



Pompey Chimes



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Parish news from north of Petersfield to the Isle of Wight

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Fareham church could be replaced by eco-friendly barn with sacred space

RADICAL IDEA WILL SERVE COMMUNITY

IT'S a radical idea for a new community space that can serve Fareham people better.

An eco-friendly barn with living walls that seamlessly blends into the community is one idea being considered for a replacement building for St Columba Church.

Portsmouth University students designed a multi-purpose community building with a sacred space at its heart. It has grass and greenery growing on the outside walls and a sliding glass frontage.

The concept was produced in response to the challenge to design a building for the 21st century.

Eight university students showed off a model and artist's impressions of their design to church members, schoolchildren, community groups, businesses and politicians, including Fareham MP and treasury minister Mark Hoban – and got a vote of support for their contemporary and inspiring suggestions.

The church has developed a two-stage project to be at the heart of community life. The first stage involves the opening early next year of a community café and outreach centre in the former Threshers off licence in Highlands Road, which is the commercial centre of Fareham Park.

The second stage is more ambitious, with the church considering selling its present site and relocating to a new site at the heart of the local community.



Above: Simon Gabe shows the model to pupils from Henry Cort Community School; right: the interior of the proposed new community building

The Rev Philip Cochrane, vicar of St Columba, said the work the students had done may only be a concept but he was confident their ideas would shape the area.

“Although this is still fairly hypothetical at this stage, there is a real possibility that we will be part of a new development nearer the centre of our community,” he said.

“We won't be able to do it on our own but with partnership help we will. It is for all of us to make a long-term investment in the future of Fareham Park – which in



some ways is a very marginalised community.”

Niall Bird and Simon Gabe, two of the students working on the concept, presented to the gather-

ing. They had spent time understanding the social demographics of the area and what people wanted from the church.

“We came up with the idea of a

barn,” said Niall. “It provides several multi-use spaces as well as a private chapel area.

“The church is planning more outreach and mission work, so we wanted to incorporate a lot of ideas that would encourage the community in, like a café space and an area for counselling too.”

Simon added: “Sustainability was also a significant issue and the ability for the building to adapt in the future. We thought what we were suggesting was quite radical but the initial reactions have been very encouraging.”

In plans for the future, St Columba Church would have to be sold to help provide the funds for this new initiative – which will be physically closer to the heart of the Fareham Park community.

The first phase sees the opening of the community café in the former Threshers off-licence in Highlands Road. It would be run by St Columba's Church.

It is the result of a three-way partnership with Hampshire County Council and Fareham Borough Council to create a community focus where people can meet and receive the help they need.

It will also have six computers with internet and printing facilities. The back storage area will be converted into a suite of counselling rooms to enable organisations such as Relate, Citizen's Advice Bureau, the police, the vicar and counselling support to deliver their services for the benefit of the community.