



Parish Council Consultation

Speldhurst Chapel Project

Speldhurst Parish Council has the opportunity to secure the future of Speldhurst Community Shop & Post Office, which is at risk of closure. We would do this by taking a Public Works Loan to purchase the Chapel site opposite. This will **slightly increase what you pay in council tax**, so we need to know if this is something you want us to do.

We'll need your response **by midnight on Wednesday 30th August**.

The Chapel site is opposite the shop and post office in Speldhurst, and is used for community activities and events. The shop's current lease expires in 2024, and without a new building to occupy, risks closure. At the same time, the owner of the Chapel wants to sell the site, and has indicated that they would be pleased to sell to Speldhurst Parish Council, rather than a developer, which would be their other option. This presents us with a one-off opportunity to acquire the Chapel for the benefit of the community.

By purchasing the Chapel, the Parish Council is looking to:

- Secure the future of the Community Shop and Post Office - allowing it to re-locate to the Chapel as a permanent premises with parking
- Save this unique community asset for the betterment of everyone in the area; it is very likely the site will be sold to developers otherwise
- **Safeguard the last post office in the Parish - a vital local service**
- Facilitate the creation of a community hub, maintaining the Chapel's longstanding role as a venue for community activities

The Parish Council would purchase the site, and Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd (a Community Benefit Society) would be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and running costs. In exchange, the Parish Council would only charge them a nominal rent.

Speldhurst Parish Council would finance the purchase with a loan from the Public Works Loan Board (HM Treasury). The purchase price is £300,000; the loan may be for slightly more to cover things like legal fees, surveys and stamp duty; we're estimating £325,000.

For an average home in the parish (Band D), the repayments over 25 years (currently at 5.4% interest) would add **£1.04 a month - that's £12.49 a year** - to the council tax bill.

The Parish Council would fully own the Chapel site. Should the shop project fail for any reason, the Parish Council would be free to operate the site - or sell it - as it wishes, in **whichever way benefits the parish the most**.

Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd are separately raising approximately £400,000 to extend and refurbish the Chapel, via a community share offer and other funding sources. This will increase the value of the Chapel site at **no additional cost to residents** of the parish. This fundraising is crucial, and will determine if we can continue.

The Parish Council want to hear from households across the *whole* parish. We will also be holding drop-in sessions. You can **find more information about this project on our website** - <https://www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

You can respond to this consultation in one of 3 ways:

- Scan the QR code and complete the form online
- Email our Clerk, Katie Neve, with your responses to the questions below at clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk
- Write down your answers and return to The Clerk, Speldhurst Parish Council, Langton Green Recreation Ground, Speldhurst Road, Langton Green, TN3 0JJ



Your Name and Address Please include the name of the village you live in.	
Do you think Speldhurst Parish Council should be taking steps to protect local assets such as the Speldhurst Community Shop?	Yes / No
Are you in favour of the Parish Council proceeding with this project?	Yes / No
Are you in favour of the Parish Council proceeding with this project knowing it will include a council tax increase of £12.49/yr for a Band D property, for the purpose of loan repayments?	Yes / No

We welcome any additional comments you may have, too - feel free to attach a sheet when returning this consultation.