

Feedback to Cornhill Community Action Ltd by Cornhill Parish Council after its evaluation discussion of 13 August 2020.

How CPC conducted the evaluation.

Cornhill Parish Council members met on 13 August 2020 to conduct an evaluation of the CCA Ltd proposition regarding the CAT application in respect of the former First School site.

Prior to the meeting, each CPC member had access to the CCA Ltd website, and using the information there, allocated a ranking against the evaluation criteria agreed in August 2019 and incorporated in the prospectus circulated to all potentially interested parties. These rankings were consolidated and this consolidation was circulated before the meeting.

In addition to the information on the CCA Ltd website, some councillors drew on other perspectives/knowledge that they have of the proposal and process to-date.

This did not result in a level playing field of assessment material, and therefore there were significant differences in evaluation results, and the allocation of rankings cannot be considered “valid”. However, the criteria evaluation exercise was used as the platform for discussion, and the outcomes are given at the end of this document. All councillors were asked to comment on the CCA Ltd proposition as they would on any arms-length business proposition.

CPC has identified matters of principle which should be given priority and addressed before the end of September and these are listed in the following table, and some matters of detail, listed under “General” which while requiring attention, can be dealt with subsequently.

It is acknowledged that CCA Ltd and its website is a work in progress and that CCA Ltd has probably already identified some of the matters raised in this document.

CPC recognises the great amount of work that has been done, and everyone involved is thanked for their work on this proposition.

Next steps for CPC.

It was agreed by the CPC members that:

1. they would meet again on 26 August 2020 to discuss the result of a second criteria evaluation exercise;
2. this second evaluation would refer to any additional information made available to CCA Ltd;
3. feedback from that evaluation would be given to CCA Ltd;
4. the PC expects to receive from Iain Hedley of NCC Economic Regeneration Services, during the first week of September, his report on the directors workshop he will facilitate on 28 August 2020;
5. the CPC may schedule a third meeting after receipt of Iain Hedley's report to do a third evaluation of the latest CCA Ltd information on the website, combined with Iain Hedley's assessment, in order to determine its position on the viability of proposition;
6. in any event, CPC intends to hold a Parish Council meeting mid-September 2020 to formally resolve the detail of the CAT proposal due at the end of the month.

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Discussion outcomes

Evaluation criteria	Comments
<p>Relevant Experience & Satisfactory Operating History</p>	<p>It was noted that CCA Ltd could not provide the information required in Step 1 of the 2019 Evaluation Criteria.</p> <p>Consequently, CPC is reliant on the experience/expertise of the key people in the organisation, and it needs a pen picture detailing relevant personal and business experience from each company member, some of whom are unknown to CPC members.</p> <p>This pen picture will be required at the planned assessment workshop with NCC scheduled for 28/8/20 therefore drafting this narrative will serve two purposes.</p> <p>If CCA Ltd could highlight experience of such areas as project management, financial management, building development, sub letting, leasing etc, then this would enhance the proposition.</p> <p>Directors should have defined roles and be accountable for their areas of responsibility.</p>
<p>Evidenced understanding of Parish Council objectives</p>	<p>It was restated in the discussion that the primary objective of CPC is to protect the playing field for posterity and to register it as a Village Green. The reason for accepting the challenge of taking over the whole site is to have control over how it is developed, to complement the village green, and to maximise the benefit to the community.</p> <p>NCC has stated many times that there will only be one CAT application opportunity, and further that it considers the development of the building to be unusually (in its experience) challenging.</p> <p>Therefore, CPC feels that the CCA Ltd proposal for the development of the building must meet its evaluation criteria, which incorporate residents mandate and our understanding of NCC's key evaluation criteria.</p>
<p>Clear how the proposal will be operated independently of the Parish Council on a day to day basis</p>	<p>CCA Ltd will be treated at arms length by CPC, as would any other service provider. Draft Heads of Terms have already been agreed to reflect this, and need to be completed.</p> <p>There is currently a CPC member registered as a member of the company. This arrangement may facilitate communication and expedite decision taking between reporting dates, if necessary, but the role and related responsibilities must be agreed and documented.</p> <p>A clear Operational Management policy (or a draft at least) is required to satisfy this criteria. The PC need to understand who will deal with day to day operational queries/problems/issues and risks. If this role is</p>

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	to be outsourced, associated costs will need to be factored into the financial summary to support the required 3 year business plan which will support the CAT.
In alignment with preferences expressed in public consultation	<p>The outcome of the public meeting was a clear preference for the building to be used for health and well-being services.</p> <p>CPC needs to know who tenants may be, whether they offer those services.</p> <p>AS CPC is responsible to the community for delivering that mandate, CPC and CCA Ltd must negotiate the allocation of rights and responsibilities for determining which potential tenants would be acceptable.</p>
Evidence of need convincingly argued	<p>CPCs view is that the 'need' for a multi-unit site has not been argued. There are units for let sites/workshops at Wark, Wooler and Berwick and perhaps elsewhere too. Are they all fully occupied and is there a waiting list? If the answer to these questions is yes then this should be highlighted and the CAT would benefit from this type of supporting narrative.</p> <p>NCC will question what research has been done to support the need for this proposition.</p>
Proposal viable and sustainable	<p>Further documented evidence is required to fully satisfy these criteria. A breakdown even at a high level is needed to understand how the following figures have been developed - redevelopment costs; annual maintenance costs; outsourced resource costs; training costs; insurance costs; anticipated annual letting income based on 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% unit occupancy and how these occupancy levels will impact on the 3 year sustainable business plan. What level of occupancy do we need to ensure this proposition is sustainable?</p> <p>In the general economic climate, as the UK enters another recession, how confident can we be regarding the sustainability of this project.</p> <p>(see the General note about permitted development of Village Greens – this may impact the financial plan for the units).</p>
No conflict of interest with services offered by Village Hall, Shop and Collingwood	If the intention is to ensure that units are not let to businesses that could impact on these existing services, then this needs to be stated.
Social benefit for	Supporting narrative is needed that explains how the proposition will:

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Cornhill Parish	encourage participation by all members of the community, lead to greater community cohesion and contribute to the physical / mental well-being of the community. We could argue that securing the Village Green would satisfy this, but what about the units?
Economic benefit for Cornhill Parish	As above, all 3 supporting bullets to this criteria need to be covered by the proposition. If the financial statement stacks up, then the first bullet regarding revenue generated for the community will be covered. If CCA Ltd intend to award contracts to local businesses, then this should be stated along with details of who those local businesses are, or at least demonstrate that we have sought quotes from locals. If these quotes don't pan out then at least CCA Ltd can state that they tried.
Environmental benefit for Cornhill Parish	Its semantics, but if CCA Ltd don't intend to change the visual appearance of the building, state this. An idea of potential generated traffic needs to be articulated along with details of what efforts will be made to keep noise pollution to a minimum. If CCA Ltd think that traffic and noise levels will be low to moderate then this needs to be addressed within the proposition. The residents living in and around St Helen's Gardens will have a concern with regard to this.

General Comments.

1. Board Operations document on CCA Ltd website.
 - The PC would like to see the specific duties of each company member articulated or at least an acknowledgement that the following roles need to be filled; Treasurer, Safety Officer, Operational Management, Record Keeping relating to Conflict of Interests, Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults concerns, Equality and Diversity. The policy framework indicates that records of reports made against these policies need to be recorded.
2. The draft site plan.
 - Can CCA Ltd explain what arrangements are planned with regards to unit flexibility. 7 out of the 8 units look as though they will be available for let. Will the configuration always remain static or is the company planning some level of flexibility i.e. merging of two or more units? If so, costs to accommodate this flexibility will need to be factored into the business plan.
3. Unit 1 'Kitchen'.
 - Can CCA Ltd explain the 'need' for this type of unit and justify what CPC assume will be a higher level of redevelopment cost? Is there an operational risk for the

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company in that this bespoke unit cannot be let and/or we are limiting potential customers?

- The proposed kitchen unit might add the possibility of environmental issues both within the building and externally (requiring extra ventilation etc to avoid fumes/smells affecting other units and surrounding area).

4. Community space.

- CCA Ltd mention in one of their monthly updates that 'advertising space' could be leased in the community space. Its early days but again, acknowledgement that an appropriate cost is to be determined is required as all anticipated income will need to be fed into the financial plan.

5. Company letterhead

- The company address is the Village Shop. Is this still appropriate?

6. Village Green

- What development of the playing field, once registered as a village green, would be permitted, might be constrained by rules and regulations on the following sites:
 - www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-your-town-and-village-greens#carrying-out-works-on-a-green (which advises contacting our local commons authority to see what, if any, improvements are permitted).
 - www.defra.gov.uk
- While this might be disappointing, if it were the case it would reduce the financial burden on CCA Ltd going forward.

7. Policy and procedure documents

- Some refinement for CCA Ltd's particular circumstance required, for example as regards Financial Management - mention of payments by cheque/cash to be locked in safe - location? security arrangements? Access? Insurance implications? If shared?