

# A consultation to relocate Pontesbury Library Service to a new Community Hub on Hall Bank, Pontesbury.

## About this consultation

We are asking for your views regarding a proposal to relocate Pontesbury Library to a new community hub building at Hall Bank, Pontesbury. Plans for the Hall Bank development were approved in September 2018 and as part of the overall project Shropshire Homes are offering to construct a community hub building. This building could house a range of community services and functions that would form a focal point for the development as a whole.

Please read the following information which gives further detail and background about the proposal to relocate the library and answers some 'frequently asked questions', then give us your views by clicking on the 'How to get involved' tab.

Please note that this consultation is specifically about the location of Pontesbury Library, and the feedback obtained will not have any influence on the overall Hall Bank development itself.

## Background

Over the past 3 years Shropshire Council has been working closely with key local partners regarding the future of Pontesbury Library service. This includes Pontesbury Parish Council, Pontesbury Library Steering Committee and the Friends of Pontesbury Library, as well as Minsterley and Worthen with Shelve Parish Councillors.

The Library Service Strategy for Shropshire (2018 to 2023) highlights the continuing financial pressures on Shropshire Council and recognises that working more closely with appropriate local partners is the best way to secure sustainable library services for the future. The Library Strategy sets out a 3-tier hierarchy of library provision and places Pontesbury Library in tier 2, meaning that Shropshire Council will seek to reduce the cost of operating the library over a 5 year period.

Various Town and Parish Councils across the county are now providing support to their local libraries, either by running those libraries as a commissioned service or by providing financial support to enable Shropshire Council to continue operating those branches.

For Pontesbury Library this has led to a funding arrangement with Pontesbury Parish Council, supported also by Friends of Pontesbury Library fund-raising. This financial support has enabled Shropshire Council to continue providing and developing library services for Pontesbury and the surrounding areas. The Friends of Pontesbury Library have become active champions for the library service within the community by organising and running events, helping to promote the full range of services offered by the library, and generally mobilising local support to ensure that Pontesbury can retain its library in the long term.

Here is a summary of the key milestones relating to Pontesbury Library over the last three years:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Key Milestone</b>
April 2015	Public meeting in Pontesbury Public Hall to outline Shropshire Council savings requirements and implications for the library.
May 2015	Friends of Pontesbury Library determine to act as a focus for community support and fund-raising for the library.
April 2016	3-year funding agreement to support library put in place with Pontesbury Parish Council and Friends of Pontesbury Library
November 2017	Parish Council drop-in regarding Hall Bank development proposals.
January 2018	Shropshire Council Library Strategy identifies Pontesbury as a tier-2 library.
February 2018	Pontesbury Library Steering Committee consultation regarding proposed Community Hub building.
October 2018	Shropshire Council consultation on proposed relocation of Pontesbury Library to the Community Hub.

The proposal being put forward within this consultation would seek to build on these existing partnerships, and deliver a shared vision of a library service at the heart of its community.

## **Current service**

Pontesbury Library is currently located in Bogey Lane in close proximity to Mary Webb School and Pontesbury CE Primary School. The library is housed in a demountable building offering approximately 144sqm of accommodation and is open for 15 hours per week.

The library provides access to the full range of library services including the lending of books for all ages, large print books, DVDs, and audiobooks on CD. There are free computer facilities with internet access and printing, plus a photocopier and free wi-fi. The library holds local studies resources as well as more general information

about the local area and events. There are also particular areas of library stock aimed at helping people with their health and well-being.

Through the request service Pontesbury Library enables access to the entire stock held by Shropshire Libraries, and items not held in stock can be obtained via the inter-library lending service. The library provides a service to local reading groups and takes part in national and countywide initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge. Alongside regular Rhyme Times for children the library hosts a variety of events organised by the Friends of Pontesbury Library.

These services are delivered by trained and experienced library staff consisting of a Branch Manager and a Library Assistant with additional cover provided when necessary by staff based at other branches in the Shrewsbury area. The library is also supported by a Team Librarian based at the library headquarters in Shrewsbury.

Pontesbury Library currently has just over 550 'active users'. Between April 2017 to March 2018 there were 8,192 visits to the library and over 15,000 items were borrowed. Over 500 people attended library events.

## Proposal

Our proposal is to relocate Pontesbury Library into a new community hub building that is being planned as part of the Hall Bank development. The community hub would be situated alongside a retail unit and a children's nursery all of which would border a 'village square' and provide access to an area of green space. The new building will enable improved access for people with disabilities and the layout of the library will be planned to make it easier for all users to access the services provided.

The amount of dedicated library space within the new building would be similar to that which is currently offered. However new modern shelving would offer flexible options for how the space is configured, for example to accommodate events when the library is closed or for other wider community uses.

The library would continue to offer the full range of library services as previously outlined, including access to computers, book/audiobook/DVD loans, wi-fi, photocopying and events for adults and children. The library would be open as it is now for a minimum of 15 hours per week, but co-locating within the community hub could enable opportunities for increasing those hours in the future.

With this proposal the library would continue to be operated and managed by Shropshire Council, whilst continuing to work closely with key partners including Pontesbury Parish Council and the Friends of Pontesbury Library to ensure that the library is sustainable in the longer term. Co-locating the library with other local services would strengthen the position of the library within the community, enable closer working with a wider range of local partners, and offer scope for a greater variety of events and activities.

Moving to a new location is consistent with the Library Strategy and our vision to 'make libraries in Shropshire the heart of their communities' and our mission to 'work in partnership with others to empower everyone to live healthy, resilient and fulfilling lives, and to provide library services that inspire people's learning and enjoyment.'

The proposal is part of wider work to identify the best possible solutions for the ongoing delivery and sustainability of valued local services, ensuring high quality services delivered at a lower cost to Shropshire Council.

We have a strong commitment to promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion and the potential impact of the preferred proposal on library users, particularly those who might be more impacted by any change, is being assessed through the completion of an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA).

Once this consultation has finished all the feedback will be reviewed and any decision on the location of the library will be subject to approval by Shropshire Council cabinet.

## Frequently asked questions

### What would happen to the library staff?

Staffing arrangements would be unchanged under this proposal. The library would continue to be staffed by Shropshire Council library staff as it is now.

### What can I expect when the library moves?

The ongoing provision of a full and comprehensive library service including access to public computers, book, DVD and CD loans, events and activities for adults and children.

### Why should the library move location?

The opportunity to create a "community hub" within Pontesbury, would provide a place that people can access a range of information and support on the local community and Council services.

**Why can't the library stay where it is?** Mary Webb School and Science College is converting to an Academy and Shropshire Council are statutorily required to undertake the legal transfer of land and surrounding buildings to the academy trust. At the point of conversion the library building and surrounding area will be in school ownership. In order for the service to develop in line with the Pontesbury Community the opportunity to move to a modern location must be considered.

### When would this move take place?

Timescales for the library move would largely be dictated by the progress of the overall Hall Bank development and the various construction works associated with that, but an estimate at this stage would be June 2019.

#### Will there be space for parking?

The development plans allow for 15 car parking spaces in front of the village square to include dedicated disabled parking provision.

#### How will this proposal save money for Shropshire Council?

In developing these proposals we are continuing to work closely with Pontesbury Parish Council, other surrounding parish councils and the Friends of Pontesbury Library to ensure a sustainable financial arrangement for the library service, in line with the Library Strategy to reduce running costs over a 5 year period.

#### If the building is 'shared use' won't the library just get squeezed into a corner?

In developing the draft layout plan for the community hub, one of the key principles is to maintain a similar amount of library space as is currently offered. A modern building would enable that space to be used more effectively and efficiently.

#### It sounds like this development is going ahead anyway, so what is the point of consulting now?

This is not a consultation about providing a community hub building, it is specifically about moving the library into that building and thus making the most of the opportunities presented by the Hall Bank development. Relocating the library would not only benefit the library as outlined but would also help to secure the long-term sustainability of the community hub itself and the wider community benefits associated with the facility.

#### Are there any recent examples of similar library moves?

Although there are no particularly recent examples of libraries moving into brand new facilities, in 2017 Ellesmere Library was moved into the former Mere's Day Centre, subsequently renamed 'Our Space', to create a community hub providing a range of services under one roof. The library has now become well established in it's new home and continues to be well used and supported by the community.