

Some issues to be overcome

Finance – an acquisition cost:

January 2017: The CLT submitted an application to SCC for a community asset transfer (CAT). SCC's CAT policy permits transfer of land and buildings at anything between nil and a discounted price if its policy conditions are met. The CAT set out the CLT's vision for the site.

February 2018: SCC offered the site to the CLT for a discounted price of £250,000. This was calculated from an auction guide price of £400,000.

The SCC discount was based on the CLT's vision for the site and the facilities and services proposed, which could give cost savings to SCC in respect of adult social care and children's services.

The CLT has applied for capital grant funding and was advised in November 2018 that it had passed the first assessment. There is now a period of questions and interviews leading to the final decision in late January. The CLT is also in communication with other grant funders for the balance of grant funding.

If we are not successful we will not proceed with the purchase. We may need a short-term bridging loan depending on when, and the terms on which, grant funding can be released and for this we are in discussion with the District Council.

Refurbishment:

The CLT is in communication with other grant funders for funding to upgrade the toilet blocks (including provision of facilities for those with disabilities) and to do other remedial work that has been identified in various surveys.

Flood mitigation:

The CLT has proposals and we will be updating these when we know that we are proceeding. These will be largely based on the flood precautions for local properties flooded in 2008, financed by DEFRA, the most significant precaution being barriers for each external door. At that time some of the private properties had pumps put into a sump well at the entrance as well as toilet non-return valves.

Communication and Consultations

The CLT has had displays and made presentations at every Annual Village Meeting (except one) since the site became vacant. The CLT's aim and its vision for the site have also been included in the consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan, including November 2017 from which came 'Consultation '17'. Throughout, the aim and vision has remained unchanged.

In addition to the above, the Parish Council called two consultation meetings, one on the 29th June 2016 (which agreed the survey described on the front cover) and the other on 23rd February 2017 (minutes on the PC website).

There was a hiatus during much of 2017 while SCC reviewed its possible continuing need for the site, the CLT Board, therefore, decided it needed to update its early records on those who had expressed an interest in becoming tenants and users. This is now being done by way of a questionnaire survey conducted by the Community Council for Somerset. The survey closing date is 10th December and it can be completed on line (www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/queencamel), It is specifically designed to clearly identify personal, community and business needs within Queen Camel and the surrounding communities, and to involve supporters and volunteers. The CLT will take into account the results of the survey provided that what is identified can meet real needs and will not jeopardise the SCC discount.

'Survey 16' and 'Consultation '17' can be viewed on the CLT website.

A brief summary from Queen Camel Community Land Trust Ltd.



History

The old school house was built in 1870 by the Mildmay family and later presented to the parish by Hervey St. John Mildmay 'in memory of' 1951 it was sold by the Diocese of Bath & Wells to Somerset County Council (SCC) for the sum of £990.

What for years was known as 'the new school' was built in 1927 by SCC to provide junior classrooms, woodwork and housecraft facilities. For a time, therefore, ownership of the site was split between SCC and the Diocese.

Generations of children from Queen Camel and the surrounding villages have attended school here and after the school moved in June 2016 to its new premises on West Camel Road the site was registered by the Parish Council (PC) as an 'Asset of Community Value'.

This registration followed an Extraordinary Meeting of the PC on 29th June 2016 at which there was the first mention of 'offices, a café, library, meeting place or car park, and possibly craft workshops and business units' and an opposite option of 'sympathetic development by a private developer'.

This meeting approved a Parish Questionnaire, the outcome of which was 'Survey '16'. This showed:

The favourite suggested use for the Schoolhouse is as a **Community centre or hall.**

The favourite uses for the Old School site are **small workshops or business units** and **public gardens.**

The CLT's Aim

The CLT aims to acquire this 'asset of community value' so that it can be held in perpetuity for use by the local and wider community.

The Objects (or purpose) of the CLT are to:

- 1 maintain or improve the physical, social and economic infrastructure within Queen Camel Parish;
- 2 advance education (particularly concerning asset-based community development and enterprises with a community or environmental focus); and
- 3 provide an opportunity for public-spirited people and organisations to contribute financially to the community, with the expectation of a social dividend, rather than personal financial reward.

Examples of the ways in which this may be done include:

- A Providing housing for those in need and helping to improve housing standards;
- B Creating training and employment opportunities by the provision of workspace, buildings or land;
- C Developing new or existing services to the local community that contribute to the local economy.

So, the reason the CLT is trying to acquire the site as its second project is because such projects are what it is set up to do. (For anyone who does not know, its first project was the provision of 20 affordable houses for people with a local connection, which is now Roman Way and fully occupied – all explained on the CLT website.)

The CLT has an Asset Lock and also the ability to access grants and to raise money through a community share offer.



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The CLT's Vision

The CLT's vision is to develop the site into a self-sustaining, vibrant enterprise that has strong ethical values and business practices, is universally welcoming to all, with a focus on the promotion of health, wellbeing, learning and creativity and spawning new business enterprises.

The emphasis has been built from the proposals suggested by members of the public at the EPC in June 2016 and in the subsequent Survey '16. It is to provide a facility that meets the **needs** of people living in the local and wider community, some of this through future employment and training opportunities in a workshop/IT/office network and also through practical learning, both inside and outside. Specifically, this would:

- provide space and support for (a) start-up artisan type businesses with a longer-term goal of taking on young trainees and (b) office and archive facilities;
- provide life enhancing facilities (including a café and informal library, a 'Men's Shed' and possibly a 'Changing Place Shower & Toilet'), activities and therapies for all ages and especially for those with any kind of special needs or disadvantage (e.g. physical, mental, communication, social isolation including carers);
- have a sensory garden that includes growing food possibly for the café and is attended by young people with special needs.
- be self-sustaining and provide services that have an environmental impact, e.g. reducing the need to travel to access employment and statutory services.

The well-being aspect of the centre will be supported by charities, Council services and community groups. This will also help to deliver aspects of strategic services, e.g. that meet the needs of the County Council, which is one of the reasons why they are supportive of the CLT having the site and have offered a discounted purchase price.

The CLT's vision includes developing the site in keeping with both the historic nature of the buildings and a Conservation Area, and transforming the interior with modern amenities presented in a rural style befitting of its location and history.

The site

The Old School House, now Grade II listed



Main Function: Health and Wellbeing centre with activity and therapy rooms, possibly a café and it is hoped to include a fully equipped 'Changing Places Toilet' (with shower) facility.

The 1920's supplementary suite of classrooms (has a flat roofed two-classroom extension):



Function: artisan workshops/small business units, offices and possibly hot desk facilities.