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Village to get flood-proof hall

'GREEN' FEATURES: Plan includes escape door for water

By David Green

PLANS for a new "flood tolerant" community hall in one of Suffolk's most sparsely populated villages have been approved by the local authority.

The hall, near the upper reaches of the River Alde at Bruisyard, near Framlingham, includes an escape door for flood water and electrical circuits above the level of any conceivable flood.

Planning permission has now been granted by Suffolk Coastal District Council and, if an application to the Big Lottery Fund is successful, work will start next summer and be completed by 2009.

Among the "green" features of the design, drawn up by local architect, Robert Smith, is an air source heat pump which is capable of drawing in cool air from outside and converting it to 55 degrees.

This is expected to provide a 70% saving against the cost of oil and avoid three tonnes of carbon dioxide – the main global warming gas – being emitted. John Gibb, a member of the village hall committee, said: "The result is that the village hall will be carbon neutral – in line with Government targets to make all new buildings carbon neutral by 2016.

"Solar panels will also be installed and the building is designed to attract as much light and heat from the atmosphere as possible."

Bruisyard, which has a population of 175,

has long been in need of a centre for the community. Forty years ago, it was a busy settlement with a shop, a pub and a village hall known as "the iron room". The pub called last orders for the final time in the 1960s and the post office/shop was closed more than 10 years ago.

The condition of the old "iron room" – a redundant iron tabernacle erected in the 19th Century – had deteriorated and had to be demolished in the 1960s as repair costs would have been prohibitively high. This had been a very popular meeting place, much loved by the residents despite the basic facilities.

Since then, village meetings have had to be held in the vestry of St Peter's Church, a cramped chamber with a solitary light bulb, no windows, no water and no heating.

When land which had previously been used as a scrap-yard for old farm machinery became available in 1995 it was acquired for the village by the parish council after opinions had been canvassed among residents.

It was agreed that funding should be sought to erect a hall on the land so the village would have a proper community centre, an aspiration which is now set to be achieved.

Parish council chairman Peter Robinson said: "There is no doubt that a local meeting place will be extremely popular in Bruisyard. Too many rural villages have lost their identities as post offices and pubs have been closed down. The new hall will be a major landmark in the history of the village."

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