

# Newland Avenue Community Action Group

## NEWSLETTER

February 1st, 2016

## First Public Meeting



### **Save Newland Avenue Primary School for Community Use!**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Newland Avenue Community Action Group. The group has been set up in response to the sale of the former Newland Avenue Primary School. The initial aim is to prevent the school from being sold for private development & allow public consultation and the preparation of a bid to develop the site as a community hub.

The group recognises the need for a public space along Newland Avenue to help respond to major changes in the population structure and to promote inclusion through supporting the development of art and culture in the area. The group is concerned to preserve public access to the gardens, amphitheatre and all-weather sports pitch and enable the community groups

using the building to continue to enjoy the benefits of a beautiful and much loved former primary school.

On Thursday 28th January 2016 the group held its first Public Meeting in Hull Community Church. 25 people attended the meeting which was co-hosted by John Allison-Walsh from the church and Patrick Naughton-Doe from the action group.

Patrick explained how he had decided to set up the action group after reading a story last December about regulars at a pub in London who saved it from being developed into a block of flats. They registered the building as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) which gave them 6 months to raise funding to purchase the pub and run it as a co-operative owned by their members but run for the benefit of the community.

### **The Ivy House**

The regulars at The Ivy House became the first group to use a new law ([The Localism Act 2012](#)) that enabled community groups to register buildings and land, in community use, as assets of community value. Once registered the Localism Act gave them 6 months to raise money to put in alternative bid. They were fortunate that they were able to list the building nationally as the interior was largely original and secured a grant towards the purchase price of about £800K. They raised the balance with a mortgage on the property after forming a co-operative for community benefit. They became London's first co-operatively owned pub and raised more money through issuing shares. No matter how many shares each member has only 1 vote. They refurbished the pub and now run it successfully as a not for profit social enterprise for community benefit.

On the 9th December 2015 Patrick suddenly made the connection between the Asset of Community Value legislation he had been reading about and the FOR SALE sign on the front of Newland Avenue Primary School. He emailed his local councillor Dave McCobb to find out what was happening with the school but 2 or 3 days later saw the sign saying SOLD appear on the front of the school.

Further enquiries confirmed that a bid of £425K had been accepted by the council subject to the property developer obtaining planning consent. Their bid proposes to convert the ground floor of the Primary School into two large retail units and the upstairs into flats. The second building would then be converted into flats. A faint hope remained that there still might be time to delay the sale to allow a community bid to be prepared so a survey was undertaken to see what the local community thought about the school and whether enough people would be willing to sign the nomination form to register the school as an Asset of Community Value. It quickly became apparent that the council had not sought to consult with any local residents about what they felt about the school and whether they would support the proposed development.

### The Survey

Patrick drew up a short survey form and walked around the area asking people for their thoughts and opinions. He found out that there had been a campaign to stop the school from being sold but the council had not consulted residents about what they felt should happen to the school. The survey showed most people felt strongly about the school and the vast majority felt it should not be sold or converted into shops and flats but instead kept as some form of multipurpose community hub. Many could not understand why the school had closed in the first place. Some had attended the school or had children at the school before it closed. They felt it was part of their heritage and they welcomed the idea that it might be saved for community use. Importantly over half of the people surveyed were willing to sign the nomination form to register the school as an Asset of Community Value (a minimum of 21 people registered to vote is required for an unincorporated body).

### What residents said on the doorstep:

- Severe problems with car parking in the area.
- Too many shops along Newland Avenue being converted into cafe-bars and fast food outlets with the perception of increasing anti-social behaviour especially at night.
- Family homes being bought up by private landlords to be rented or converted into houses with multiple occupancy.
- Too few spaces for children to play with most houses having no gardens.

- A feeling that residents felt powerless about these changes - some had objected to the council but no matter what the changes continued to occur.
- One resident had tried to rent some classrooms in the school to teach English but had been turned down.
- The Residents Association did not believe enough people would be willing to take action.

### **Who is using the site now & what is happening to them?**

The Hull Playgoers Society have agreed to move to The Avenues Centre on Park Street which is to be reopened for adult education and managed by representatives of the community but remain under council ownership.

The Wyke area council offices are relocating to temporary accommodation above Chanterlands Avenue Library until a more permanent home is found.

Newland Youth Club is to be relocated to Kingston Youth Club on Beverley Road but the council have requested that they be allowed to stay for up to six months until the first phase of the building work to convert the front of the school is completed.

PSYPHER group for young adults with mental health problems - future location uncertain but Calvert Lane and Orchard Park community centres being considered. May be allowed to remain at Newland temporarily if agreed by the property developer.

CARER's group is in a similar situation to Psypher.

The football pitch is used regularly and is protected from being redeveloped until March this year. it will need resurfacing but is a very much valued asset as there are so few pitches like this in Hull.

The Garden is not well maintained but is a haven for wildlife and birds who have little green space in the area. The amphitheatre is overgrown but could with a little TLC could be used for outdoor theatre perhaps for Assemblefest or The Hull City of Culture.

### **What action was taken prior to the meeting:**

1. Asset of Community Value nomination was submitted.
2. Public Meeting was organised.

3. Facebook group was started.
4. Meeting with representatives from the Lithuanian Community was arranged in which it was agreed to organise a petition and work together to save the school.
5. Open letter to Martin Green, CEO & Director of Hull City of Culture was drafted to ask for support from the Hull City of Culture team.
6. Interview with Burnsy on BBC Radio Humberside.
7. Interview with the Hull Daily Mail.
8. Meetings with local councillors were arranged and Councillor Lunn suggested a business plan be prepared and submitted to Councillor Daren Hale, Deputy Leader of the Council and responsible for enabling the City Plan, Finance, Land and Property.
9. Meetings and discussions were sought with representatives of the local residents associations (Newland, Ella Street and The Avenues), Friends of Pearson Park, Hull Civic Trust and Park Avenue Adult Education Centre group as well as local heritage specialist Hilary Byers.

## **What was agreed during the Public Meeting**

After presenting the story everyone was encouraged to give their views and we discussed how the community could buy the school using a similar approach to The Ivy House. Various sources of funding were explored including Grants, Loans, Crowdfunding and issuing shares. Hilary explained the heritage aspects of the school and the difference between local listing and National listing. Hilary emphasised that objections to the planning application would only be considered if they were covered by planning law. Having a better proposal for the site would not classify as a valid objection. We would need to show how the plans did not comply with the local or national plan for objections to have a chance of influencing the decision.

Helen spoke eloquently about the importance of preserving the landscaped gardens and trees behind the front of the school. The lack of space for children to play in the area and the lack of open and green spaces was highlighted. The gardens at the school and the all weather sports pitch were of particular concern if access was lost due to development of the buildings.

Dani also spoke up on behalf of children and families concerning the lack of play space available and how the gardens and play areas could be better used. She agreed to set up a smaller sub-group to explore the Hull City Council plans with respect to children's play areas and see if the private development might conflict with council policies for play and open spaces.

Mike spoke about council planning process and emphasised the importance of engaging with as many people as possible.

Nearly everyone had ideas which were discussed as much as possible within the time available. There was a perception that the community was facing great challenges but this seemed a good time to take action especially in view of the impending Hull City of Culture 2017 activities. Support was given for the [open letter to be sent to Mr Martin Green](#) CEO & Director of the Hull City of Culture.

## **Future Plans**

1. Hold a further meeting in 2 weeks on Thursday 11th February at 7pm to enable further discussion and allow people to find out more information to feedback to the community. Venue TBC.
2. Invite a planning expert to outline the relevant law and how to register objections effectively.
3. Dani to co-ordinate a small group of people willing to look at how families could use the gardens and play space more often and review council policy on play and open spaces.
4. Patrick to set up an online petition and keep everyone informed using the Facebook group.
5. Relevant documents and background information to be shared on the Facebook group.
6. Build links with other social enterprises to explore sustainable models such as a co-operative for social enterprise.
7. Apply for funding from Hull City of Culture 2017.

## Things you can do before the next meeting

[Sign and share the online petition](#) 338 Signatures 1st February 2016 and counting!

Collect written signatures ([Forms online available here](#)) 377 and counting!

[Print, share and distribute A5 leaflets](#) or ask me for copies to take with you when collecting signatures.

[Come to the next Public Meeting on Thursday February 11th at 7pm Venue TBC](#)

[Write to your local councillors and MP](#)

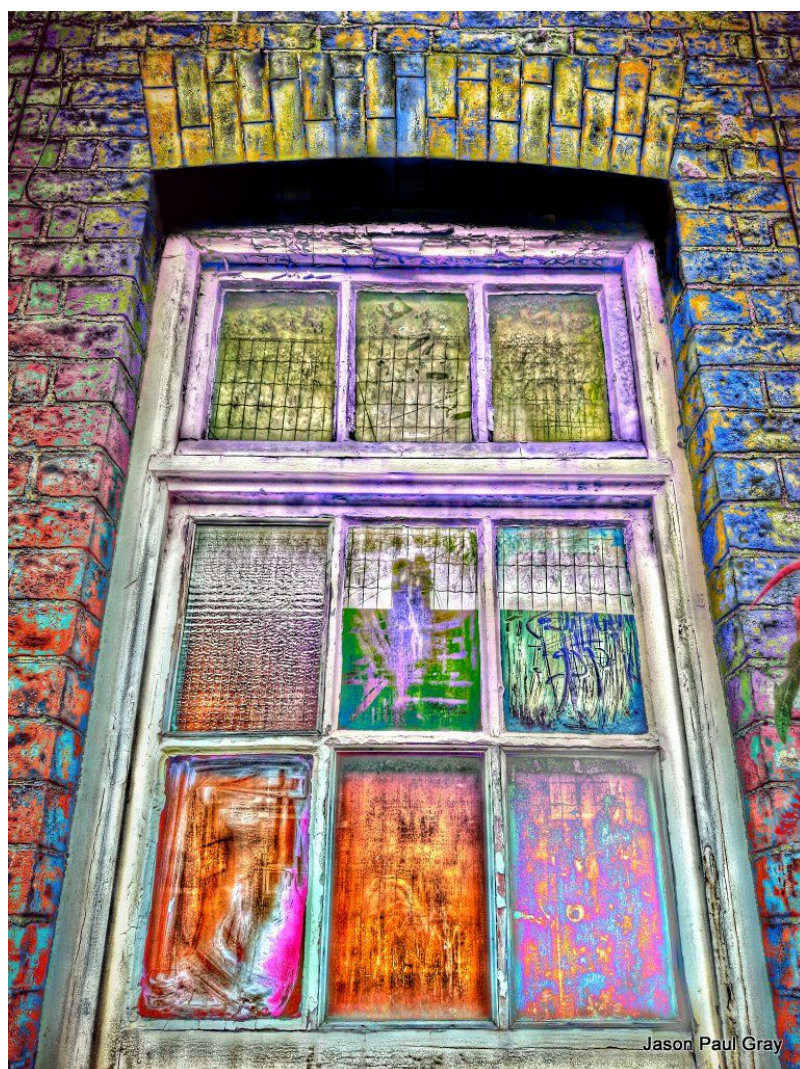
[Read and add your comments to the Draft Business Plan](#)

[Join the Facebook group.](#)

[Read the background information and files ie Why Social Enterprise?](#)

Follow us on Twitter [@Newland Avenue](#)





Jason Paul Gray

Jason Paul Gray is kindly offering to sell [printed copies of his photographs](#) from the outside of the school at cost + £10 donation in aid of the Newland Youth Club. Please contact me for orders.

Published by Patrick Naughton-Doe on behalf of

Newland Avenue Community Action Group

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