

# Plan for new hall at school site scrapped

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## **A body behind proposals for a new community hall at Monks Eleigh Primary School has abandoned plans due to uncertainty over the school.**

The village school is in special measures after an inadequate Ofsted report, with the entire board of governors resigning earlier this month.

Mesch – which stands for Monks Eleigh School Community Hall – revealed its decision not to reapply for planning permission for a new hall, at an annual meeting on Monday.

The charity gained planning permission in 2010, with conditions stating building work must commence by the end of this month.

Chairman Sarah Hodgkinson said: “The trustees have concluded that there is too much uncertainty to warrant the charity’s money being expended for the renewal of the current application.

“If the school becomes an academy, totally new discussions with the sponsor organisation would then be required as to whether the school community hall was an investment which the sponsor approved.

“This could involve new designs for the hall and, therefore, result in a entirely new planning application.

“Alternatively, if the school closes, discussions with Suffolk County Council would be needed and, again, this would most likely result in a different planning application. The strategy of the Mesch trustees is to keep all options open.”

Residents were told Mesch has secured grants and donations totalling £367,000 towards construction costs of £550,000 – including a Suffolk County Council pledge of £185,000.

The balance would have been made up from the sale of the current site.

Negotiations for a new lease were scheduled to take place in early September but these were halted because of the school’s future.

The county council has pledged to work with the school to help it make the improvements demanded by Ofsted.

Speaking at this week’s meeting, resident Kathy Haddow said: “The fact of the matter is £63,000 has already been spent on planning and associated costs. It is no longer about egos; it’s what is right for the village.”

Fellow resident Patti Derry said: “The problem with the Mesch project is that the school will be under scrutiny for 24 months.”

Residents expressed disappointment that the school's headteacher, a trustee of the charity, was unable to attend the meeting.

A new headteacher is expected to be appointed this week, with an executive body in place for January.

Another village hall proposal – by Monks Eleigh Parish Council on the village playing fields – was approved last week.