

YHA Streatley hostel

A shared vision for the future



Vision

The evolution to an exciting, inspirational, sustainable and modern hostel, meeting the needs of young people, a diverse society and the local community in the 21st Century. A springboard to the great outdoors, welcoming and encouraging everyone to access The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails and to experience nature and landscape through the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs'. The hostel will be a hub for those enjoying the outdoors, providing access for exploring, relaxing, or studying this beautiful area.

The Youth Hostels Association - YHA (England and Wales) - is a registered charity. Together with its partners, and with shared priorities, YHA is seeking to create a sustainable, modern, high quality youth hostel in the Streatley - Goring area to support the charity's strategic aims as outlined in its strategy.¹

Background

The existing Streatley hostel building was one of the first hostels when YHA was originally set up 90 years ago. It now needs modernisation and enhancements to meet the expectations of YHA's customers, and provide the facilities to enable the delivery of YHA's strategic aims.

In 2019 YHA's Board determined it did not have the resources to invest in YHA Streatley and made the decision to dispose of the site. Further to representation from local partners, YHA's Board has agreed to defer decisions over the future of the hostel until February 2022. YHA's financial position has significantly worsened during the pandemic with substantial losses being incurred. Therefore, the need for YHA and its partners to secure funding to invest, in order to ensure the hostel can continue to operate and meet its and partners overlapping strategic priorities, is greater still.

Core to this is YHA's commitment to young people's development and getting more young people outdoors, improving health and wellbeing. Innovation will be crucial as we connect people and places in a world where Covid-19 is with us.

Local partners and the community representatives are of the view there is a viable future for a hostel to be retained locally to deliver the vision. YHA is positively

embracing working with these groups to secure funding to commission an Options Appraisal, which will focus on the future concept, development options, collaboration opportunities, indicative costs, and fundraising opportunities.

The YHA Streatley Hostel Options Appraisal will be used as a tool to evaluate the possibilities and attract the capital investment needed to deliver the vision.

A hostel in the joint villages of Streatley and Goring is strategically well positioned. It is on The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails, is well connected through its proximity to the M4 and mainline railway to London, and has the potential to meet the needs of a diverse range of visitors to the area and become a focal point. A place to stay, to meet, relax and learn. A hostel to potentially better support rural tourism and the local economy too.

The expectations of visitors constantly evolve and in developing the YHA hostel, the challenge is to meet those expectations by designing facilities that are future proofed and sustainable. It has been 20 years since the hostel last saw significant investment; as a charity with limited resources, compromises have always been made when investment decisions are made.

One of the purposes of the feasibility study is to understand the facilities that will be required to deliver the vision. It will also provide an opportunity to capture local partners' needs too, for example, the inclusion of information/interpretation about the AONB's and National Trails to enhance the visitor experience, meeting facilities for local businesses and the community, a café promoting local produce, or even a cycle repair hub are some of the ideas.

Next steps

Financial support is needed to commission an Options Appraisal which will enable the vision to be turned into a tangible development proposal.

Supporting the study, consultants with knowledge of property maintenance, planning and refurbishment and experience of alternative business models, working closely with communities, will be employed to help inform what is achievable and practical, supplemented with contributions from local partners, the local community and YHA's expertise.

The project has been planned into distinct phases of work; each phase will inform the following, enabling clarity regarding what will be achieved with a clear indication of cost. Swift completion of the study and reporting as detailed below is required to fit with YHA's wider capital strategy review.

- Securing support from the YHA Board for an agreed period to enable the Options Appraisal to be completed and options to be presented for approval - completed spring 2021.
- Establish the vision, members of the steering group, terms of reference, and key stakeholders - completed summer 2021.
- Define the brief of the Options Appraisal - completed summer 2021.
- Find financial support to enable completion and select consultants to complete the study - autumn 2021.
- Progress signed off by YHA Board - winter 2021.
- Complete stage 1 of the Options Appraisal - early 2022.
- Report to YHA Board & Project Partners and agree way forward - spring 2022.

How you can support the project

To date, local partners have generously contributed £20,000 towards the commissioning of the Options Appraisal, however more help is needed if a comprehensive study is to be undertaken.

You can support the project in a variety of ways.

- Donate to help commission the Options Appraisal study.
- Pledge your support for the project - explain why it's important to you.
- Offer your skills (or those of your company) on a gratis basis to support the study.

For further information, to donate or pledge support visit www.yha.org.uk/yhastreatleystudy or call us on 01629 592700.

If you'd like to discuss how you might be able to support the study, please email yhastreatleystudy@yha.org.uk

The vision for YHA Streatley is supported by the following organisations, in partnership with the Friends of Streatley YHA (Local Supporters Group)

