

Martlets Shopping Centre Short Term Revival Project

Introduction

When judged against the District Plan and the Mid Sussex Sustainable Communities Strategy it is evident that the area around the former Martlets Hall site and the Martlets Shopping Centre does not match up to the visions which is for:

*“a thriving and attractive District, a desirable place to live, work and visit. Our aim is **to maintain, and where possible, improve** the social, economic and environmental well-being of our District and the quality of life for all, **now and in the future.**”*

The vision is underpinned by four priority themes that promote the development of sustainable communities are:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Promoting economic vitality
- Ensuring cohesive and safe communities; and,
- Supporting healthy lifestyles.

The Strategic Objectives of the District Plan expands on the vision for sustainable development with outcomes that:

- Promote a place which is attractive to a full range of businesses, and where local enterprise thrives.
- Create and maintain town centres that are vibrant, attractive, and successful.
- lead to safe and socially inclusive places.
- support the local economy; and
- create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities.

Policies DP2 and DP7 are also relevant.

For a variety of reasons, the redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre and neighbouring Martlets Hall site has stalled. It is not clear when the redevelopment might be revived, what form any redevelopment will take or the phasing of it.

The only clue in this respect is in the NRR November 2021 Investor Update which referred to the group considering bringing forward the residential element, a new car park and refurbished retail units.

The consequence of the delays in redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre are for all to see. The area is blighted and, if we are to be true the vision in the District Plan, it is incumbent upon parties with responsibility for this estate to take action to reduce the blight.

Burgess Hill Town Council is willing and able to support Mid Sussex District Council and NRR in the reduction of the blight in the Martlets Shopping area and the former Martlets Hall site and the proposal in this paper sets out what we can achieve.

Summary of the projects

There are two principal projects being proposed

1. The Victoria Schilling Urban Garden

This will be located on the concrete area of the former Martlets Hall site. Designed with sustainable and re-usable materials the garden will be constructed in such a way that it can be moved to create space for outdoor community activities or if the land is required by ITV for its film crew and equipment.

2. The Little Hive

This will be located on the ground floor of the former LIDL building where there is an area of approx. 4000 sq.ft. of space which we would convert to a 'pop-up' community venue. This would be available for use a range of uses including community activities, indoor events, drop-in sessions for a range of community services, drama, comedy and music performances, and commercial activities (e.g., po-up indoor market).

The fit-out of The Little Hive will be in such a way that the capital assets (which is most of the expenditure) can be re-utilised in other locations (e.g., in The Beehive).

We are aware that New River has leased the whole of the LIDL building to Sandridge Media, the agents for ITV, and we would work with them to ensure that our use did not interfere with ITV's production schedule.

Other works

Related to the delivery of these two projects we would like to see a programme of general visual and environmental improvements as well as works that will reduce health and safety risks. We understand that some activities of this nature are planned by New River. Critically though we would like to see visual improvements to the exterior of the LIDL building and creative work to the hoardings on the Martlets Hall site plus a general overhaul of the Stone Garden in Church Walk.

3. Project cost

The cost of each project is

Urban Garden	£50,000
The Little Hive	£ 40,350
Creative hoardings	Awaiting quote
LIDL building wrap	Awaiting quote

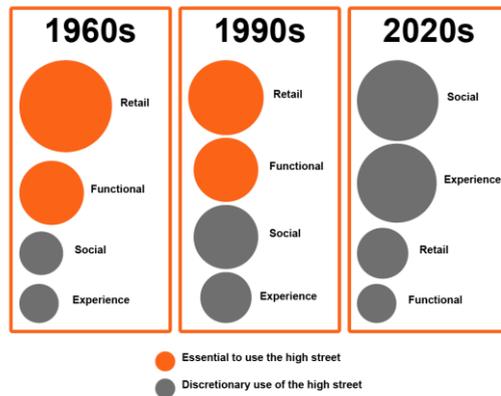
4. How will the town centre benefit from these projects?

There are a range of benefits to be obtained from adapting the disused Martlets Hall site and front portion of the LIDL building.

Visual: The Martlets Hall site and LIDL building sit on an elevated point in the town’s shopping centre and in their current situation detract considerably from the townscape. No-one believes the are is visually appealing. Improving the townscape creates a more welcoming appearance at this important gateway. The intention is to encourage visitors to spend more time at this point rather than pass through to Church Walk or the Market Place shopping centre.

Environmental: The **Urban Garden** creates a green space in a town setting. There is a trend in urban design for green space to be incorporated in new developments and, indeed, there are now recent examples where redevelopment schemes are being adapted to provide green oases in urban environment (e.g., Castlegate, Stockton-on-Tees, Mayfield Railway Depot, Manchester and Aire Park, Leeds). The Urban Garden also fits into a key plank of the government’s 25 year plan on the environment (i.e., “Greening our towns and cities”).

Social: Both the **Urban Garden** and the **Little Hive** are being designed to maximise community use across all age demographics. The LGA and other organisations see social activities, community use and experience led functions as keys to maintaining the importance of high streets through this decade and into the 2030s (see below from Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the ‘new normal’ – LGA Jan 2022) which highlights the growth of social and experience led high street uses.



Community Health: The effect of Covid on mental health has been well documented in several studies. By providing this outdoor and indoor space we can create opportunities for people to meet in informal and formal settings. Both spaces lend themselves well to hiring out to a broad range of community groups for social and leisure purposes. Until The Beehive is constructed there is an opportunity to create a community hub and performance space in the town centre. All of these activities are good for community mental health.

Economic: The Urban Garden and Little Hive provide opportunities to generate additional economic activity. This can be achieved by hiring out the spaces for commercial, leisure and community purposes. There is the added benefit that these proposals will also generate footfall and, therefore, more activity for other businesses in the town centre.

Detailed Project plans

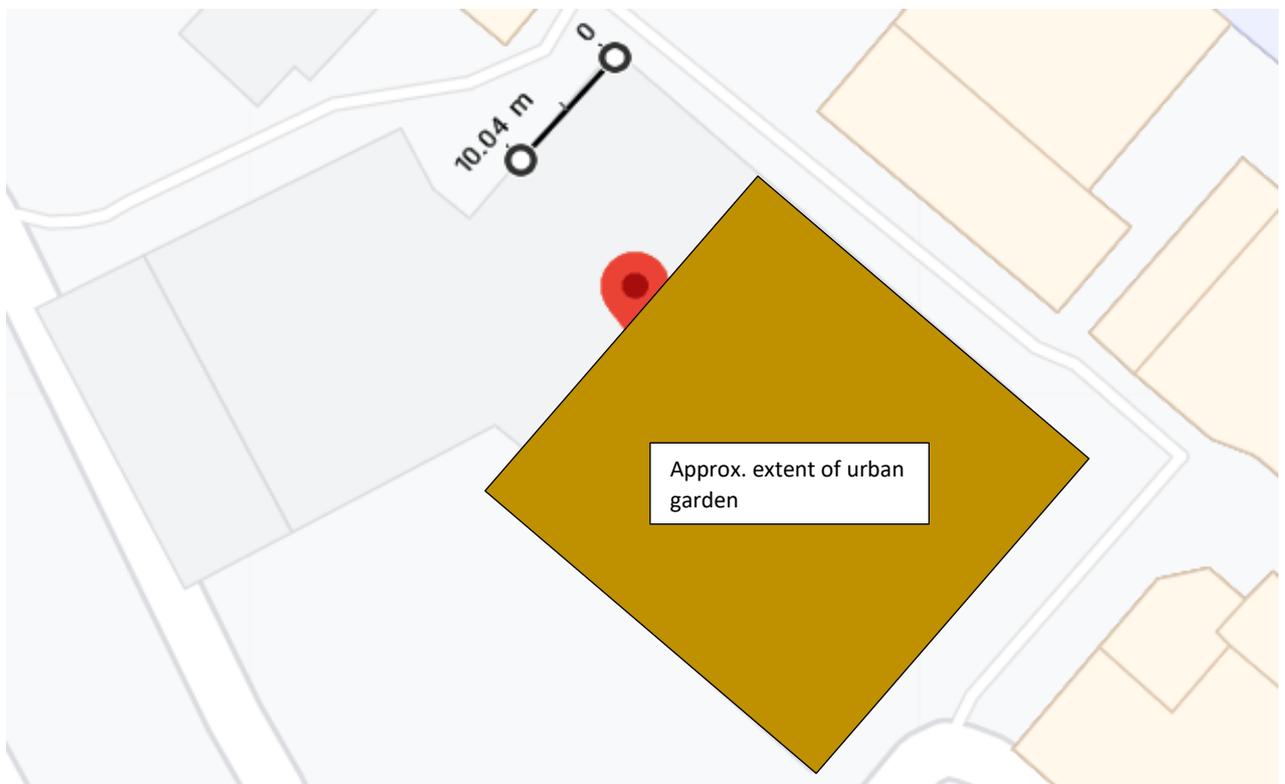
Victoria Schilling Urban Garden

Victoria Schilling was born Victoria Hallett in Burgess Hill, West Sussex in 1952, the fourth generation of her family to be born in the town.

Her grandfather was gamekeeper at the nearby Heaselands Estate owned by the Kleinwort family which was noted for its formal and woodland gardens including ornamental trees and spectacular displays of native bluebells in spring

It was Vicky who, together with Alan Mitchell, founded the Tree Register of the British Isles (patron: HRH The Prince of Wales) and who subsequently became the central figure in the growth and development of the Tree Register. Vicky's contribution in the formative years of the Charity was unequalled and reflected her passion for trees.

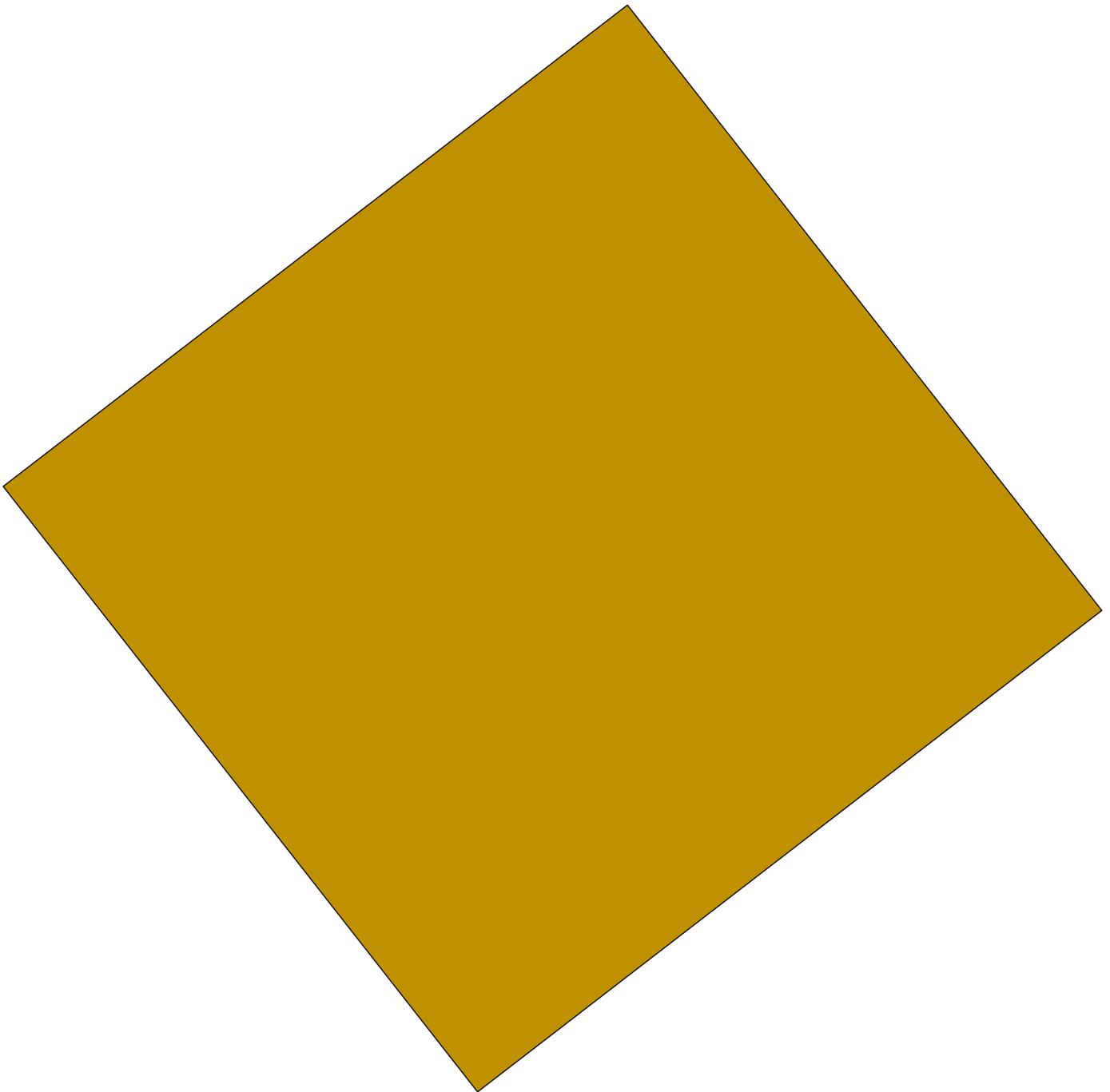
Vicky passed away on 23rd November 2019 and we would like to honour her memory by naming the garden after her.



The area identified in brown is the approximate extent of the Urban Garden which consists of the hard concrete area on the former Martlets Hall site. The area between the Urban Garden and the unused land will be securely fenced off as will the perimeter, which will be close boarded. Access to the Urban Garden will be via lockable gates

The Urban Garden has been designed with mobility in mind. This means that the planters in the central areas can be moved so that the space can be redeployed for community events, pop-up leisure activities or markets and when it is required for ITV for their film crews.

A broad outline of the Urban Garden design is set out below.



The Victoria Schilling Urban Garden design features

The Little Hive

The Little Hive is a reference to The Beehive which is the community centre and performing arts venue project being developed by Burgess Hill Town Council. The Beehive will not open until late 2024 at the earliest. The Little Hive will operate as a pop-up community space and performance venue until The Beehive is open. If redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre has not commenced by late 2024 there is not reason why The Little Hive could not continue to operate.

Utilising approx. 4000 sq. ft. on the ground floor of the former LIDL supermarket, The Little Hive will be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of uses. This includes everything from soft play days for toddlers, arcade type games for older children and teenagers, comedy nights, live music or drama events, rehearsals, keep fit, yoga and other classes, private hire, and commercial pop-up events (e.g., kilo sales).

The Little Hive will be licenced for regulated activities including the sale and consumption of alcohol and other regulated activities. It is envisaged that as a theatre venue it would be capable of hosting an audience of between 140 – 170 people seated theatre style.

Almost all of the capital equipment being required for The Little Hive could be redeployed at the end of the project's life.

In terms of fit-out of the community space (costs are approx. but hopefully decent guesses)

1. Fix water supply - £1,500
2. Refit toilets and tea point (basic condition look ok but they need an overhaul - £1,000
3. Check installed aircon/heating if not operable/repairable install 4 x wall mounted systems (as per Trading Spaces) - £10,000
4. Painting/decorating/cleaning - £2,000
5. Electrics – install cabling for sound & lighting rig and add power points where appropriate - £2,000 (might want to talk to TS Professional)
6. Swap out strip lights for LEDs - £1,500
7. OPTIONAL – remove ceiling tiles (a) creates a better height for performances and (b) gives it a more urban feel - £2,000 (mainly labour but would need to re-org electric fittings)
8. Modular stage and valance - £5,250
9. Blackout and sound absorbing curtains - £1,000
10. Acoustic blocks - £1,200
11. 160 chairs - £6,400 (I have had a look around and it is possible to get 2nd hand chairs which are a lot cheaper)
12. Fittings for lighting rig and demountable Par Can lights - £1,500 (probably need to talk to TS Professional about this)
13. OPTIONAL – PA Rig (sound deck, speakers, fold back monitors, mikes and stands). £5,000 (alternative you hire in the tech support each night).

Total cost £40,350. Plus VAT