

Form CAT01

Application for the transfer of a Council asset

Your details

Your Organisation *Englands Social Centre Trustees*

Contact name

Position held

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Your proposal

(please complete Checklist CAT02 before completing the following)

Details of asset

Please include exact location, address, postcode, size, boundaries, access points and a map if possible

Englands Social Centre's address is: Wood Lane, Chippenham SN15 3AN.

The property is situated on Wiltshire Council owned land between Wood Lane and London Road, Chippenham.

The site's dimensions are 31m x 27m. The site boundaries are well defined by walls and fences which are in good condition. Vehicle and pedestrian access is from Wood Lane whilst there is also a pedestrian pathway from London Road. These access routes are both unadopted.

This application for transfer relates to the land on which the Centre and its car park stand, not the vehicle and pedestrian access points.

Summary of proposal

Why do you want the asset and how will this benefit the local community?

Englands Social Centre was opened in the late 1940's as a community hall for the people of Chippenham. It has been in continuous use as a local community resource since then.

In 1948 public subscriptions collected from the local community enabled the purchase of a surplus, ex-Second World War military building from a local MOD site which was re-assembled on land off Wood Lane, Chippenham owned by the local authority in

existence at that time. The land was leased to the community at a peppercorn rent of £5 per annum. Since the 1940's the local authority has retained ownership of the land whilst the building and its operation has been the responsibility of the community.

The lease has been renewed at regular intervals since 1948 without change to its terms and conditions. It has always been between the local authority in existence at the time and the Trustees (currently five in total), who now operate as a registered charity, "Englands Social Centre". The Centre has always been a non profit making operation.

The lease was last reviewed in 1984 and renewed at that time for a term of 30 years. Under the terms of each lease the Trustees continued to be responsible for maintaining the premises and paying the utilities' bills. The trustees managed the hiring of the premises and the fees generated were used to pay for the upkeep of the premises.

The Centre has always been used by a diverse range of local, formally-organised social activity groups from across Chippenham, such as Guides groups. It is also hired out to individuals for one-off events such as birthday parties and recently for a dewali celebration. Other users currently include training providers who use it as a location for first aid training. During the Chippenham Folk Festival it is hired by visiting groups as affordable, overnight, group accommodation. It is used by Wiltshire Council as a polling station.

The last lease expired in June 2014. The lessor in 1984 was North Wilts District Council but by 2014 this had become Wiltshire Council following the creation of the unitary authority. Since June 2014 the rent has been paid on a month by month basis whilst attempts have been made to resolve the future of the Centre. The normal use of the Centre has continued in the meantime.

As stated above, the original charge for the use of the land under the lease was a peppercorn rent of £5 per annum. However in recent years Wiltshire Council has increased this to a commercially set rent of £184.83 per month. Having to pay such a large amount absorbs most of the monthly income from hiring the Centre, despite the Trustees attempts to boost income by increasing the hire charges in 2013 to £12.50 per hour. As a result the financial reserves of the charity have been well below £1000 for several years.

The Trustees would like to continue to operate the Centre so that it remains the community resource it has been over the past 70 years. However they now consider the finances have deteriorated to such a level they will be unable to operate the Centre much longer under the present financial arrangements. Funds are needed to pay for repairs and to carry out improvements to the premises but the Charity's financial

reserves are almost exhausted. The Trustees feel the present leasing arrangements with Wiltshire Council should be brought to an end by the transfer of this community asset back to the community.

If the Centre were to close the groups currently using it would struggle to find suitable alternative accommodation elsewhere in the area for their activities as a number of other local halls in Chippenham have closed. Individuals in the community would be denied a local, affordable venue for their social and communal needs in their immediate area.

Community use

Please explain how the asset will be used

(Please refer to questions 5-8 in the checklist - CAT02)

If the application for the transfer of the asset is successful the Trustees will continue to operate and supervise the premises as before - that is as local, affordable premises with car parking space attached, available for hire to any interested group(s) or individual(s) from the local or wider Chippenham community for their social activities.

The existing management structure of a registered charity, "Englands Social Centre", with a group of trustees (currently five) will operate the Centre. The trustees administer the hiring, cleaning and maintenance of the premises but neither they nor anyone employed by them supervises the premises whilst they are in use. The Trustees ensure each prospective hirer's activities come within the constraints of the charity's aims before allowing its use. The Centre's existing conditions of hire stipulate that the hirer is responsible for supervising the occupants and their activities whilst they are on site. No person under the age of 21 is allowed to hire the premises and a person aged 21 or over must be present in the premises at all times whenever it is in use.

There has been continuous public access to the site since the 1940's. Access by vehicle is by an unadopted road leading from Wood Lane. This road also serves as rear access to the neighbouring residential properties in London Road and Wood Lane. There is also an unadopted pedestrian pathway from London Road.

If this application is successful the Trustees wish to upgrade the premises to improve its accessibility and suitability for use by people with disabilities. For example, at present there are no toilets available on site adapted for use by people with disabilities.

Suitability for purpose

Please explain why this asset is suitable for the intended purpose

(Please refer to questions 5-8 in the checklist - CAT02)

The premises are made up of an entrance lobby and a hall 8 m x 21m. Attached to one side of the hall are separate male/female toilets, a storage area with lockers for groups who hire the premises to store their equipment and a fitted kitchen with a domestic gas cooker, gas boiler, fridge etc. The building is constructed on a concrete slab. The walls are timber framed with external cement skin and dry lined interior. The roof is of a

shallow pitch and has a modern sheet metal covering. The windows are double glazed. The floor in the main hall is a parquet wooden floor.

The premises are considered large enough and to have the right facilities to support most types of social activities for groups of up to 100 people. Within the boundaries of the premises is a gravelled car park for up to 15 vehicles.

The premises are located in the middle of the built up area of eastern Chippenham and can be easily reached by members of the public.

The premises are cleaned and inspected at least once per week throughout the year. Any maintenance and repair issues are picked up during this inspection. The gas boiler undergoes an annual safety check; the electrical system was certified safe in 2014 following the required 10 yearly inspection under the Electricity Regulations. Fire safety equipment is inspected annually.

All the main utilities of gas, electricity and water are present.

Community support and consultation

Please set out who you have consulted about your proposal and how you have addressed any concerns raised

(please refer to questions 9-14 in the checklist - CAT02)

The Centre is surrounded by residential properties. Some of these are owner-occupied whilst the remainder are owned by Green Square Housing Association.

Nearby residents have been sent a newsletter during the summer of 2015 setting out the Trustees proposal to apply for an asset transfer. In it they were given the option of commenting online or in writing to the Trustees about the proposed asset transfer. As the proposal will result in a continuation of the existing uses of the building, including local residents hiring the premises themselves it was not anticipated any objections or concerns would be raised by them and indeed no comments have been received from local residents.

Green Square Housing Association has been contacted about the proposal. It has raised no objections with the exception that it will expect the unadopted access road and pedestrian footpath to the Centre to remain unaffected by the proposal's acceptance as its tenants already have access to their properties via these access points which have been in use for decades.

Wiltshire and Chippenham Town Councillors have been informed of the proposal. No comments have been received.

All groups which currently use the Centre have been sent a newsletter about the proposed transfer and asked for comments either online or in writing. One reply was been received which supported the proposal.

Legal issues

Please set out how you will address any legal, planning, insurance and health and safety matters associated with the asset *(please refer to questions 15-18 in the checklist - CAT02)*

There are no known covenants or legal constraints on the application.

No planning consent is required as there are no changes of use or alterations to the building contained in this submission.

There is existing public liability insurance cover for the building, its occupants and the trustees' liabilities to a limit of £10m.

Risk assessments have been carried out in accordance with health and safety legislation in relation to risks to employees, contractors, hirers and local residents for general operational and fire risk. No significant risks were identified in this simply designed and constructed building. Its safe use is dictated in the conditions for hire. Suitable control measures are in place to control remaining risks.

Financial matters

How will you fund future running costs, repairs and maintenance?
(please refer to questions 19-23 in the checklist - CAT02)

Past capital maintenance costs have been met through hiring income. A one-off grant was obtained from Chippenham Borough Lands Charity for major renovations some 9 years ago following extensive damage by vandals.

It is calculated that if this application is successful and income is not diverted to pay rent then the hiring income will cover ongoing maintenance costs. Any large repair or extraordinary cost may require application to other bodies for help should they arise in the future.

Income generated through hiring the premises has always met day to day running costs.

The Centre generates its own income but is a non profit making organisation.

No third party will assist with normal costs though it may be necessary to seek help from a third party for extraordinary repair costs.

The Centre has a small amount of contingency funding but, as indicated above, the cost of paying commercial rent to Wiltshire Council has resulted in the contingency fund being run down to cover rent liabilities. Current contingency funds are about £650.

Future management

How will you manage the asset and ensure that it continues to contribute to the wellbeing of the local community in the future?
(please refer to questions 24-27 in the checklist - CAT02)

The Trustees currently manage the asset and will continue to do so if the asset transfer goes ahead.

The Trustees have managed the Centre through meetings and regular communication with one another.

The Trustees are volunteers drawn from users of the Centre. Other users are informed of and invited to the annual AGM.

No other body or person will be involved in the management of

the asset other than the Trustees.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the details included in this application are correct

Signed:

Name (please print):

Date: *2 December 2015*

Form CAT02

Application for the transfer of a Council asset

CHECKLIST

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Community use	1. Is the asset to be provided for a public purpose?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Council will not transfer assets for private or commercial use</i>
	2. Will the asset be hired or used by third parties?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'yes' your application should set out how this will work</i>
	3. Will your organisation supervise use of the asset?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' your application should explain how use will be supervised</i>
	4. Will the public have access to the asset?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'yes' your application should set out how your liabilities will be covered</i>

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Is the asset fit for proposed use?	5. Is it big enough?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Council will not transfer assets that are unsuitable</i>
	6. Is it in the right location?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Council will not transfer assets that increase unnecessary car use</i>
	7. Is it safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Council will not transfer assets that are unsafe</i>
	8. Does it have utilities? <i>(Water, electricity, drainage, etc.)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - your application should explain if they are needed</i>

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Community Support and consultation	9. Have you consulted nearby residents?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - please consult before submitting your application</i>
	10. Have you consulted adjoining owners?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - please consult before submitting your application</i>
	11. Have you consulted others affected by the proposal?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - please consult before submitting your application</i>
	12. Have you consulted the local Wiltshire Councillor?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - please consult before submitting your application</i>
	13. Have you consulted the local Parish Council?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - please consult before submitting your application</i>
	14. Is there community support for the change of use?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' - consider carefully whether you wish to proceed with your application</i>

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Legal	15. Are there any covenants or other legal constraints?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<i>If 'yes' your application should explain implications</i>
	16. Does the proposed use require planning consent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<i>If 'yes' your application should explain implications</i>
	17. Have you considered insurance cover?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' your application must explain implications</i>
	18. Have you assessed health and safety liabilities?	x		<i>Your application must explain how you will deal with risks and liabilities</i>

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Finance	19. Can you meet all capital maintenance costs?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' your application should explain how funding will be provided</i>
	20. Can you meet all day-to-day running costs?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' your application should explain how funding will be provided</i>
	21. Will you use the asset to generate income?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'yes' your application should provide further details</i>
	22. Will any third party be assisting with the costs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<i>If 'yes' your application should provide further details</i>
	23. Do you have any contingency funds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<i>If 'no' your application should set out how you will deal with contingencies</i>

	Question	Yes	No	Note
Management	24. Will you manage the asset?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'no' your application should set out who will manage the asset.</i>
	25. Will a management committee be set up?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'yes' your application should set out how this will work</i>
	26. Will users of the asset be involved?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If 'yes' your application should set out how this will work</i>
	27. Will someone be employed to manage the asset?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<i>If 'yes' your application should set out how this will work</i>