

Proposal by Cornhill Community Action Ltd (CCAL)

This proposal is to develop the former Cornhill First School building in partnership with Cornhill Parish Council (CPC).

*References will be made to documents available on the website
<https://www.cornhillcommunityaction.co.uk>*

The Company

CCAL is a company without shareholders, limited by guarantee and described as a micro-entity. It was established for the principal purpose of developing the school building. The rationale for its creation can be viewed in 'Chronology, March 2020'. It is a non-profit making company run by a group of volunteers who are keen to see the sad, disused building brought back to life for the benefit of the whole community and surrounding area. The building has been empty for eight years since the school closed. This is a cause of concern and distress to many residents.

*Please refer to 'Company Operational Management' in Policies and Procedures.
Please note that all the Policies and Procedures have been written to apply to a small charitable trust so CCAL could change itself to that status in the future.*

Outline of the Proposal

CCAL will refurbish the building into six rentable units plus a community space and toilet block. The plan showing these proposed units can be seen in *Appendix A*, page 6. It does not preclude either the amalgamation of units into larger areas or subdivision of some of the units. This plan does not involve any alteration to the loadbearing structure of the building. The main features of the initial survey and of the proposals for refurbishment are given on *Appendix B*, page 7.

CCAL will apply for funding to cover the costs of refurbishing the building. A cover price for this work has been obtained and can be seen in *Appendix C*, page 8. A substantial part of the work will be the replacement of all the external doors which are in a poor condition and insecure. This is best done on a 'nominated supplier' basis and will be priced separately.

It will also be necessary to re-connect the electricity and water supplies. Both were permanently disconnected in 2018 on Gleesons' instruction with approval by NCC subject to it being at Gleesons' risk in the event of non-completion of the sale.

Although access to the oil boiler has not yet been available, it is probably 27 years old and will almost certainly need replacing. Consideration will be given to a change to LPG which is cleaner and cheaper in capital terms.

It is planned to install 10kW solar panels on the roof and supply two electric car charging points in the car park, both actions made possible by the re-installed 3-phase electrical supply. It is anticipated that grants will be available for both of these sub-projects.

As can be seen from the unit sizes and possible rental income, *Appendix D*, page 9, the sum received will be sufficient to cover the maintenance costs of both the building and of the proposed Village Green. In view of the nature of the existing installations, it is expected that running costs such as heating and electricity will be shared between tenants in proportion to their floor area.

Efforts have already been made by the company to secure tenants for the building. A list of these may be seen in *Appendix E*, page 10. Two of the units, including the kitchen, have been reserved. However, the economic effects of the Coronavirus pandemic mean that people are unwilling to commit to anything new at the moment. It is, therefore, likely that it will take some

time to build up to full occupancy and full revenue. On the other hand, expenditure such as maintenance will be minimal in the early days.

The residents' mandate, as agreed at the open public meeting in July 2019, include health/well-being, social day care, or small businesses. CCAL has incorporated these suggestions in its initial search for possible tenants. CPC should be aware, however, that in view of the national situation, at this initial stage, CCAL needs to accept tenancies of all kinds. There will be a turnover of tenancies and these opportunities will be taken to redirect tenancies towards the mandated use. A website giving some background and details of the units on offer is being prepared (August 2020). Once the CAT is agreed, it may be a good idea to hold an open public meeting (if Covid19 restrictions allow) to inform residents of the proposals.

Day to day running of the building

All tenants will be independent from the company and will have their own keys for both their own unit and for the main front door of the building. Once the first person has arrived, the front door can be left unlocked for visitors to the units and those wishing to use the community space. Who locks the building in the evening will be organised within the company.

CCAL will arrange contract cleaners and window cleaners, the cost of which will be shared amongst the tenants.

In the future, it may be necessary to appoint a manager but, for the time being, the members of the company can be approached with any queries from the tenants.

Sources of funding for refurbishment of the building

These will be determined by the director responsible for this aspect of the company.

Financial Management

CCAL will seek to populate all the tenancies as soon as possible after completion of the refurbishment. Rents are expected to be paid by Standing Order or bank transfer to the company's bank account. There will be no cash transactions.

It is hoped that in due course over £12,000 will be coming in each year. It is thought that the insurance*, maintenance and general upkeep of the building will cost c.£5000 per year. Assuming that all the units are let, the income will be sufficient to cover these costs. The surplus will be sufficient for CPC to maintain the Village Green (c.£3000 per annum) and the rest will be divided, 50% to company reserves and 50% to CPC to be used for the community.

*Insurance of the building may be the responsibility of CPC as holder of the head lease; this must be clarified.

RESPONSES TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

(including concerns raised from the PC meeting of 13th August 2020)

Relevant experience and satisfactory operating history

CCAL can only provide the personal experiences of its members. These are more than adequate for carrying out this proposal.

Personal information will be circulated to PC members.

The directors and members of the company have defined roles and undertake to be accountable for their areas of responsibility. *Refer to 'Company Operational Management'.*

Evidenced understanding of PC objectives

CCAL understands 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 taking over the building is to have control over how it is developed, to complement the village green, and to maximise the benefit to the community. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, it is planned that revenue from the building will cover CPC's maintenance costs of the Village Green.

It is noted that NCC (in its experience) regards the project as unusually challenging.

CCAL responds that in its expert opinion, the refurbishment of the building as planned by CCAL is straightforward and routine, does not require any structural alteration and will result in a building significantly enhanced in both appearance and function.

In the current pandemic situation it is the letting of the units that is challenging, but that will resolve over time.

Clear how the proposal will be operated independently of the Parish Council on a day to day basis

Draft Heads of Terms agreement between CPC and CCAL has been agreed. This shows the relationship of CCAL and CPC. It can be viewed in *Chronology in March 2020*.

Everything that has and is happening within the company is being recorded on the private CCAL website.

In alignment with preferences expressed in public consultation

At the public consultation, health and well-being, or social day care, or small businesses were the preferences. CCAL has incorporated the residents' mandate from the beginning. As mentioned, efforts have been, and will be made by CCAL to find tenants to fill these requirements, *see Appendix E*.

Evidence of need convincingly argued

CCAL believes there is a definite need to develop the building. The proposal put forward is one way to address that need. It is clear from the feelings expressed by people in the village that there is dis-satisfaction with the state of the current building. Many describe the situation 'as a disgrace'. It has also been vandalised several times and that is of great concern to elderly people living nearby.

At the well-attended public meeting in July 2019, there was a strong preference for the school building to be used for some sort of health and well-being activities, social day care or small businesses, all of which will bring social and economic benefit to the community. It will also create a feeling of 'life' and 'things happening' especially once the Village Green is developed as the community would like.

The difference with this development and other commercial units is that CCAL is operating for the good of the community. It will be able to provide tenancies of units at a rate somewhat below the going commercial rate, to encourage non-profit organisations, startups etc. to take this opportunity to grow and thrive within the area.

Proposal viable and sustainable

As can be seen from the simple spreadsheet, *Appendix D*, income from the six units covers the cost of maintenance of the building, leaving money for CPC to use for the maintenance of the Village Green and for community use. The project is viable and sustainable even if only some of the units are occupied initially.

No conflict of interest with services offered by Village Hall, Shop and Collingwood

CCAL will ensure that units are not let to businesses that could impact on these existing services in the community.

Social benefit for Cornhill Parish

- **encourage participation by all members of the community**

It is hoped that all members of the community will be able to use at least some of the services offered by the tenants. Proposals for the Village Green have included a walking route, a peace garden, vegetable growing, adult gym equipment, to mention a few. One person has suggested that a petanque club could be started. Equipment could be stored in the community space in the building. However, this must not clash with the carpet bowls which takes place in the village hall. The toilets in the building will also be available to users of the Village Green. Access to the key at weekends will have to be negotiated.

- **lead to greater community cohesion**

Once the units are ready, CCAL plans to organise an 'Open Day' (if the restrictions imposed by Covid19 no longer apply). All members of the village and surrounding area would be invited in the hope that everyone will feel involved in the project. The community will be asked to suggest a name for the building, something which looks forward rather than backwards to 'Old School'.

- **contribute to the physical and mental well-being of the community**

Certainly the Village Green and its amenities will contribute to the physical well-being of the community and hopefully, the fact that the village has thriving enterprises in its midst to complement the ones that already exist and a community space open to all, will contribute to mental well-being.

- **protect the interests of young people, the elderly and vulnerable**

All age groups, whatever their circumstances, will be welcome. Some of the tenants may be offering services especially for some of these groups. Border Links has already offered to help with gardening on the Village Green.

Economic benefit for Cornhill Parish

- **generate revenue for the Parish Council to use in the community**

If all the units are let, then there will be some revenue for the PC to use in the community.

- **contracts directed to existing local businesses**

Whenever contracts are to be allocated, local businesses will be contacted first.

- **more local jobs available to local people/local people offered reduced rates or preferential offers/local service provided, reducing need to travel distance to alternative supplier.**

It is hoped that local people will apply to rent the units. Some tenants may wish to employ others and logically, they would seek to recruit locally first

It will depend on the types of services provided and on the tenants as to whether preferential rates can be offered.

CPC should note, however, that CCAL, at least at first, will not itself be an employer as such.

Environmental benefit for Cornhill Parish

- **visually attractive**

Outside, the building will remain much as it is now but will have new doors. Solar panels will be installed on the roof and the wood and wire divisional fencing around the building will be removed. Some car parking space on the tarmac will be allocated. Two electric vehicle (EV) charging points in the current car park are planned. These could encourage visitors to visit the village and use its amenities while the car is charging.

- **will increased traffic be acceptable**

There will be no more traffic than that generated by a school.

- **will noise and atmospheric pollution be kept to a minimum**

Again, there will be no more noise and pollution than that generated by a school.

- **will it complement the Village Green**

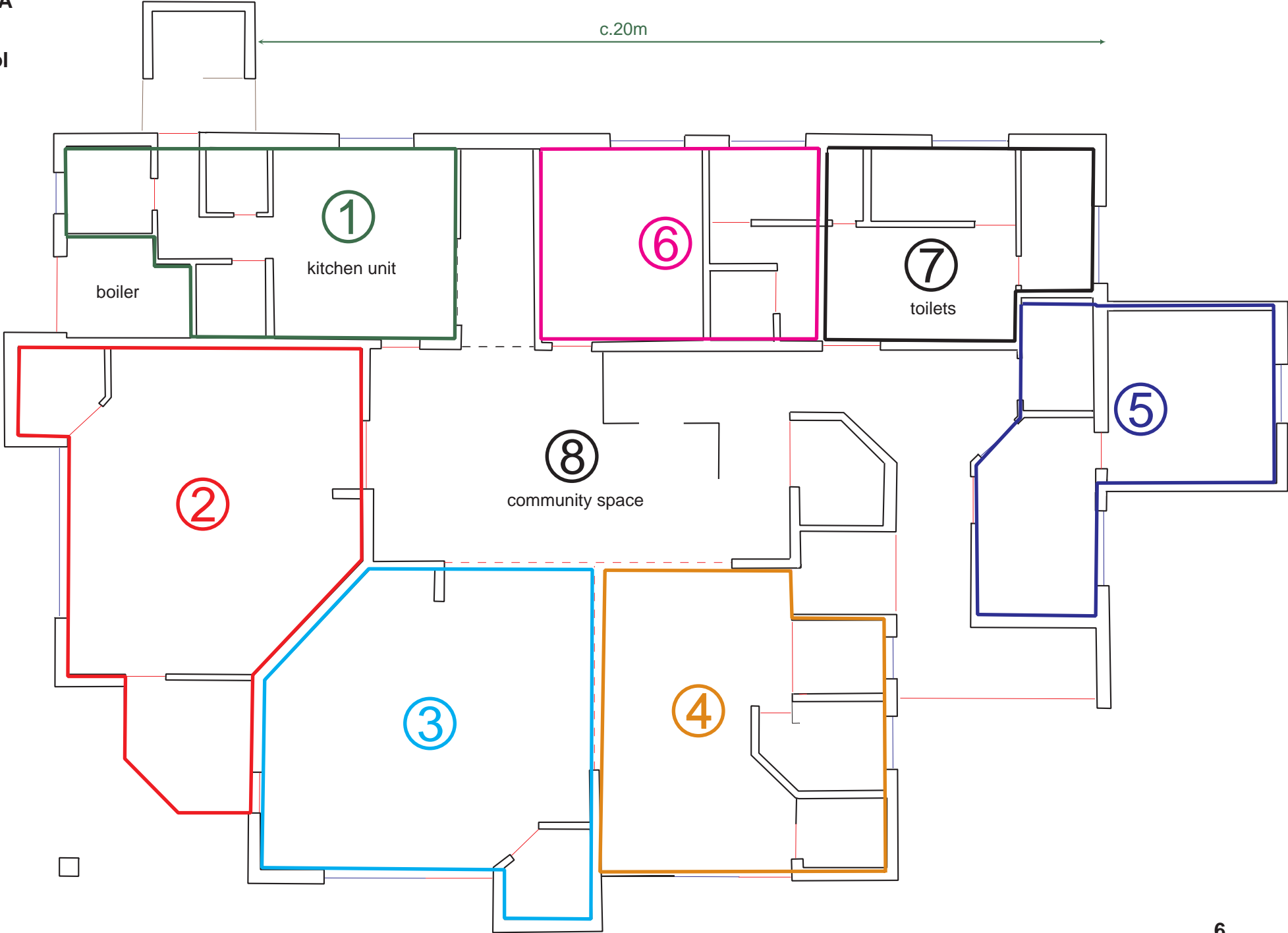
Revenue from the rents will cover the cost of maintenance of the Village Green. Nearby toilet facilities will be an amenity for people visiting the Village Green. It may be possible to keep some children's outdoor games in the community space. It is envisaged that there will a dedicated area for children on the Green which be fenced off from dog walkers.

Proposal written on behalf of Cornhill Community Action Ltd

22nd August 2020

APPENDIX A

Cornhill
First School



APPENDIX B

The Structural Survey and the Refurbishment.

Main points from the structural survey.

The building was constructed in 1993 of brick and block, partially rendered with a roof of interlocking concrete tiles. Its use as a school ceased in 2012 since when the building has been disused.

The roof is in very good condition with possible exception of a leak at one of the rooflights over the hall.

The walls are in very good condition, without any significant cracking.

Windows are double glazed in hardwood frames with bronzed metal drip cills. The woodwork now needs to be stripped and re-varnished, otherwise the windows are in good condition.

In contrast, external doors are poorly made and panels are now coming loose. They are single glazed. Locks are of low quality.

Internally, there is much damage to linings resulting (it is understood) from a search for asbestos in construction. Since the dangerous blue and brown asbestos was banned in 1985, it would not be expected in this building. A fair amount of debris and fittings remain from the school.

Electrical and water services are disconnected so could not be tested, but everything appears to be still in place, intact and re-usable.

Elements of refurbishment

The leak at the rooflight will be investigated and made good as necessary.

All the external doors will be replaced, similar to the existing, but well made, double glazed and fitted with high quality 3-point locks. Since the old doors are 45mm thick and new ones will be 58mm, it may be better to specify new door and frame sets rather than attempting to modify the existing frames. This will be dependent on pricing.

Internally, the removal of rubbish and making good the damage to linings will be routine work.

Several of the internal doors are unsuitable for the changed function and will need replacement, but this aspect cannot be quantified until unrestricted access is again available.

The openings between units 3 and 4 and the communal area have folding doors below and glazing above. These will be filled in with stud panels below while the studwork above will be retained with superficial linings, a process which would be reversible should the need ever arise.

Electricity and water will be reconnected, with additions of solar panels and EV charging points.

Fire curtains will be installed over the dividing walls of those units which have an open loft space, namely between units 1 and 6, 6 and the toilet area, the toilet area and unit 5 and, possibly, unit 1 and unit 2 if found necessary on examination.

Statutory requirements: Planning

The project will require planning permission for change of use, but this is expected to be a formality.

Statutory requirements: Building Regulations

Since there is no structural work as such, no approval under the Building regulations is strictly necessary and a Building Notice will suffice. Installation of the fire curtains has been discussed with the Local Area Surveyor, who may wish to confirm that it has been done.

APPENDIX C

Former Cornhill First School: cover prices for refurbishment

Steven Lackenby General Builders Ltd General building work according to MD schedule of work and site inspection	£22,330
Crawford's Joinery Ltd 2 pairs double + 4 single external doors estimated by MD from previous work supplied all with double glazing, insulated panels and seals	£14,400
7 internal doors (provisional)	£ 5,600
Reconnect electricity and water (guess only, no figures yet available)	£ 4,000
new boiler 2 x 35kW (LPG) or oil approx £5,000	£ 3,500
total	£49,830

VAT: this is likely to be liable to VAT at £20%
However tax may be mitigated in view of the use as
a school. MD will make enquiries of specialists..

Not included here

EV charging points to be incorporated in reinstated 3-phase electricity supply
10kW solar panels connected to 3phase supply
It is anticipated that full grants will be available for these purposes.

APPENDIX D

Areas	Units	dimension (m)	dimension (m)	Net area (m sq)	Rental at £5/ft sq	Total income
1	kitchen unit/bakery	9.00	4.40	33.8	1818	
2	1 large unit or 2 small	7.70	7.20	51.5	2770	
3	1 large unit or 2 small	7.60	7.30	52.6	2890	
4	1 large unit or 2 small	7.30	7.10	53.8	2840	
5	room with walk-in cupboard	7.30	2.80	17.4	929	
6	medium unit	6.70	4.40	29.5	1587	
7	toilets					
8	public space	9.70	4.60	45.6		12834

APPENDIX E

List of Possible Tenants

Bell View

Age UK Northumberland

Border Links - not interested in a unit but will help with maintenance of Village Green

Cornhill Village Shop - have tentatively reserved the kitchen unit for a bakery

The Battlefields Trust - small unit reserved

Norham Deanery - not interested

North Northumberland and the Borders Psychological Services - expressed interested

Kelso Health and Well-being

Northumberland Sport

Northumberland Scouts

The Foot Health Clinic - expressed interest

The Beauty Room - not interested