

**REQUEST FOR FUNDING CONTRIBUTION**

**1. Current operation:**

- a. The community café in Leavesden Country Park is run by One YMCA, alongside the charity's other activities within the community hub. The site caters for park users during daylight hours, as well as providing training and employment opportunities for YMCA's service users (currently several young people, with further residents from YMCA hostels planned).
- b. Margins are very tight in the industry, especially with energy price rises and the 10% increase to Real Living Wage, which will put pressure on the café in the coming year – even though the café is well used and is often “full” at peak times.
- c. Until last year, Watford Community Cycle Hub operated within the second half of the building, but have now vacated the space, leaving a shell that lends itself to other activities.

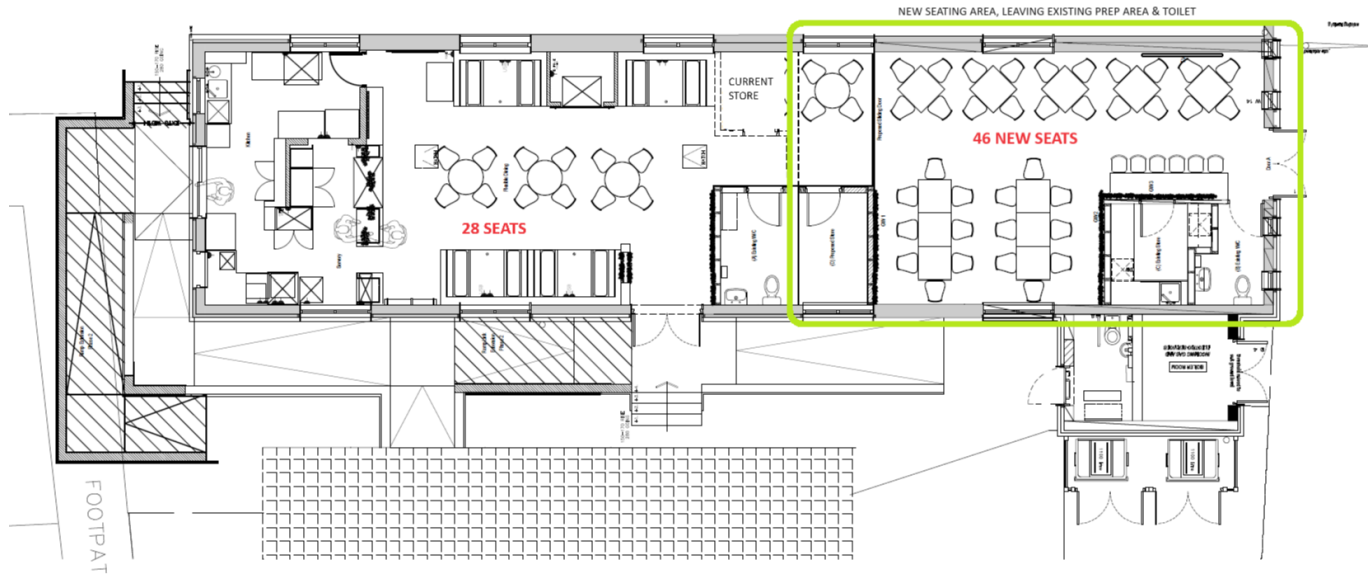


**2. The café capacity issue:**

- a. A key next step for securing a sustainable future for this community facility is to ensure that the café can serve more customers at peak times, rather than having queues for seating, thus losing custom and vital revenue.
- b. These peak times usually focus around Park Runs, community events, Christmas Carols and even the start and end of Park Ranger-organised walks.
- c. Even during this quieter month of January, there have been lengthy queues at peak times each weekend and the 28 current seats provide insufficient seating space for local customers.

**3. The expansion proposal:**

- a. To remove part of the wall between the two sides of the building, creating a larger single space, with consistent decoration, (non-fixed) furniture and style.
- b. This proposal will add 46+ new seats, taking overall capacity to over 70 for the café, including two larger tabled areas, plus a long desk for single workspace provision (seating design will evolve over time).
- c. In addition, by retaining the existing kitchenette and toilet, a further potential food service area is introduced, plus an additional toilet for café guests, adding to capacity with the park.
- d. This new space will also have the flexibility to be used for private hire / community events at non-peak times (within the usual constraints of the current licence).
- e. The works will be delivered under YMCA supervision, with a focus on using locally sourced, environmentally-friendly materials (reused / recycled / locally sourced) where possible.



**4. Financial Implications:**

- a. YMCA has obtained two quotes from reputable firms (one of which undertook the initial fit out) and the best value quote came back at £118,000 +VAT
- b. YMCA is applying to TRDC for £60,000 as a contribution towards developing this community resource, to give it a more sustainable and long-term future, as well as providing a better service to park users at peak times such as Park Runs, or Art in the Park.

**5. Timescales:**

- a. Given that summer is the busiest time for the Park, it would be advantageous to undertake the works as early in the season as possible.
- b. In the event that funding from TRDC can be secured, YMCA will proceed with contractors to deliver the works at the earliest possible stage, with as much work as possible being completed in the empty side of the building, prior to “knocking through” for a short period of café disruption.

