



**EMSWORTHFORUM**  
EMSWORTH EMPOWERED

C/o The Emsworth Community Centre  
North Street, Emsworth PO10 7DD  
[www.emsworthforum.com](http://www.emsworthforum.com)

Jean Tier, Secretary,  
The Emsworth Community Association,  
North Street,  
Emsworth  
PO10 7DD

25/06/16

Dear Jean,

Following our recent telephone call, as I told you, the Officers Group of the Forum discussed the future of the ECA building. This was informed both by the feedback you gave me and the article penned by your Chairman, Mike Stott, that appeared in the latest edition of Shorelines.

As you know the Forum intends, with the ECA's support, to include the ECA site in the draft neighbourhood plan in a site specific policy designed protect it for public/community use in the future. I think that there is general consensus that would be a useful protection in the Neighbourhood Plan for an important community asset in Emsworth.

The Forum Officers felt that it would not be appropriate for the Forum to take a view on the question of whether or not to rebuild or restore the building as we have had no detailed information, such as surveys or financial appraisals, on the matter and it is not a decision for us to make. That decision is for Hampshire County Council as the ultimate owner and the ECA as the leaseholder – although we understand that HCC have, in effect, delegated the decision entirely to the EC.

As I mentioned to you, we have had representations to protect the old school. The option of replacing it with a new build centre paid for, as we understand it, by residential dwellings, whose tenure is unclear, would we believe probably be controversial to many people in Emsworth. Having thirteen people (who are divided, so in fact, it could be 7) make such a potentially contentious decision on such an important matter for Emsworth's future services and community assets would we believe be unacceptable to many people and probably cause considerable local controversy.

We therefore strongly urge your committee to consult not only its membership but the Emsworth community as a whole on the options. This would not mean that HCC and the ECA does not make the ultimate decision as to what to do with the site but that it would do so in the context of an understanding of the views of the local population. This could be very helpful to your committee. Furthermore, as a publicly owned site and building, we believe local people will feel they are entitled



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to know the position, have the facts shared with them and be given the opportunity to express their views on the matter – and we agree.

We appreciate that these decisions are very difficult and that your committee has been wrestling with it for many months. But our view is, that, if a consultation is done, your decision – whatever it is - will have greater legitimacy and acceptability to the local community. The deadline for your grant from HCC seems arbitrary and could be extended to allow for such a consultation. We urge your Committee to seek an extension do this as soon as possible.

As I have said to you previously, the Forum would be very happy to assist with any such consultation. We have the infrastructure to set up an online poll like the one we did for the surgery at no cost. We also have volunteers who can help deliver leaflets and input the data. I am sure the ERA and the EBA and other local groups would also help too if asked. We know this is a tough decision for your committee, but, with all due respect, we feel that a public consultation will help you to reach a view that people can support.

Please do call me if you would like to discuss this further and if you would like to take up our offer of help – which we sincerely hope you will. I am copying this letter to Mike Stott also and will of course report it to the next Forum management Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

Kind regards

Stephanie Elsy