

## Call for Expressions of Interest – Chelmund’s Space

### Introduction

Chelmund’s Space is a council owned asset set within a £9m new-build, multi-functional building within the Chelmund’s Cross Village Centre. This building will house Bishop Wilson School, St Andrews Church, Excellence in the Community Centre, Healthcare offices and Chelmund’s Space.

The purpose of Chelmund’s Space is to provide a self-contained facility which can be used to benefit the local community. The benefit can be social or economic; or even both. Initial enquires have been made by social enterprise organisations.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council are inviting expressions of interest from organisations who wish to utilise the Chelmund’s Space and can demonstrate that their activities are financially sustainable, ethical and in keeping with the surrounding users of the new Chelmund’s Cross Village Centre.



### The Physical Space

- 85sq meters
- Unfurnished
- No other fixtures and fittings
- Access controlled
- Separate WC facilities
- Tile floor area
- Small area with plumbing – potential kitchen use
- Own metering for measuring electricity / water use
- Glass / transparent walls / good natural light
- Shared lobby
- Adjoining doors to church



As you can see from the pictures, Chelmund's Space is almost completed. Viewings can be arranged by contacting Chet Parmar on 0121 704 6894

#### Evaluation Criteria

The SEISMIC acronym was developed to define how Chelmund's Space should be used and to evaluate the proposed uses of the space in terms of delivering the best socio-economic value to the local community.

- **Sustainability** – Does the proposed usage have a long-term approach and can it be self-supporting?
- **Employment** – Will the usage either directly or indirectly positively influence employment opportunities?
- **Interest** – Are there sufficient numbers of people / organisations enthused enough to take the idea forward and is there public support?
- **Suitability** – Is the purpose ethical and in keeping with surrounding users?
- **Mobilisation** – How quickly can the idea get off the ground and what is required in terms of investment / fixtures and fittings / support?
- **Inspiring** – Will the activity / usage positively inspire local groups / individuals such as the young?
- **Commerce** – Will the usage increase interest and footfall?

Dependent on the detail contained within the initial expressions of interest, Solihull M.B.C may require further information. Each applicant will be contacted by a council officer who will then evaluate the proposed use in terms of being a SEISMIC opportunity.

The next stage will be to shortlist applications and invite the remaining applicants to present the proposed use in person, provide a business plan and answer any further questions.

### Timescales and Deadlines

- Deadline for Expressions of Interest – 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013
- Discussion with Council Officer – w/c 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013
- Invitation to present and provide business plan will be sent by 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013
- Final decision 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, subject to suitable user being identified.

### Submission Format

- Please forward expressions of interest in Microsoft Word format to [chetan.parmar@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:chetan.parmar@solihull.gov.uk)
- Please include contact information, including email address, phone number and organisation address.
- Where possible; company / charity registration number and a brief description of your organisation are required, including: - the number of employees, sites, volunteers and any financial information that you are able to supply.
- There is a limit of 2000 words; excluding pictures, diagrams and accounting information.

### Potential Uses

The following is a list of proposed and suggested uses.

- **Co-Working**

Co-working is a style of work that involves a shared working environment. Development in Social Enterprise <http://www.disecic.org/> and Blue Orchid <http://www.theblueorchid.co.uk/> have both raised the issue of lack of affordable office and work space as barriers to start-up businesses (including social enterprise) and those wishing to expand

Unlike in a typical office environment, those co-working are usually not employed by a single organisation. Typically it is attractive to work-at-home professionals, independent contractors, or people who travel frequently who end up working in relative isolation. Co-working is also the social gathering of a group of people who are still working independently, but who share values and who are interested in the synergy that can happen from working with like-minded talented people in the same space.

Co-working offers a solution to the problem of isolation that many freelancers experience while working at home, while at the same time letting them escape the distractions of home.



Co-working is not only about the physical space, but also about establishing the co-working community. With careful management of the co-working environment the space could become a hub for third sector organisations or focused on a specialist area such as arts or science. Alternatively, the space could leave flexible to evolve into its own specialism i.e. a number of technology services providers coming together.

The advantage of using the space in this way is that it will attract many organisations to the area and word of mouth can provide a cheap but effective way of securing new tenants / users. Other similar facilities in the West Midlands currently have waiting lists due to demand.

A further benefit would be the opportunity for tenants to transfer to the **Enterprise Centre** as they become more established or ready to expand their team.

Examples of co-working spaces include <http://www.theworkspace.org.uk/> , <http://co-work.co/> and <http://moseleyexchange.com/>

- **Workshop Environment / Physical Art / Crafts**



A search of Solihull Councils property database shows that Solihull has a limited number of workshop spaces under 200 sq. ft. and currently zero availability within North Solihull. Therefore the local area offers limited arts and crafts facilities. Lack of space may deter individuals from practicing their skills or turning their skills into a business.

There is an opportunity to enthuse others, including the young; through public displays / working in an open environment.

Because of the proximity to the school, there could be regular taster / experience days to allow the children to practice the varying crafts. There may also be an opportunity to offer adult learning activities.

There is the possibility of creating an interesting destination for both local residents, whilst also attracting visitors for the wider area. A craft shop would facilitate the sale of produced arts and crafts, helping the craft person to maintain their activities and allowing them to gauge the demand for the work that they produce.

Locally, Earlswood has a crafts centre <http://earlswoodcraftcentre.co.uk/1.html> other examples include <http://theoldneedleworks.wordpress.com/> <http://www.craftanddesign.com/>

- **Markets**

Indoor markets may conflict with the retailers who eventually take up the designated space. There could be a possibility of making the space more integrated by including working craft stalls.

Again, this would require the close management of spaces to avoid duplication and to ensure that the stalls were operating legally, safely and in keeping with the surrounding building users. I.e. would it be appropriate to sell fish and meat products

In terms of sustainability, footfall throughout the week would have to be considered as well as the potential to attract passing trade into the area.

- **Digital Media**

Various individuals have expressed interest in delivering digital arts and media services. This would include video, music and still images created with the use of computers. The media would be displayed on multiple LED screens and the projects could be coordinated with other community projects to follow central themes – heritage; poverty; healthy eating and Chelmund's Day. Local school children could contribute and their works would be shown alongside those of local artists. One of the interested parties has already worked on school projects within the borough and has a successful career as a digital artist; thus being able to show how a personal interest can develop into a career. The social enterprise model would also mean that the organisation would help other local residents to use technology.

Examples of similar services include <http://www.catchermedia.co.uk/SocialCIC>; <http://www.aidemdigital.org.uk/>; and <http://www.reasondigital.com/who-we-are/>

A number of the interested parties have been introduced to each other to see if they can work together to come up with a viable and sustainable business plan.

There could be an opportunity to develop a relationship with Virgin Media or other media related organisation to provide some funding / sponsorship for the space. There are also various other opportunities for funding such as the NESTA Digital R&D Fund for the Arts as highlighted by the Turning Point West Midlands website <http://www.tpwestmidlands.org.uk/news/2013/2/6/nesta-digital-rd-fund-for-the-arts.html>

- **Mixed Arts**

The space could be utilised as a mixed arts facility to incorporate all forms including performing arts. The management of this may require a committee to be set-up in order to decide upon the art to be displayed and the events to be held.

The Three Trees already has a drama group, however there are various other groups and artists who would like somewhere to perform and display their work.

The mixed arts facility could run taster workshops and be involved in community events such as Chelmund's Day.

In Kingshurst, there is already an initiative operating from a shop <http://kingshurststartspace.wordpress.com/about/>

- **Coffee Shop / Café**

Although the number of branded coffee shops is still increasing throughout the UK – growing threefold in the last decade alone, the market is fiercely competitive due to the number of retailers / others offering this service. In addition to stand alone coffee shops, supermarkets, community centres and even public houses offer a place to sit down and have hot drinks and snacks.

As a heavily residential area, with a community centre (Three Trees) that is also offering hot drinks and snacks; potential customers already have the choice of a low cost option or going home. Due to limited disposable income, buying a coffee from a shop can be viewed as a treat and many would tie this in with going into the town centre, perhaps using the very reasonably priced Asda café at the end of a shopping trip. The community centre has been working closely with a local group to improve its café / hot drinks offer.

Whilst the enterprise centre and other services are set to open in the near future, it is likely that tenants will have their own tea / coffee making facilities within each of the buildings.

Cost of equipment would need to be considered, as would staffing and opening times. Pricing is also key and it is doubtful that local residents would be willing to pay Starbucks or Costa prices.

- **Village Hall / Community Centre**

A mixed use village hall / community centre could be made available to all residents and businesses. A booking system would be required and the flexibility to maintain and service the centre 7 days a week, including evenings would also be required

In order to achieve some degree of sustainability, village halls are often set up as charities. There are over 9,000 village halls and community centres operating as charities in England and Wales (<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Publications/rs9.aspx#7> - Charities Commission, 2004). Extensive research from the Charities Commission highlights that many centres fail due to a lack of interest from locals, competition from nearby facilities and the increasing cost of maintenance. They have also evidenced a lack of imagination and diversity of activities as a major contributory factor to failure.

Another space to be used as a village hall may not be necessary, as there are existing facilities available within the area. Three Trees operates as a community centre and has a number of spaces that are available for use with prior arrangement. Solihull Community Housing have a number of community buildings that are available for hire and Solihull MBC also manage a number of Excellence in the Community Centres that can be made available for activities.

This space would need to be managed so that it was utilised regularly and such a space would attract enquiries from local residents wishing to hold birthday parties and other celebrations. Turning such events away could cause local friction, further resulting in interest in the hall / centre to wane.

In terms of providing activities, utilising the space in this way would put the space in direct competition with Three Trees at a time when there is already a lack of activity provision in the area, due in part to the lack of providers.

### **Science / Environment / Innovation Centre**

A combination of schools, colleges, universities and local industry (JLR etc.) could work with local school children and other groups on science related projects. These would be on display for visitors and the projects and progress can be continually updated – to ensure that visitors had a reason to return.

Projects could include sustainability, cleaner energy and transportation. Local professionals could run workshops and hopefully encourage the young to think more careers within science and how science affects all of our daily lives.

As an example, Birmingham Science Park <http://www.bsp-a.com/> has been very successful at nurturing science start-ups. If the community space was to be utilised for a similar purpose, this could tie in with creating attracting private business to the soon to be built enterprise centre and create further employment opportunities.

This option requires more research and would require multiple contributors / sponsors and private business to commission research projects.

- **Children's / Young Persons Play and Well Being**

Complete Kidz is one of a number of organisations identified as potential model for services that encourage physical activity. Operating as a social enterprise, they deliver various activities and programmes that combine sport, art and nutrition. The space would be used for indoor activities and to operate as a base for co-ordinating external activities such as orienteering <http://www.completekidz.co.uk/>

Some of the activities that they provide are funded; others are paid for privately, i.e. children's birthday events.

Soft play facilities would be aimed at younger children. There could be an opportunity for health, welfare, education advice to be given via the council and partners, whilst the children play.

Contact

**Chet Parmar – Stewardship Officer**

**Economic Development & Regeneration**

**Places Directorate**

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Email: [chetan.parmar@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:chetan.parmar@solihull.gov.uk)**

**Telephone: 0121 704 6894**

