



NEW ASH GREEN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION LTD

Registered Office: Centre Road, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent DA3 8HH

Village Centre Update – 1 February 2023

Many people will be aware that the present owners of the freehold of the village centre, Piperton Finance, have advertised their holding for sale at auction on Thursday 9th February. The property is advertised as an investment, although noting that part or all of it may be suitable for redevelopment subject to existing tenants' leases and planning permission from Sevenoaks District Council.

For clarification, the land in question includes the shops and premises above them **except** for the Co-Op's supermarket and its upper floor. It includes all three car parks and most of the service yards but not the Badger pub or village hall. The library, Youth & Community Centre and doctors' and dentists' surgeries are also outside the area.

The Village Association has no legal power to influence what happens to the centre because it does not own anything in it, but as soon as we became aware of the impending auction, we took steps to ensure that all interested parties were aware of it. We are therefore in contact with the Parish Council and councillors at Sevenoaks District Council and Laura Trott MP. Officers at Sevenoaks Council have carried out an urgent assessment of the implications of any sale.

The impact of any sale is obviously unknown at this stage, but the immediate effect will not change anything because existing leases and tenancies will be carried forward. The VA is willing to work with any new owner, alongside the District and Parish Councils, to do everything possible to ensure that the centre remains a vital part of the village and that the improvements we have wanted for many years can be achieved.

We are also aware of the attempt to register the centre as an Asset of Community Value. If this is successful it will mean that the community will be able to delay the finalisation of any sale for six months while attempting to find the money and expertise to mount its own bid to buy it. This will not be easy because neither the VA nor the Councils have the money available to pay for the purchase and necessary repairs and renovation. However, we are keen to use this opportunity, if we can identify a realistic way forward, to look for willing partners who will work with us for the good of the village.

The VA is encouraged that the planning policies of Sevenoaks District Council aim to ensure the retention of the facilities in the village centre and these policies will determine what can be approved if an application for planning permission is submitted by a new owner for development in all or part of the centre. We will ensure that the interests of village residents are put forward if any application is made.

We will keep a close watch on developments and update residents as soon as we have any more information that we can publish.