

South of Romsey Town Centre

1 How we got here

Over the past decade, we've worked closely with the Romsey community to shape a shared vision for the south of the town centre, including the future of Crosfield Hall.

A community-led journey

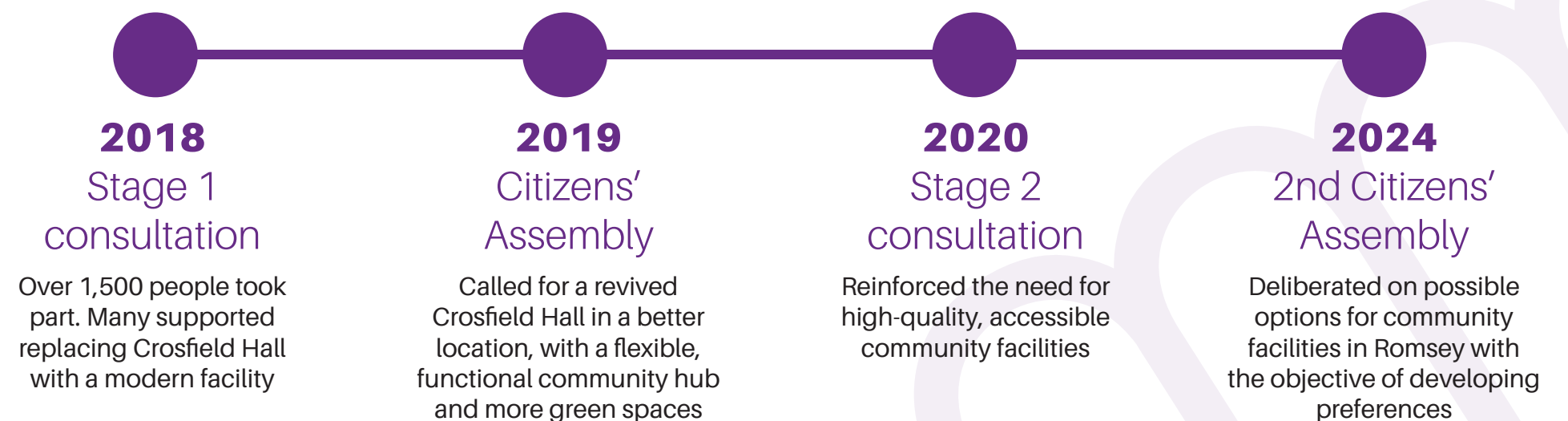
- in 2013, local organisations formed the Romsey Future partnership
- a major public consultation in 2015-16, involving over 2,000 people, led to the first Romsey Future Vision
- one of the key aims was to create a healthier, more vibrant town centre that meets the needs of residents both now and in the future
- Crosfield Hall was identified as a valued community space, but it's isolated and no longer meets the needs of a growing population
- another identified priority was the importance of public realm improvements - making the town centre more welcoming, walkable and connected
- there was also a desire to make a feature of Holbrook Stream, creating a new public realm and green space that opens onto the water and encourages people to spend time in the area.

The South of Romsey Town Centre (SoRTC) masterplan was adopted in 2020, setting out opportunities for the area but not fixing the future of Crosfield Hall.



What you told us

Since 2018, we've carried out extensive engagement around the future of the south of Romsey area including the bus station site and the Crosfield Hall site. One of the key topics of discussion was how best to provide a community facility for a growing town.



Citizens' Assembly 2024

In 2024, a second Citizens' Assembly was held to deliberate on possible options for community facilities in Romsey with the objective of developing preferences to inform Romsey Future's decision making. These preferences serve as a starting point to inform Romsey Future's considerations when developing community facilities.

The Citizens' Assembly brought together 36 residents, selected to reflect Romsey's population, and supported by independent facilitators and expert speakers.



What the Citizens' Assembly did:

- *heard from local groups including the Disabled People Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and Romsey and District Society*
- *explored lived experiences of current facilities through pre-engagement workshops*
- *explored three site options: bus station, Crosfield Hall, and Romsey Rapids*
- *developed a set of principles and criteria for future community spaces, including:*
 - *a large hall and smaller meeting rooms*
 - *café/bar, performance space, co-working areas*
 - *outdoor space, Changing Places WC, and full accessibility.*

The Citizens' Assembly's preferred approach:

After reviewing the design options, the Citizens' Assembly were permitted to vote for more than one design in order of preference.

Following the final vote, the list of preference of the three options was:

- *most members of the Assembly placed the Crosfield Hall site as their first preference*
- *for a few members of the Assembly, the bus station site was the preferred option. For over half it was their second preference*
- *no members of the Assembly placed the Romsey Rapids site as their preferred option. A few placed this as their second preference.*

Additional Studies

Between the two phases of the Citizens' Assembly, the council received results from two studies it had commissioned, undertaken in summer 2024; a retail study and a parking study. These have helped shape the design options and highlight key priorities for the town.

The parking study found that:

- *Romsey's town centre car parks are often 90% full, which is above the recommended 85% threshold for easy access. This means it can be difficult for people to find a space, especially during busy periods*
- *redevelopment of the south of Romsey town centre area would result in the loss of 84 spaces*
- *these spaces need to be re-provided elsewhere to avoid harming town centre access and vitality*
- *the Crosfield Hall site is the only viable location within council ownership to do this.*

That's why all design options include a decked car park on the Crosfield Hall site - and why the preferred option (Option 1+) increases this to 285 spaces to help meet future demand.

The retail study found that:

- *demand for retail and food and drink space in Romsey is expected to grow modestly by 2040.*

To support this, all design options include mixed-use development on the bus station site, combining homes, shops and commercial space. This helps keep the town centre vibrant and supports linked trips with the new community facility.

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2 The options we explored

Three sites (outlined on the aerial image to the right) were initially considered as possible locations for future community spaces by the Citizens' Assembly in October 2024.

- 1 Bus station site
- 2 Crosfield Hall site
- 3 Romsey Rapids site



Overview of options

Some members of the Citizens' Assembly raised questions about the possibility of renovating or expanding the existing Crosfield Hall.

The adopted masterplan identified that, while the community facilities that the Crosfield Hall provides are important to the local community, the building itself is limited in the range and type of activities it can be used for.

In May and June 2024, Romsey Future carried out a series of workshops with community groups across Romsey to understand how they are currently using community facilities. Community group representatives pointed to issues with Crosfield Hall such as:

- *accessibility within the building, with the entrance facing away from the town centre*
- *the layout is inflexible, due to the ad-hoc way the facility has been extended over time. It has limited meeting room space, poor acoustics and the technology and stage space is lacking*
- *outdated facilities and limited provision for disabled users*
- *these were challenges for many different groups, ranging from Crosfield Hall users like the Romsey Chamber Orchestra to the Disabled People's Partnership.*

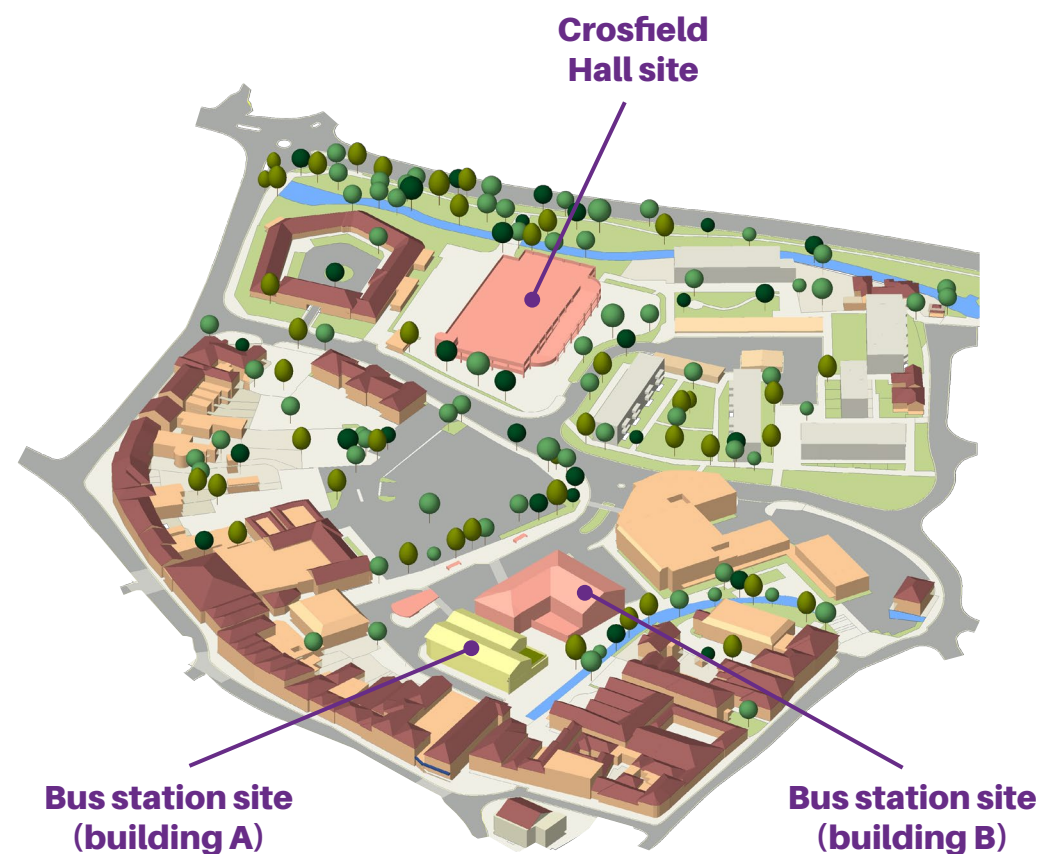
Similarly, there was widespread agreement within the Citizens' Assembly that the current provision of community facilities does not meet the needs of younger people.

Refurbishment would therefore require both major reconfiguration of the building, and extensive work to ensure its energy use matched an equivalent new community building. This would be both costly and complex, with initial estimates indicating that refurbishment of Crosfield Hall would cost approximately 15% - 20% more per sqm than a new facility.

Additionally, the current layout of the site means that keeping the existing building in place would limit the ability to deliver the improved, flexible community facilities identified by the public consultations and Citizens' Assemblies. It would also not allow for the required parking provision for the town centre identified in the parking study.

As a result, refurbishment of the existing hall was not taken forward as a viable option.

Summary of **Option 1**



The bus station site will be used for:

- a new 880sqm community centre
- 20 homes
- 600sqm of commercial space
- a 200sqm plaza and transportation hub (the new bus station).

The Crosfield Hall site will be used for:

- a new three-storey 200-space car park.

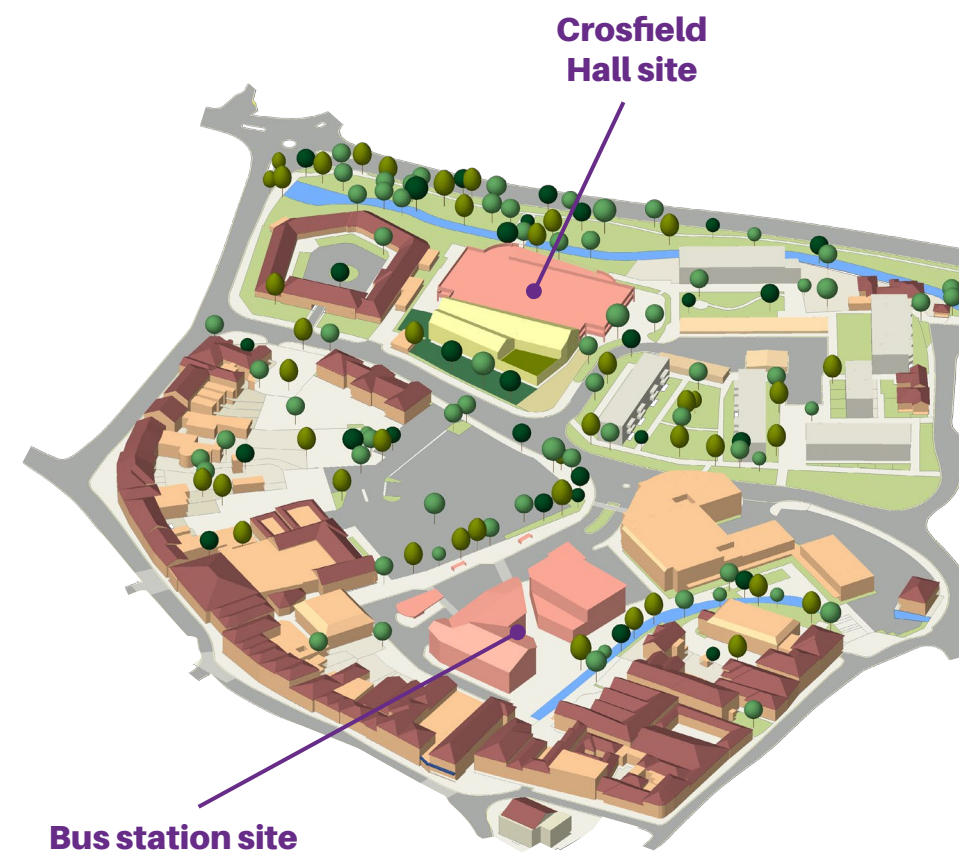
Pros:

- puts the community facility in a central, accessible location
- all community facilities are in one place (unlike options 2 and 3)
- there is the potential to retain Crosfield Hall (and associated parking) until the new facility is completed
- aligns with the masterplan public realm improvements (bus stops, bike hub etc.)
- provides increased community and commercial space compared with the masterplan
- reduces the height of building A from three to two storeys
- lowest overall cost.

Cons:

- requires off-site parking for community users
- loss of parking at Broadwater Road whilst construction of the new hall takes place
- loss of parking at Crosfield Hall during construction of the decked parking (same as option 3)
- provides fewer residential units compared to masterplan (20 instead of 30)
- annotated drawing of option 2 showing the different sites.

Summary of **Option 2**



The bus station site will be used for:

- 30 homes
- 1,067 sqm of council/commercial space.

The Crosfield Hall site will be used for:

- An 880sqm community centre
- A new three-storey 200-space car park.

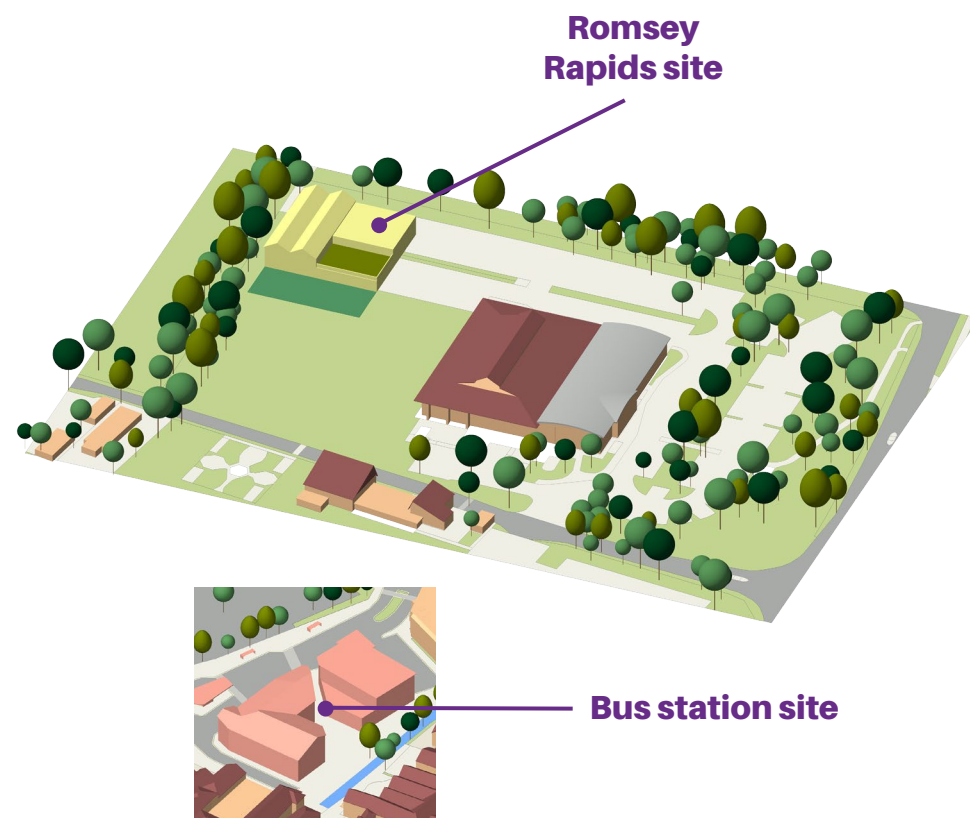
Pros:

- preferred location identified by the Citizens' Assembly
- combines community facility and parking in one location
- the likelihood of linked trips to the town centre is assumed to be similar to how it is now
- the community facility would 'screen' the decked car park.

Cons:

- potential parking capacity of 200 spaces - no additional parking to meet existing or forecasted demand
- loss of community facility whilst Crosfield Hall is demolished and the new facility is built
- loss of car parking during demolition of Crosfield Hall and construction of the new hall and decked parking
- higher cost compared to option 1
- annotated drawing of option 3 showing the different sites.

Summary of **Option 3**



The Romsey Rapids site will be used for:

- a new 660sqm community centre plus outdoor space.

The bus station site will be used for:

- an additional 380sqm community hub
- 30 homes
- 687sqm of commercial space.

Pros:

- creates a new community anchor near future residential neighbourhood
- level access on-site parking
- potential to retain Crosfield Hall until new facility is completed
- offers open community green space.

Cons:

- less accessible for town centre users with a 10 to 12 minute walk to Romsey Rapids
- people are less likely to undertake linked trips to the town centre
- community facilities are split across two sites - the Citizens' Assembly were reluctant for this to happen
- potential loss of approx. 48 parking spaces at Romsey Rapids
- highest overall cost.

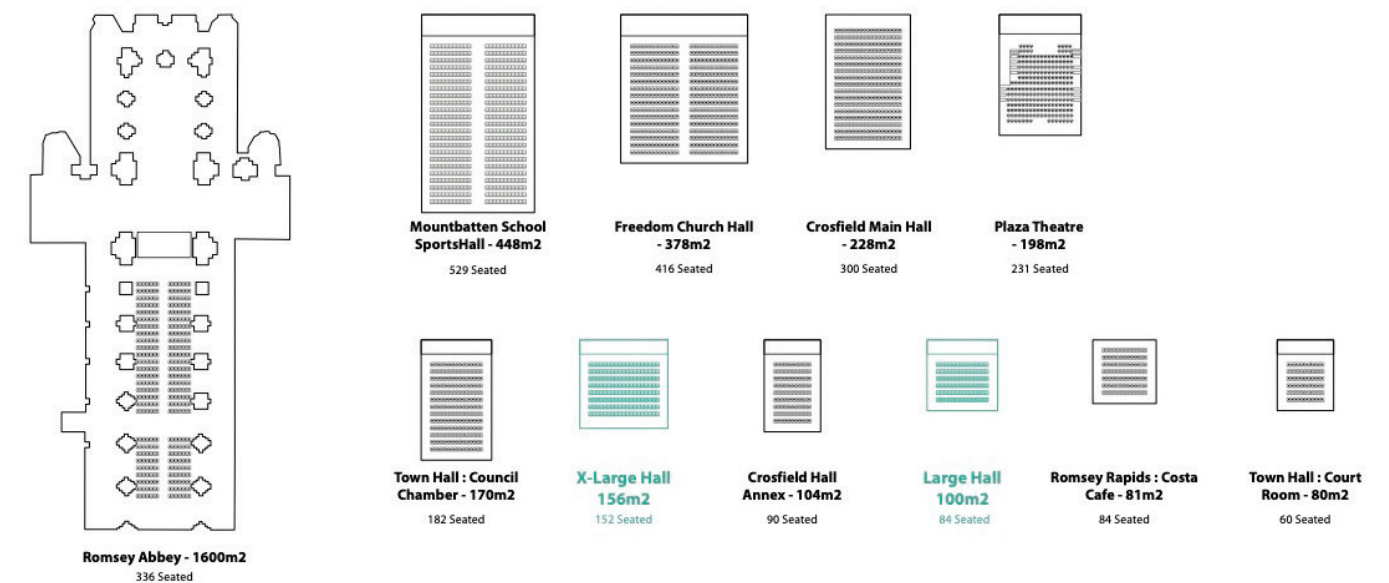
Size comparison of community facilities

To help visualise the scale of the proposed community facility, the design team compared the size of Crosfield Hall with other venues.

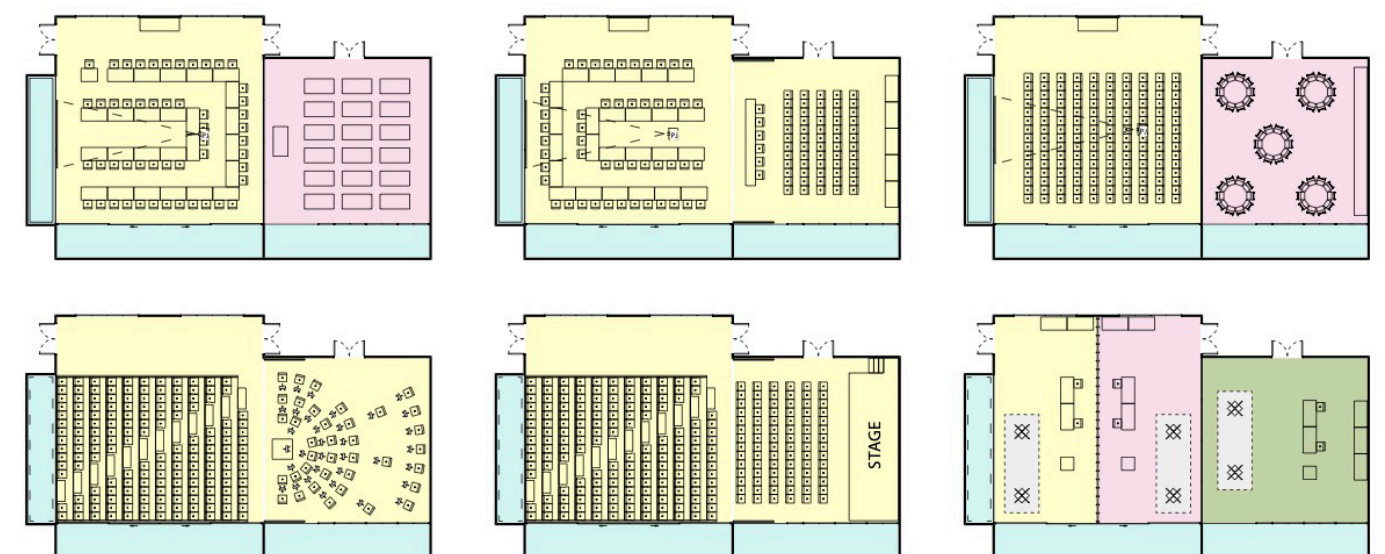
The new facility is designed to be 880sqm, which is larger than the existing Crosfield Hall and comparable to other modern community centres.

This space allows for a large hall, smaller meeting rooms, a café, youth space, and flexible areas for events and performances.

The Citizens' Assembly considered an XXL hall as part of option 3, however, it was decided that such a large space was no longer necessary.



A scaled comparison of Romsey's civic rooms



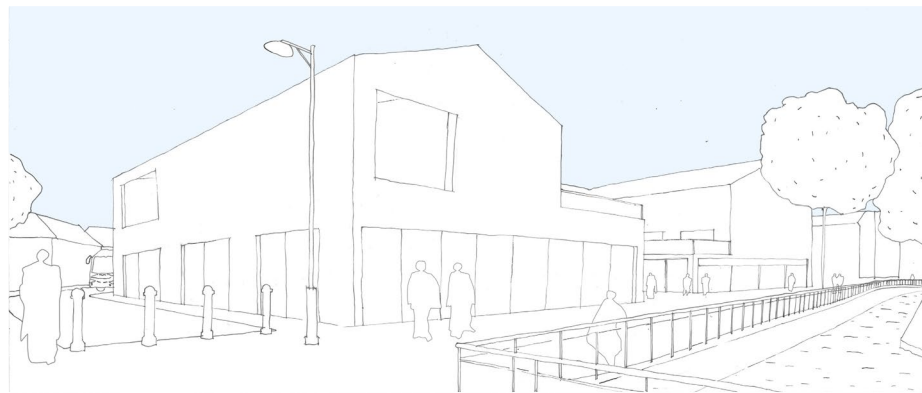
Layout options, showing the flexibility of rooms for community uses (XL and L halls)

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3 The preferred option

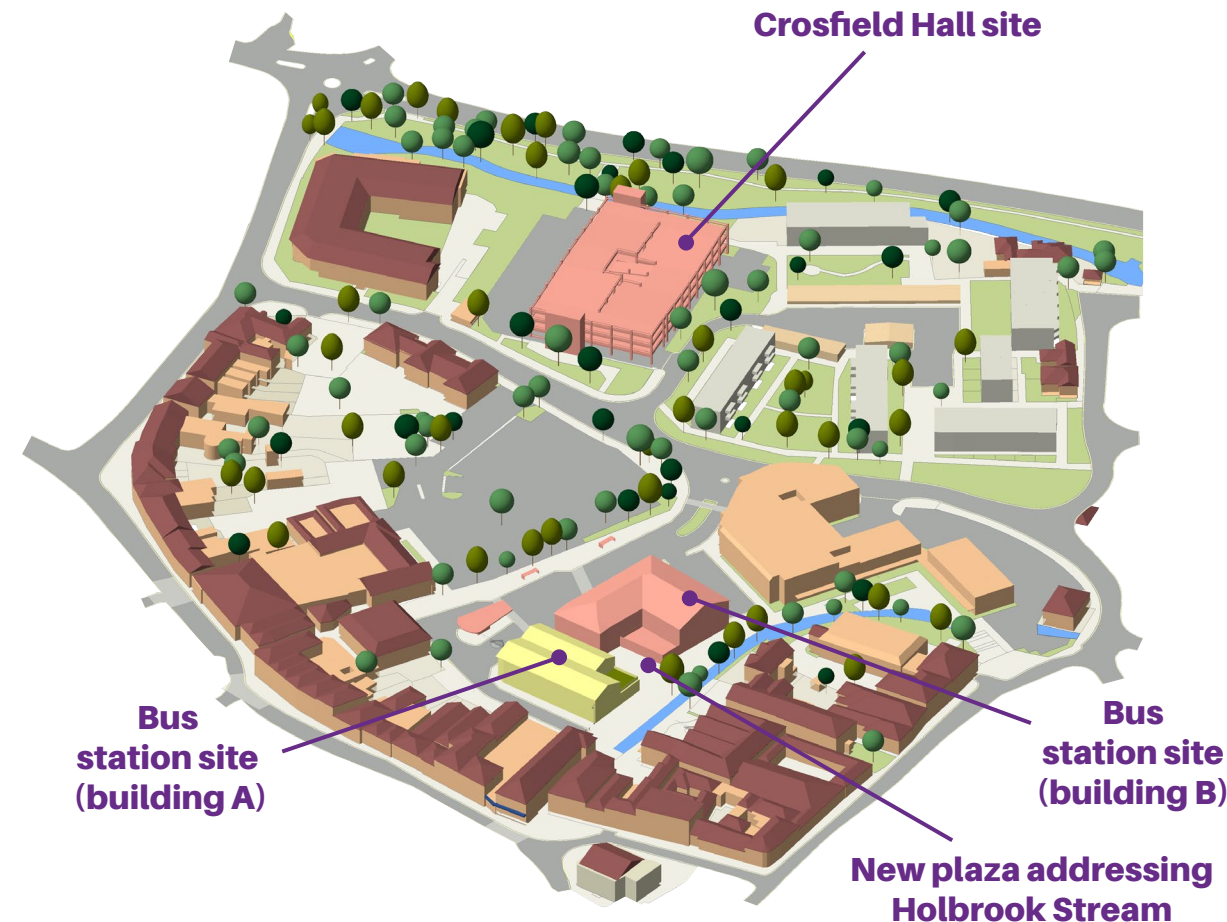
What is Option 1+?

Following presentation of the three options to the Citizens' Assembly in October 2024 and further work and technical studies, Option 1+ was developed as a refined version of Option 1. It aims to maximise parking provision while delivering a high-quality community facility in a central location.



Please note these are indicative concept designs only.

These illustrations are intended to show the scale and location of the buildings only. No design work has been undertaken. This work would begin with community engagement once the preferred option has been selected and the architects have been appointed.



Why Option 1+?

The preference of the Citizens' Assembly was to have the community facilities in the town centre - as per options 1 and 2 - with option 2 being marginally ahead.

Option 1+ as a refined and further developed version of option 1, reflects many of the same priorities and features identified as important to the Assembly - most notably utilising a central, accessible location to provide large, flexible community space.

The preferred option:

- responds directly to community feedback about location and accessibility to the town centre
- places the community facility centrally, supporting linked trips (where people combine visits to the community centre with shopping, dining or other activities in the town centre). This helps boost footfall and supports local businesses
- maximises parking provision to support town centre vitality and helps meet future parking demand
- Crosfield Hall will remain available until the new facility is ready
- construction will be phased to minimise disruption
- retains key features from the masterplan, including transport and public realm improvements
- benefits from existing transport links and pedestrian routes, making it easy to access by foot, bike, bus or car.

Bus station site:

- a new 880sqm community centre (building A)
- 600sqm of commercial space (building B)
- 20 homes (building B)
- a transportation hub (new bus station), bike hub, and public realm improvements.

Crosfield Hall site:

- a new 285-space decked car park
- 58 EV charging spaces
- 13 disabled parking bays.

Considerations going forward

At this stage, we are focusing on setting the location and key principles for the new community facilities. Further work on the detailed design - including how it will look - will come later, and there will be further opportunities for community involvement as the project develops.

During construction we're committed to keeping Romsey accessible and active, and we'll be exploring options for temporary parking arrangements while the new car park is built.

We'll continue to engage with the community and local businesses throughout the process.

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4 Next Steps

Subject to council approval of the presented option, we will:

- begin detailed design work in mid-2026
- submit a planning application in early 2027
- start the procurement process to appoint contractors in mid-2027.

In advance of the above, and to help shape that work, we'd like to hear your thoughts.

If approved by council, what you would like us to consider as we move into the next stage of designing the new development including the new community facility, decked parking and public spaces? This is an opportunity to share reflections, ideas or concerns.

Tell us what matters to you



Visit <https://testvalley.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/sortc-introduction> to view the plans and share reflections, ideas or concerns about what you want the council to consider when they move into the designing phase.

