

Handy Guide - How to Complete an Expression of Interest for a VCS property in Camden

June 2024

Unit 23, 43 Carol Street Camden NW1 0HT

To make an expression of interest for the lease of this building please read the guidance and complete the on-line application form using this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/TL9FMR3PE4>

Please complete the form by 12:00 noon on the 18th July 2024

Open day 10-1pm Wednesday 3rd July 2024 @ carol street workshops

You can view the buildings particulars here: https://camden-modules.staging.oxfordwebapps.com/templates/vcp/show_res_more.cfm?fmrId=330

For further information please contact Sam Rowe Senior Community Partners on vcs@camden.gov.uk

Introduction

These are the notes to help you complete the expression of interest form to bid for Unit 23, 43 Carol Street, NW1 0HT. Please read through the questions in advance of completing the form and submit your response by 18th July by using this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/TL9FMR3PE4>. If more than one organisation is bidding for the space then we will compare your application with any others received before awarding a lease.

Any information in this application is given without prejudice and subject to contract.

For any further questions about please contact Sam Rowe on vcs@camden.gov.uk

Background

Camden Council has various commercial buildings that have been reserved for charities and community groups to rent on a long-term lease. Even though they are called 'commercial' they are reserved for not-for-profit organisations. This means that if you are an incorporated charity, CIC, CIO or similar, then you can apply to occupy this building when they are empty. If you are successful and offered the building we will grant you the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector lease. This lease gives you preferential terms compared to the standard commercial lease (and you can find extra information about this on our website [here](#)). Because these terms are for not-for-profit organisations they are much better than standard terms and so there is usually lots of interested in obtaining these particular buildings. The Council is committed to having affordable space available so charities can keep their costs down. Unfortunately usually several organisations get interested in the same building and the process becomes competitive. Where this happens a panel of staff from the Council will compare 'bids' and assess them fairly against one another.

To manage this fairly we are asking for prospective tenants to complete the form using the link above so that applications can be compared against each other.

To make this as easy as possible these guidance notes have been produced to help you put the best case to the panel as you can. All the questions that are asked in the form are written below, along with suggested material to cover in your response.

1. How will you use this property?

A good answer would have at least three elements to address: how you will use the available space, the times the building will be in use, and who uses the building and for what purposes. As a minimum please try and answer these three elements fully, adding any extra information when relevant.

It is important to be clear how the space will be used. It may be useful to cover how each individual room will be used if this makes it easy. The panel needs to be confident that the whole building will be well used, but not to the extent that this may be a squeeze, or cause overcrowding. Don't assume it will be clear that you need all the space or how you will deliver your services. A better answer will give a clear impression that good spatial planning has taken place and all areas of the building and different uses have been carefully considered.

Secondly, a good answer will say what times the building will be open, and if this varies during term times, weekends and evenings, for example. This gives an indication of how well the building will be used and helping to understand any down times that occur. Please say here if you are using the space out-of-hours for any purposes such as events, deliveries and so forth.

Please give a clear description about who will use the property, and what they will be doing there. It would be particularly useful to say who the main people who will be there; a building open to the public may need different things than if space is solely used by staff for back-room activities. Knowing who will be there helps us assess the suitability of the premises. It is important to say if there will be people from particular groups. For example if you are working with a recognised equality group, marginalised community or ultra-local residents, it is worth including this information.

2. What are your current circumstances (regarding property)?

We want to understand the benefits moving to this new building by understanding your current circumstances. The Panel want to know how this new space may resolve some issues of your current building. Issues in your current building could be from the physical space, or from arrangements of how you use the building, for example, if your landlord prohibits certain activities taking place there, such as limiting opening hours. If you are not fully operational because you don't yet have a building, please cover any issues that you've experienced in delivering from different sites, perhaps now is the right time to consolidate by securing a building. If you have struggled to get real estate on the open market, this may be an important factor. such as steps you have taken to get a lease elsewhere and the benefits of this building.

3. How ready are you to move-in?

Use this section to cover your plan to move in. This may be the right building for you, but is the timing going to work for you too? Address all aspects of how easy or hard it would be to relocate. A good answer will demonstrate that you have an understanding of the issues that moving presents and give assurances to the Panel that there is a plan to manage this. For example you may have to give your current landlord a significant amount of notice as well as finance repair costs before you leave. Will your current contracts and contractors need to be moved or are there penalties to leaving suppliers who you can't take? Consider the impact on your team: can staff to work in a new building? Also, don't forget that there are significant costs to drawing up and signing a lease and several thousands of pounds will be needed just in legal advice, and to pay other fees connected with just getting a lease. There will also be other one-off costs, such as removal, fit out, new furniture, etc. With this answer it may be useful to indicate if you already have funds to move into the or will need time to fundraise for costs.

If you don't currently have a commercial lease, it may be easier for you to move in. However if you've not had a lease before you may need to consider how prepared for other aspects of running a building, and the time you need to dedicate to manage premises issues. For example, you may want to say how familiar you are with the responsibilities of managing a public building, who will manage these functions. Who will do the work around compliance, health and safety, and so forth. It is important to demonstrate you have capacity to manage and oversee a new property, and an awareness to manage maintenance and compliance, so you can be operational from day one.

Moving in and becoming operational may not be the same thing. In this section of the form please also say if you intend to undertake any works in the new building prior to becoming operational to make it ready for your use. This could be to fit it out for your purpose or undertake remedial works.

Finally, if you can give an any significant dates about when you may be able to move in, notice periods, etc, then please include these in this section.

Question 4 How will you fund the running costs of this building? Please say if this involved any financial assumptions or money not yet secured.

There are many costs associated with having a building. While the rent may be reduced, there are many other running costs to consider, (including costs that you may not pay in a residential property or pay at a lower rate). In this section please give your broad plan to cover these running costs, which may include,

- Rent
- Utility bills (gas, water electricity at a commercial rate)
- Business Rates (usually 20% for charities who get the 80% discount)
- Service Charge (assumed to be £3.50-£4.00 per square foot)
- Maintenance and repairs
- Building compliance and certification
- Waste management
- Cleaning and security

If you are dependent upon the building to generate an income for you, please say. For example you may wish to make money by hiring out space or having sub-tenants. Please say if this is the case as well as say what the projected income you are expecting will be.

Overall a good answer will demonstrate that there is a clear business plan and an understanding of cash flow. Alternatively if you are downsizing then it may be useful to include information about what your current rent and costs are and say what saving you will gain from the new building.

5. If you would like to apply for the social value discount applied to your rent (which will half the rent), please say what social value is that you will you bring to residents of Camden?

Full guidance on the Council's social value framework can be found on our website [here](#)

The Council offers a discount of around 50% to tenants in some buildings. This building is eligible for the discount. The discount is not automatically awarded and so you will need to apply separately. However you are able to check if you are eligible for the discount, (see the council website [here](#)) and if you are eligible, you will be able to say in this section if you wish to apply for the discount. If you do wish to apply for the discount please complete this question about what social value you can bring to the residents of Camden. You are able to say the benefits of the work you will do from this premise. Please note that you are only going to be eligible for the discount if you mainly work with Camden residents or people from the local area.

If you do think you offer social value, please say what issues you tackle, and how the services you provide are targeted towards residents on low income, from marginalised communities or are for people from recognised equality groups. Typically we would like to see that any service is broadly representative of its wider community. Remember that social value is expected to be added to the most deprived sections of the community.

6. What rent are you offering for the building?

The publicity will say what income the Council would like to get for the building. However you can offer something different. Please note that the Council is not obliged to offer the premises to the highest bidder. We invite you to suggest what rent you are able to pay, as well as ask you to say if you need a rent-free period for any reasons. If you are proposing a different rent, please structure your answer over five years, giving your reasons. For example Year one - £XXX.XX Year two - £YYY.YY, Year three - £ZZZ.ZZ ... etc until year five. If you want a shorter lease only cover the years of your intended occupation.

For the avoidance of doubt please state the rent you wish to pay after any discount is applied.

Note: If you know if you want a lease with an annual inflationary uplift please say here, If not the rent is usually set for periods of 5 years and doesn't change within that period

7. How connected are you, what will be your impact locally?

A strong applicant will have good connections that are relevant to their application and know what impact they would have locally. Connections could take a variety of forms. For example you may be connected to the local area, and need to find premises in a very tight geographical area, you may provide services to people who live or work in the area of this building, and so want space close to them. You may have data on the area and a track record of consulting with people from a particular group and this space is a good fit, or you may be integrated into delivery partnerships with links to other charities in the area or provide strategic or commissioned services on behalf of the NHS or Council. Strategic links could be being involved with Camden Council's voluntary sector networks, deliver Camden Council policy outcomes or similar. What the Panel is looking for is a clear rational why this building make sense to the connections that you have and that you understand the area. Also demonstrate any relevant knowledge you have about established service in the area. For example it would be difficult to justify to move in a youth organisation who are delivering similar services to a different youth organisation that is situated close by. Please demonstrate how you would fit in with other providers and work with them.

8. The main terms are (without prejudice and subject to contract):

In this section we ask if the main terms that will make up a lease are acceptable to you. These terms are the standard terms that we offer VCS tenants. We need you to be aware of what the Council is offering, for example we don't offer a 99 year lease for a peppercorn a year. Please indicate that you understand the main terms, and it would be helpful to know how long you would like to take the building for.

a lease will be offered between 3-20 years, rent at £20,000 p.a or £10,000 if discounted, tenant to undertake building safety compliance and responsible for internal repairs, landlord to be responsible for external and structure and any single repair of high value mechanical and electrical items (such as boiler, fire safety etc) if over £5,000, tenant to pay a service charge in the region of £3.5-4 per spare foot, lease is contracted out of the '54 Landlord and Tenant Act. Rent review 5 yearly (up and down), No alienation or subletting without landlord consent. Tenants have a rolling break clause with 6 months notice. Landlord can only break in certain circumstances.

Please state if these are broadly agreeable or you need any variation in these main terms. There is the opportunity to negotiate when a formal offer of the building is made.

The Council's full VCS heads of terms are on the Council website [here](#).

9 Which of the following statements are true?

These are short statements of a yes/no nature to help with our decision making process. This is because they are thought to be of a yes/no nature. If anything needs to be qualified, please add information to question 11 below.

The following are yes/no statements

1. We are an incorporated organization with charitable status, such as a CIC, CIO, Registered Charity, Community Benefit Society or equivalent
2. We have the tax status of a charitable organisation
3. We have a turn over of under £2m
4. Statutory reports and other paperwork is up to date with our regulator and available on request
5. We can take the building in its current condition and do not require any further works to be carried out
6. Over half of our service users are Camden residents
7. Any other commercial buildings that we have will be surrendered if we are offered this building ie it will be our only premises
8. We always operate within our rules and constitution and are not being investigated by any authority.

10 If you lease any other premises, please say here and what you will do with it after the offer is made. Please give details of the current landlord, so we can get a reference after an offer is made.

We anticipate that this building will be your sole premises, if this is not the case please say here. Also give details of any other landlords so a reference can be obtained

11. Please include here if there is any other information you wish to provide about your application for this property

Use this space for any additional information about the application that you think useful to include. Include anything that helps to better understand any of the answers you have previously given.

12. Contact details Please give 1/ your name and role 2/ the name of the organisation and registered address 3/ your email, phone number and any other useful contact details for you or others in your organisation

This section is for your contact details. Please also provide the registered name of the company/charity who will be granted the lease as well as the relevant charity/company number(s)

13 Declaration By completing this you have expressed an interest in being the tenant for this particular property. You confirm that all the information is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge. The Council will contact you if they are interesting in discussing this further with you. Please indicate below that you understand the following statements:

We ask you to tick several statements if they are true or not.

1. I understand that by completing this form I am not obliged to accept the building, if offered
2. I understand that by completing this form the Council is not obliged to offer you this building
3. I would like the Council to consider me for other buildings if they become available in the future
4. I am happy to be contacted if any aspect of this application isn't clear
5. All information provided is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge

14 Is there any feedback you wish to give that will improve the application process?

Here you can provide any thoughts or comments that we could use to make the application process better in the future. This information will not be circulated to the Panel and is not used in the decision-making process.

Please complete the online form by the 18th July 2024