



# Three Counties

## Showground Development Plan

Update August 2018

# Background

In more recent times the Three Counties Agricultural Society has replaced the title of showground masterplan in favour of Showground Development Plan because it closer describes the function of the document and plan.

In June 2015 the Three Counties Showground Masterplan Feasibility Document was produced following an initial assessment by our Planning Consultants. It was agreed by the Three Counties Board of Trustees and presented to Malvern Hills District Council at the beginning of what has proved to be a long and continuing journey. The masterplan attempted to simplify the Society's masterplan of 2009 by adopting a simple focus on projects over the next 3 to 10 years. The overall purpose of the 2015 plan still remains, however in a more focused form. The plan attempts to:

1. Improve the visitor experience and retain long term clients through essential refurbishment of key buildings and development of new facilities.
2. To establish new income streams through diversification of land uses and capital development projects which are linked to shows but also operate independently.

Together the above objectives will play an essential part in protecting the Society's long term future by reducing its vulnerability to risks such as adverse weather.

The 2015 plan included a number of options which at that time had not been sequenced into a workable plan. These have since been rationalised and formed in to a logical and deliverable plan which is now considerably underway. This plan consists of three phases of activities as outlined on the following pages.

# Background

## Phase 1

- To re-clad Avon and Wye Event Halls at the southern part of the showground. This work was completed to Wye Hall in 2016, removing asbestos from 1975 on a leaking building, and replacing with modern cladding. Avon Hall was lightly refurbished. This has resulted in many new clients being secured and long term bookings renewed.

## Phase 2 – consisting of two parts

1. To create a lodges' park in Langdale Wood.
  - This project presents the perfect opportunity to attract tourists to events at the showground and the wider region. It also supports the overnight accommodation strategy of the Society.
  - Permission for the lodges' park in Langdale Wood was approved in June 2018 and work has begun planning its development.
2. To develop a link building between Avon and Wye Event Halls
  - The initial plan and 2015 masterplan plan determined this as a simple large, clearspan structure bridging the gap between the two building and providing a versatile undercover event hall.



# Background

## Phase 3 – consisting of two parts

1. To develop a hotel on the perimeter of the showground
  - A recent study determined that there is a need for another good standard hotel in the Malvern area. Furthermore bookings of the existing conference and exhibition facilities will increase enormously if supported by close and appropriate overnight accommodation.
2. To establish a visitor centre and farm shop
  - The showground has the potential to become a destination venue across 7 days of the week. The farm shop will support the producers of our Three Counties by promoting its produce. The farm shop will be supported by a visitor centre with potential for a cycle hire outlet and promotion of tourism and rambling routes.



# Where we are now

Currently at the southern end of the showground, known as the livestock area, we erect a costly marquee to fulfil the needs of our events, and have ageing infrastructure dating back to the 1950's, consisting of a wooden café and blocks of shower/toilet facilities which are fast becoming not fit for purpose in the modern world.

Visitor expectations, quite rightly, have begun to exceed what we are able to offer. It is our desire to place all of these facilities under one roof, within the new building. The space created will give way to much needed additional parking alongside the venue providing an enhanced visitor experience for all.



Link Marquee



# Changing needs

Three show seasons have passed since the initial showground plan was produced. Since then efforts from all departments of the Society has had a significant impact on the popularity of events. Now more than one million visitors attend each year. This increase in attendance has put new pressure on the showground's ageing infrastructure resulting in a need for additional and better facilities beyond that of the initial development plan consequently promoting a re-think of the plan.

The greatest inadequacy in showground facilities is the number and quality of toilets, showers and permanent catering facilities to the south of the showground. Simply building a new large clearspan hall as previously intended (under phase 2, part 2), and attracting more visitors to events would undoubtedly have a negative impact on visitor experience, and cause reputational damage for all future events held at the showground.

Deferring the multi-use development in favour of building or upgrading essential facilities to meet demand would mean that the objective to generate new income is lost. Consequently the decision to modify the building to meet all needs and objectives was taken.

The new design which is in the same location as before consists of two stages as outlined on the following pages.



# Changing needs – stage one

**Stage One** accounts for approximately 1/3 of the foot print and improves the facilities which are struggling to meet visitor demand. The new design includes:

- a) A substantial number of male, female and disabled toilets
- b) Separate facilities for overnight stay visitors to include showers, toilets and wash-up areas
- c) A cafeteria capable of accommodating 250 visitors with kitchen and storage
- d) A small exhibition / event hall with reception room
- e) An upper floor where the Society offices will be relocated and an exclusive hospitality suite overlooking the showground

Including these facilities in the design will mean that the current Stockman's Cafeteria, a wooden structure capable of serving 100 visitors, which is now in very poor condition, will be demolished along with an ageing toilet/shower block.



# Changing needs – stage two

**Stage Two** will include a clearspan multi-purpose event hall. This will be smaller than the previous design due to the introduction of the facilities building (stage one). This reduction in size is acceptable because it still equates to the size of the marquee which it is replacing that has been perfectly adequate, in terms of the space requirement, for several years.

During the process of re-designing the building, consideration was given to other future uses that could be incorporated into the design. This new design is far more costly to complete than the original one, so having extended this far it is important to 'future proof' the building.





# The new multi-use building

It is intended that the new building will be used to support our own Society shows, and additionally be hired out, to support existing and new third party events; opening times will therefore reflect the current times for the showground. The building (stage one) is increased in size to include a second floor where the showground offices may be relocated. The upper floor also has an extension to the catering offering, overlooking the livestock judging rings, this will be used for entertaining visiting committee members, sponsors and VIP guests., and will replace the need to hire expensive marquees. This area will also be used to support the Society's educational objectives; schools from our three counties attend Royal Three Counties Show free of charge; in 2018, 2500 children from 50 schools took part in 995 workshop spaces on site. Additionally, 500 members of the Scouting and Guiding community attended the show to earn their Three Counties Agricultural Society Badge. The building will play a vital role in extending the Society's educational function by holding classes on the upper level for academic work and on the ground floor for practical exercises.

Relocating the offices enables the current office block, located in the centre of the showground adjacent to the Three Counties Exhibition Centre, to function as a much needed conference support facility providing 'break-out' meeting rooms. Many conference bookings are lost due to the absence of such facilities. During our shows this building will also be used as a first aid hospital to include 12 treatment clinics. This will free the current location of Teme Hall making it available for commercial use such as a corporate hospitality venue; again replacing costly marquee structures.

# The new multi-use building continued

The design footprint includes a car park for 100 cars, constructed of a surface material which allows the area to be multi-purpose enabling alternative uses such as locating an animal enclosure marquee. When an event is being held solely in the new building the car park will enable parking close to the venue for key visitors and exhibitors. The car park will be accessed through the 'Blue Gate' entrance off Hanley Road. This entrance has always been regularly used by exhibitors for the build-up and break-down periods of shows and particularly for livestock vehicles. Providing additional parking will alleviate the current shortage of parking for this purpose. This will also extend the exhibitor parking which is in short supply at many events held on the south area of the showground, and can be conveniently accessed directly from the 'Blue Gate' entrance in Hanley Road.

The revised design of the new multi-use building incorporating a reception room, smaller exhibition hall, catering facilities, upstairs space and substantial toilet/shower facilities lends itself to be adapted to future needs, whatever they might be as the demand changes; although it is not intended that the building will be used for retail purposes. This is important because we have already demonstrated the need to re-design this building due to changing demand in only three years.