for instance is inaccessible for part of its length and the footpath and cycle networks are, in places, poorly developed and signposted.
- 5.4 There is ample provision of sports pitches although facilities for changing and viewing are mostly lacking.
- 5.5 There is a reasonable range of eating places and shopping – mainly along Bexhill Road. A definite sense of community exists based around the facilities between the junctions with West Hill and Filsham Roads. But this area is dominated by heavy traffic on the A259 and the remainder of the area has a disjointed feel with no clear sense of identity, urban structure or neighbourhood focus.
- 5.6 The Coombe Haven Holiday Park has an excellent indoor swimming pool and other facilities which are not currently available to the local community.
- 5.7 There are many schools in the area, some with good modern facilities. Some of these are available to the public but more could be so.
- 5.8 There are a number of community buildings and facilities. Mostly these are in poor condition and the organisations using them are struggling. The most relevant existing facilities in relation to developing new ones include:
- a) Gables Day Nursery – private day nursery for children up to 5.
  - b) Hastleon Hall – owned by amateur dramatic society and used for rehearsals. Could be used more.
  - c) The Harleys (formerly The Ranch). Private social club.
  - d) Scrapp Project. Collects waste from industry and distributes to a variety of member groups for play. Looking for new premises and funds.

- e) St Ethelburga's Church Hall and Church. Currently fundraising to develop facilities and provide more activities.
- f) St Leonards Parish Church. Currently expanding its facilities for young people.
- g) West St Leonards Community Centre. Keen to build a new community centre.

5.9 There is a general lack of information about the whereabouts of community facilities and their availability.

5.10 The area is part of a wider urban area and has to be seen in that context.

5.11 The West St Leonards Community Centre is well used throughout the week and throughout the year. Other community buildings are less well used.

## 6 People's hopes

- 6.1 People were asked 'What are your hopes for community & leisure facilities in the West St Leonards area?' (see Appendix 2, section 1 for full results)

### FINDINGS

The main themes to emerge were:

- 6.2 Huge amount of concern about the amount of traffic on the Bexhill Road. Although outside the scope of this study it seems clear that either traffic needs to be reduced or steps need to be taken to reduce its impact on community life by locating activity away from it, providing crossings and so on.
- 6.3 Strong desire to see more use made of the seafront. Suggestions include cafés, shopping, bars, events, a lively continental style atmosphere, a heritage centre, arts and crafts galleries. A marina is generally supported but there are differing views on a slipway as too on the location of both.
- 6.4 Strong desire to see a new community centre. This should:
- a) Build on the success of the West St Leonards Community Centre.
  - b) Provide a range of services and activities, indoor and outdoor.
  - c) Be for young and old.
  - d) Have a new image.
- 6.5 Strong desire to keep and enhance the remaining green areas with improved footpaths and cycleways. Improved access to the beach and the countryside. An improved cycle route network, particularly the completion of the seafront route from Stamco to Glyne Gap.
- 6.6 The need for more for children of all ages, both indoor and outdoor. Safe green spaces so they do not have to play football on the roads. Better playground and play facilities (new and improved). Perhaps a new youth club. Wood adventure park.
- 6.7 The need for local swimming, gym and dance facilities.

Other hopes mentioned include:

- 6.8 Better and cheaper transport to facilities in other parts of town, e.g. the new proposed stations (at Marina, Bulverhythe and Glyne Gap), or at least open up West Marina Station on the Brighton line. Better bus services on Sundays. Better bus services up Harley Shute Road in the evening.
- 6.9 Open up the pond at South Saxon wetlands (*since opened – Autumn 03*)
- 6.10 The importance of making the area safe from flooding. Repairs and updated flood defences.
- 6.11 Quality shopping and cafes needed away from the Bexhill Road.
- 6.12 Make more use of the schools. Use halls in the evening. Classes for arts and crafts.
- 6.13 Build community spirit and awareness.
- 6.14 Social and cultural events for all. Dancing for the over 50s.
- 6.15 Cinema arts show and social club.
- 6.16 Need for a new identity for the area.
- 6.17 More facilities for the elderly at the north end of Harley Shute Road or better bus services to Bexhill Road.
- 6.18 More use of churches for both recreation and worship. Particularly St Ethelburga's.
- 6.19 Improved sports complex on Bulverhythe fields.
- 6.20 Improve quality of existing community facilities.
- 6.21 Improve infrastructure of allotments.

## 7 Facilities used by residents elsewhere

- 7.1 The study has looked at what facilities residents use elsewhere to help establish what demand there might be for new facilities locally. *(see Appendix 2, section 3 for full results)*

### **FINDINGS**

- 7.2 The main facilities used regularly elsewhere which are not available in the area are gym and swimming. Almost half of those who responded travel to use these facilities regularly.
- 7.3 Other facilities not available include sailing (marina or slipway required), quality outdoor play areas, theatre and cinema.
- 7.4 Activities which people travelled to which are already catered for in existing facilities in the area include: dog training, bingo, socials, table tennis.
- 7.5 Activities which people travelled to which could perhaps be located in existing facilities in the area include: band rehearsal, youth groups, arts and crafts, ballroom dancing.

## 8 Facilities lacking in the area

- 8.1 'What facilities are missing? What community and leisure facilities would you use if they were available in West St Leonards?' This question elicited a wide range of responses. (see Appendix 2, section 4 for full results)

### FINDINGS

- 8.2 A large menu of facilities of all kinds are perceived as missing from the area in all main sectors: sports and leisure; eating and drinking; services and commerce; arts and culture. The results provide a useful agenda for future planning and development activity.
- 8.3 Commonly mentioned themes that can be identified include: marina and marina or seafront associated activities; gym and swimming or leisure pool; children and youth play; a variety of cultural activities.
- 8.2 Facilities mentioned are listed in alphabetical order within sectors. Reference numbers of the questionnaires are provided to show the numbers of people mentioning each item and to facilitate further analysis.

#### A) Sports and leisure

	Keep fit/exercise 70 91
After school club 34	Lido 15
Aqua aerobics 27	Marina 15 33 46 48 81
Basketball 83 107	Nudist area on beach 111
Beach huts (more) – currently a waiting list 79/2	Parks/with picnic tables 23/1 24
BMX area 107	Playground/play areas/ play park 6 23 24 76 98 99 110
Car fixing area for teenagers 104	Skateboard track/park 37 54 100 104107
Cycle ways/route along beach from Stamco to Glyne Gap 29 98	Speedway 54
Dog free zones in parks 98	Sports hall/centre 60 92 99
Footpath right along Coombe Haven 37/5	Swimming pool/leisure pool 10 15 23 25 27 35 47 53 58 61 64 77 81 82 88
Go cart track 54	Tennis (indoor) 109
Gym/community gym 19 35 47 81 99	Volley ball 83
Holiday club/activities for children (like Priory Centre) 34 42	Watersports facilities on seafront 34

**B) Eating and drinking**

Beach side bars/cafes 36 79

Café society 82

Fast food outlets like Pizza Hut and / or  
Burger King 33/1

Internet facility 8

Night club 110

Public realm - place to chill out 15

Pubs 24

Restaurants/quality restaurants 24 34 51

Wine bar 34 47

**C) Commerce and Services**

Bakery 79 (*Note: Wilsons Bakery recently  
opened*)

Dry cleaners 79 (*Note: Post office takes in  
dry cleaning*)

Health visitor 110

Police station (local) 82

Shops/decent shops 51 82

Supermarket – perhaps a small, high quality  
one (history of ASDA wanting to build on  
School site.) 2

Toenail cutting service for the elderly 69

Video shop 33/1

Women's hairdressers and bank 79 (*Note:  
there is a hairdresser in Bulverhythe Road*)

**D) Arts & Culture**

Art gallery for local amateur artists 46

Arts and crafts classes 50 78

Cinemas 55

Drama 91

Dance/dance floor 59 67

Exhibition hall on seafront 101

Exhibition on South Saxon Wetlands and  
other things going on in the area 71

Function room for parties/weddings 55 56  
57

Lecture hall for concerts, classical/pop 18

Library 47

Line dancing 70

Music 92

Music group 98

Music rehearsal studio 31

Photography 92 94

Pottery studio (drop in) 27

Social club/s 27 91

Talks/workshops/lectures 65 92

Theatre 99

Whist drives 70

Woodwork 92

Yoga 59

**E) Other**

Community centre (larger) 55 56 57 59 61  
93

Improve public transport/buses 34 88

New proposed rail stations. 80 106

Upgrade railway stations 34 101



## 9 Facilities wanted in a community centre

9.1 In the summer of 2002, before this study was embarked on, the West St Leonards Community Association conducted a survey of its members asking: 'What facilities do you think the new community centre should have?' This section summarises the results, see Appendix 6 for full details.

### FINDINGS

9.2 A clear vision of a multipurpose centre emerges, building on the facilities and activities at the Association's present Community Centre in Bexhill Road.

9.3 Five main elements can be identified:

- a) Social club, particularly for the elderly, with bar and café facilities and a range of games and activities such as bingo, pool and table tennis.
- b) Activities and space for children of all ages, both inside and outside.
- c) Large hall for functions and performances.
- d) Sports and health facilities both inside and out.
- e) Wide range of possible services and activities requiring use of small to medium sized spaces.

9.4 The information provided by the survey will be useful in drawing up a brief for designers at the appropriate time. Facilities and activities mentioned are listed in alphabetical order below. Reference numbers of the questionnaires are provided to show the numbers of people mentioning each item and to facilitate further analysis.

Advice services 31	Baby clinic 12 28 64 65 73 92
Aerobics (daytime) 43	Baby room 56
After school club/s 28 30 43 62 64 65 67 74 91 92 93 94	Badminton 11
Army cadets 62	Bar/bar area/with flexible hours 6 8 12 15 16 20 24 25 26 33 37 38 40 41 42 43 44 46 48 62 64 67 73 80 81 83 85 86 87 90 95
Art classes (for beginners/for children) 27 31 43	Basketball (inside) 8
Art room 56	Basketball (outside) 52 56
Athletic circuit (all weather) 10	

Billiards 66	Cricket pitch 14 30 41 44
Bingo 1 21 22 26 38 47 62 66 74 75 85 91 93	Cricket strip 3 13
Bingo club 12 20 25 28 64 89	Dance machine (old and new/ Euromix 1&2) 49 50 51 53 54 55 57 58 59 60 61
Bowls 26 66	Dancing (ballet) 56
Bowls (indoor/short mat) 12 32 65	Dancing/dance area (general) 85 87
Box veg day 47	Dancing (line) 5 24 31 47
Bridge (card games) 11	Dancing (modern, country) 21
Bridge connecting centre with field 2 3 8 13 14 18 40 41 43 44	Dancing (old time) 21 27 31
Café/drop in/tea/coffee 21 27 31 32 35 38 41 42 43 46 52 67 90	Dancing (tea) 1 24
Car park 12 25 26 41 42 43 44 46 48 65 66 73 87	Darts 11 16 18 24 25 41 44 45 64 65 66 85 86 87
Cash point machine 41 43	Decks 49 50 51 54 57 59 60 61
Changing rooms 8 18 41 43	Disabled access/facilities 8 12 18 40 41 43 46 52 56 66 67 73 90
Cheese and wine afternoon/evening 47	Discos/ parties/ raves (adult/ children/ youth) 24 47 49 50 51 54 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 64 67 74 86 91 92 93
Children's room/ space/ play area/ facilities (indoor) 7 15 16 18 20 26 33 35 41 42 44 45 73 90	Dog training 93
Children's space/fenced off area/ playground/playpark (outdoor - swings/slide/trampoline) 26 48 49 50 56 57 60 61 74 77 78 92 93 94	Drama/theatre 56 67
Classes (day/evening) 38	Elderly support facilities 10 36
Climbing frame (outside) 48	Embroidery/classes 27
Club manager 41 45 62 90	Family planning/clinic 75 76 93
Club room 37	Football (five a side) 11
Computers (video games) 56	Football group for youngsters 25
Computer room 67	Football/pitch (outside, upgraded) 2 10 12 18 20 26 30 40 41 43 44 45 52 56 58 62 64 65 67 80
Cookery demo 47	Function room/hall (parties/weddings) 8 15 16 18 20 24 25 26 33 37 38 40 41 42 43 44 46 47 62 73 81
Crèche/child care 9 11 30 38 52 81	

Games 19 38	Meditation 67
Games (bar) 12	Membership link with Ravenside swimming pool 62
Games club 64	Meeting room/space/committee 18 21 37 40 41 64 65 66 73 79 83
Games (card/board) 44	Music 49 57 67
Games machine 19	Music workshops 67
Games room/centre/area 8 9 15 16 18 24 37 40 42 43 44 47 48 81 83 89 90 94	Nail cutting 32
Garden/ landscaping (lawns, flowers, seats, hedging) 73 89	Needle craft 5 41
Gym 20 26 67	Netball (inside) 8 9
Gym club/gymnastics 5 56	Netball (outside) 2 8 18 26 40 41 67
Hairdresser 32	Nursery/play school/ 10 21 26 28 30 42 45 62 91
Handicrafts/classes for 21 27 31	Offices 73 83
Health facilities 7	Outings 11
Information services/noticeboard 52	Parent/mother and toddler 12 28 42 64 65 66 77 85 92 93 94
Jukebox 52	Payphone 52
Karate 12 64 65 66 93	Pensioners drop in/facilities 1 35
Karaoke machine 26 41	Photocopier 52
Keep fit/exercise/yoga/fitness club 21 24 25 32 47 62 66 74 75 91 93	Piano/organ tuition 26
Kitchen 20 47 73	Pinball table 52 56
Knitting club 5	Play mats 75 76
Knitting machine club 5	Pool 18 24 30 33 40 41 44 45 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 57 58 59 60 61 64 85 86
Lace making 43	Pottery/classes 27
Library 36	Present/existing facilities 2 3 5 7 44 68 70 71 72
Martial arts clubs 12	Quiet area (for a drink and chat)
Medical room/area/clinic/first aid/ health visitor 8 18 26 40 41 42 75 76 87 93	

Reception area 52	Tea room 26
Rooms for hire (private) 52	Television room 90
Sauna 20 26	Tennis (head) 11
Scrabble 26	Toilets (baby changing) 46
Self defence (for women/girls) 56 67	Toilets (more/better) 20 26 41 73 83 85 86
Shove (halfpenny/penny) 11 16 18 24 25 43 44 66 85 86	Toilets (disabled) 26 46
Skittles (indoor) 47	Toys/learning toys/toy lending library 47 75 76
Slimming club 47	Vending machines (coke/chocolate/ice cream/sweets) 56
Snooker 12 25 41 44 48 65 66 82 85 86	Volley ball 11
Social club for the elderly/open regularly 25 28 30 74 91 92 93 94 96	Well man clinic 28
Sound system (better) 33 41 43 45	Well woman clinic 28
South Saxon Wetlands promotion area 17	Whist 11 26
Sports club (in the evening) 6	Yoga 67
Sports equipment (new) 6 41	Youth club 47 62 74 75 92 93
Sports facilities (all) 10 19 28 30 35 38 64 79 87 92	
Sports hall 8 18 67 84	
Stage (music/drama/theatre) 26 49 51 52 57 58 59 61 67 84 86 87	
Store for equipment 40 41 77 78 94	
Swimming pool 6 20 26 56	
Table sale (indoor) 47	
Table tennis 8 11 18 24 25 30 40 43 45 48 50 51 52 53 57 58 60 61 85 86 87	
Tai Chi 67	
Tapestry/classes 27	

## 10 Relevant future developments

10.1 A number of future developments are proposed for West St Leonards and will affect the need for community facilities. Uncertainty over the nature and timing of these also affects decisions relating to investment by both private and voluntary sectors in any new projects in the area.

10.2 Key future developments include the following:

### 10.3 **Old Bathing Pool site**

Options for developing this prime seafront site have been discussed for many years. Sea Space is intending to prepare a Masterplan for the entire seafront during the first half of 2004 and this site will be a key element. The work is expected to take 6 months. A design competition towards the end of 2004 is under consideration.

### 10.4 **Road plans**

A study with a number of options for the route of the Link Road from north Hastings to Bexhill has been prepared by East Sussex County Council. This road could be built as early as 2006. A firm decision on the route of the Link Road will then make it possible to consider road improvements to the A259 which could have a positive impact on the character of the area and affect decisions on the location of any new development.

### 10.5 **Millennium Community sites**

Masterplanning for the Millennium Community sites will be part of the seafront Masterplanning exercise mentioned in 10.3 above.

### 10.6 **New stations**

The concept of new metro stations on the Hastings to Eastbourne line is still alive but no firm commitments have been made on where stations would be located or when they will open.

### 10.7 **New Countryside Park and closing of Pebsham tip**

The date for the closure of Pebsham tip has recently been put back from 2006 to 2008. The Country Park cannot be a reality until then.

# 11 Potential buildings and sites

- 11.1 What buildings and sites are potentially available for developing community facilities? Responses from questionnaires (*Appendix 2, section 5*), discussion and surveys identified the following:

## FINDINGS

- 11.2 **Old bathing pool site.** Outside the scope of this study but clearly vital for the area and an important site for the town as a whole (see 10.3 above).
- 11.3 **Territorial army site** including lower drill hall, Cinque Ports Way. This site was recently on the market. The lower drill hall is an interesting building and its potential should be explored.
- 11.4 **Old school site,** current location of the Community Centre. Good centrally located site but affected by traffic noise and Millennium Community plans.
- 11.5 **Recreation Bulverhythe.** Currently this has games pitches but could have more for young people, e.g. skate ramp. Old hockey changing rooms. (*see Appendix 2 section 5/107*)
- 11.6 **Schools.** Make more use of their resources; Grove and Filsham Valley in particular have underused land (eg fenced off land in Filsham Valley).
- 11.7 **Nature reserve.** Make more use of this, especially during evenings and holidays.
- 11.8 **Old tram track** north of Bexleigh Avenue. Could be a cycle path if this does not conflict with plans for road improvements or the Countryside Park.
- 11.9 **Marnsbury House site,** behind Bo Peep pub. Attractive park area with view over the sea.
- 11.10 **St Ethelburga's Church Hall.** Considerable potential for improvement and extension.
- 11.11 **MFI site.** Will have to be redeveloped at some point if West St Leonards' image is to improve.

## 12 Potential support and funding

- 12.1 Creating new facilities will require support in many different ways. The question 'What support, services or facilities if any can you or your organisation provide (eg cash, voluntary help, premises, organisation)?' was asked in the questionnaire to encourage people to think about how they could help.
- 12.2 Securing funding for specific projects will be an important next step in the process, however a number of possibilities have emerged during the present study.

### FINDINGS

- 12.3 Responses to the questionnaires identified a number of people prepared to assist in a number of ways including helping with: Tennis coaching for 10-15 year olds; clairvoyance evenings and psychic fairs; badminton clubs; musical events; fundraising; setting up computers; making cash donations (*see Appendix 2, section 6*). This local enthusiasm could be developed and built on.
- 12.4 There is a considerable amount of feeling that a new community centre should be publicly funded.
- 12.5 Key sources of funding include the following:
- a) Millennium Communities – particularly for design feasibility and community development.
  - b) Hastings Borough Council – neighbourhood renewal support.
  - c) East Sussex County Council – especially transport links in West St Leonards and as owner of the school site currently used as the West St Leonards Community Centre.
  - d) Charitable trusts – a large number support community development and community facilities.
  - e) Local business and sponsorship – once a clear vision and specific projects have been identified.
  - f) Developers – via Section 106 agreements on new developments.

## 13 Organisation

- 13.1 How is progress to be achieved? Elsewhere in Hastings local neighbourhood forums have been established in some areas. They provide a community-based mechanism for coordinating local views and progressing proposals with service providers. Could a similar initiative be useful in West St Leonards and how would it operate? The question 'Would it be helpful to establish some kind of local forum to co-ordinate regeneration initiatives in the area?' was asked in the questionnaire (see *Appendix 2, section 7*) and was raised with interviewees.

### FINDINGS

- 13.2 64% (54) of those responding to the question about the forum thought setting up a local forum would be a good idea. 7% (6) were against and 29% (24) were unsure.
- 13.3 Those in favour generally saw it as a positive way of giving local people a voice. Those against it who gave reasons generally saw the formation of a forum as an alternative to action. Those unsure seemed unclear as to whether it would make any difference or not.
- 13.4 Some people feel that the Council is not interested in West St Leonards, focussing its energy elsewhere in the Borough. Some feel that the Council has deliberately ignored the wishes of local people on issues such as the ASDA planning application and the bypass.
- 13.5 There is some concern that constructive proposals for the area have been shouted down by a loud minority.
- 13.6 Suggestions for how a forum might work included:
- a) Representation from different areas
  - b) A partnership with Hastings Borough Council
  - c) Allocating certain groups to tackle certain area
  - d) Mixing young and old
  - e) Networking opportunity
  - f) Minutes to be taken
  - g) Needs to have money to ensure it is worth starting
  - h) Learning from the other forums



- i) To include some people in authority
  - j) Majority must be local residents
  - k) Make it attractive for people to give up their time
- 13.7 While not offering any funding as yet Hastings Borough Council Neighbourhood Renewal is keen to see the development of a forum in the area and is willing to support its establishment. It is recognised that a Forum is only likely to succeed if staff time and funding is available to support it.
- 13.8 Sea Space is keen to build links with the community over its regeneration plans and would welcome the establishment of a forum. It will be worth approaching Millennium Communities for financial support towards this.

## 14 Conclusions

- 14.1 There is currently uncertainty over the long term future of key infrastructure and sites in the area which is causing blight. This needs to be resolved as soon as possible by the local authorities and the task force agreeing an area development framework with clear goals and timescales. Until this is done it will be difficult to attract investment for development on individual sites.
- 14.2 In the meantime there are a number of initiatives that can be taken to improve existing facilities and the quality of life in the area. These include:
- a) Publicising existing facilities.
  - b) Upgrading existing facilities which are unlikely to be affected by long term changes, e.g. new footpaths and cycleways, Hastleon Hall, Field Way playground.
  - c) Making existing facilities more accessible to all, e.g. the disabled.
  - d) Making more use of existing facilities, e.g. schools, holiday camp.
  - e) Identifying sites which will not be affected by long term development.
- 14.3 There would appear to be a demand for two significant new community building projects:
- a) A new facility to be built on or near the present site of the West St Leonards Community Centre at the junction of Filsham and Bexhill Roads;
  - b) New facilities on the seafront as part of the development proposed for the Bathing Pool site.
- 14.4 It is suggested that the former is located slightly to the north of the present Community Centre, taking it away from the main road, with its noise and pollution, and allowing it to relate better to the sports pitches and open space.
- 14.5 This facility could cater for all the activities currently taking place in the Community Centre. In addition it could have a medium sized multipurpose hall for activities such as dance, keep fit, light sports, performances and functions. It could also have pavilion facilities for the sports pitches, exhibition and interpretation facilities for South Saxon Wetlands and space for outside activity with gardens and benches.
- 14.6 Detailed planning should be coordinated with the proposed development of St Ethelburga's to avoid duplication of facilities.
- 14.7 Given that any facility on this site needs to integrate with new housing development proposed for the site, it is suggested that some design options for this be commissioned by Sea Space as part of the Millennium Community Project.

- 14.8 The facility could be managed and developed by a new body made up of potential user interests, including the West St Leonards Community Association, in liaison with the proposed new forum and the funders.
- 14.9 New facilities on the seafront could focus on the arts and seafront activities and be more commercially based and visitor oriented. Detailed planning needs to be coordinated with plans for the old bathing pool site and the surrounding land. The potential of the lower drill hall should be explored urgently.
- 14.10 Good practice experience would suggest that some form of local development trust, supported by Sea Space, should be established to manage and develop the facilities in the seafront area.
- 14.11 Once the content of these two projects above has been firmed up and the effect of making more use of existing facilities has been assessed, there may well be a case for establishing the feasibility of additional facilities, for instance a swimming pool, perhaps in conjunction with one of the schools.
- 14.12 Mechanisms for involving the widest possible spectrum of the community need to be developed. In the first instance it is recommended that a West St Leonards Forum is established as soon as possible and provided with administrative support to encourage and coordinate community initiative and enterprise and to provide a link with the authorities and service providers.
- 14.13 Once the Forum is in existence and preliminary design options have been explored, a professional fundraiser and finance manager should be engaged to tap the many sources of funding available for community facilities and ensure that any facilities developed are financially sustainable.
- 14.14 Particularly in view of the widely held perception that the area has not been a high priority for the authorities in the recent past, it is important that this study is followed up relatively quickly and that some practical action is seen to follow.

## Questionnaire

Please complete some or all of the questions and post to the address at the foot of the page by 15th September. Alternatively send an email or fax. Make copies of the form or continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

- What are your hopes for community & leisure facilities in the West St Leonards area?
- What community & leisure facilities do you use within West St Leonards? (area on map)  

facility	activity	frequency of use
Eg WSC Community Centre	Eg parents and toddlers	Eg once every 2 weeks
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
- What community & leisure facilities do you use outside West St Leonards?  

facility	activity	frequency of use
Eg Felsham Hall Gym	Eg fitness training	Eg twice a week
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
- What facilities are missing? What community & leisure facilities would you use if they were available in West St Leonards?  

facility	activity	frequency of use
Eg gallery space	Eg exhibits pottery	Eg 2 weeks per year
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
- Can you think of any underused or unused buildings or land that could be used for community & leisure facilities? If so please specify.
- What support, services or facilities if any can you or your organisation provide (eg cash, voluntary help, premises, organisation)? Eg organising local drama productions
- Would it be helpful to establish some kind of local forum to co-ordinate regeneration initiatives in the area? YES  NO  NOT SURE   
Any comments on how it might work?

Name   
 Organisation (if any)   
 Address   
 Tel/Email   
 Age group: 0-5  6-15  16-25  26-39  40-59  60-79  80 and over

Return to: Nick Wates Associates, 7 Tackleyway, Hastings TN34 3DE  
 Tel: 01424 447888 Fax: 01424 441514 nick@wates.demon.co.uk www.wates.demon.co.uk  
 An Email version of this questionnaire is available on request.

## What new facilities are needed for the community in West St Leonards?

### Your views wanted

What do you want to do when you're not at home or at work? This is a study to find out what community and leisure facilities are needed in West St Leonards. It is being carried out because of the need to replace the West St Leonards Community Centre and also to prepare the Millennium Community and other plans for new homes, jobs, facilities and transport improvements. A range of options is being explored, including new buildings and making better use of existing facilities. Please help by returning the questionnaire or supplying information in any other way by 15th September 2003. The results will be used to help develop detailed plans and raise funds. There will be a chance to view some early results and discuss the issues at the West St Leonards Community Association's anniversary fair on Saturday 30th August 10am - 3pm at the Community Centre on the junction of Beachill and Filsham Roads. All welcome to drop in.

The study has been commissioned on behalf of West St Leonards Community Association by Hastings Trust. It is funded from the Single Regeneration Budget and European Objective 2 and is being undertaken by Hastings based community planning consultants Nick Wates Associates. Steering Committee: John Swinbank, Keith St John and Ian Donnelly (West St Leonards Community Association); Carol Pierce and Elizabeth Pye (South Saxon Wetlands); Jane Swinbank (West Marina Society); Ray Atter (St Ethelburga's); Clr Joy Waite (East Sussex County Council). August 2003

## Existing Community & Leisure Facilities in West St Leonards

**SPORTS & LEISURE**

- 1 Beach
- 2 Combe Haven Valley
- 3 Cycle path
- 4 Filsham Valley
- 5 Games pitches
- 6 Glynne Gap site (boot fares, circus)
- 7 Parks and gardens
- 8 South Saxon Wetlands
- 9 West Marina Gardens (St Leonards Bowls Club)
- 10 Playgrounds

**EATING, DRINKING & ACCOMMODATION**

- 1 Cafes
- 2 Holiday parks
- 3 Hotels and guest houses
- 4 Restaurants & take-aways
- 5 Pubs

**COMMERCE & SERVICES**

- 1 Chemists
- 2 Doctors
- 3 Post Offices
- 4 Shops - food and general
- 5 Garden centre

**SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**

- 1 Filsham Valley School
- 2 The Grove School
- 3 Hastings College of Arts and Technology
- 4 Saxon Mount School
- 5 St Leonards College, Westleigh School
- 6 St Leonards C of E Primary School
- 7 West St Leonards Primary School

**ARTS & CULTURE**

- 1 Electro Gallery

**SOME OTHER FACILITIES**

- 1 Gables day nursery Pre school nursery Monday to Friday, 0-5 year olds.
- 2 Hastle Hall Drama rehearsals, dance classes, available for hire.
- 3 The Ranch Sports club. Line dancing.
- 4 Scrapy Project Saxon Community Recycling and Play Project. Makes waste from industry available to local groups.
- 5 Sea Cadet Hall For 10 to 18 year olds.
- 6 St Ethelburga's Church Hall Rainbows, brownies, guides, relaxation classes, mothers & toddlers, baby clinic, table tennis, available for hire
- 7 St Leonards Parish Church Parents & toddlers, brownies, pop in morning.
- 8 Territorial Army base Careers office. Base for several army units.
- 9 West St Leonards Community Centre After school club, careers advice, social games (pool, table tennis, darts, shone penny, chess, draughts, dominoes, cribbage), parents and toddlers group, karate, over 50s stretch classes, hearing aid replacement service, over 55s bingo, dog training, ward surgery, meetings, football, social bar, hall for hire.

**Legend:**  
■ Millennium Community study area  
■ Proposed Countryside Park  
● West St Leonards station  
○ Proposed new stations

### Some groups & organisations that might have an interest in new facilities

(in addition to those with facilities listed on the facing page)

- Burton's St Leonards Society
- East Sussex County Council
- Environment Agency
- Fellowship of St Nicholas
- Flood Action Group
- Hastings Borough Council
- Hastings & Bexhill Taskforce
- Marina Park Residents Association
- Primary Care Trust
- South Saxon Wetlands
- West Marina Society
- West St Leonards Community Association
- Wishing Tree Residents Association

**Have we left anything out? Let us know.**

Missing facilities

Missing interested parties

Newsletter and questionnaire distributed throughout the area. See Appendix 1 for full size version.

