



Business Plan

Version: 25 May 2021

Executive Summary

There is no retail infrastructure in the Pennsylvania area of Exeter, a development of more than 2000 households, and far too often residents drive off the estate to shop and socialise. This is a daily occurrence for many residents. The opening of Sylvania community stores and café will make this no longer necessary as it will provide a friendly local space full of drop-in community activity.

The unused, vacant convenience shop on Sylvania Drive will be transformed into a vibrant community stores and café drawing upon the local artisans who grow and produce jam, chutney, bread, plants and more. We will also include the work of local artists and our community café will include a story telling corner, art and craft activities, sing-a-long sessions, a board games club, a toy library and much more. Research has shown that there is an urgent need and a remarkably high level of support for a space to bring people together in a spirit of community friendship. This exciting project will involve hundreds of people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.

The stores and café will be run by a not-for-profit community benefit society owned by its members in the community, which the management committee registered with the Financial Conduct Authority in March 2021. The management committee, which has been responsible for developing this business plan, currently comprises of 10 local residents: a former headteacher, a solicitor, a former mayor of Exeter, University academics and residents who have lived on the estate near the stores since it was built in the 1970s. The society will operate as a not-for-profit community enterprise with surplus funds returned to the business to offer an even better service, with any excess donated to local clubs and societies. The sales turnover is projected to be at least £22,000 per month based on being open 67 hours per week with an average of around 14 customers per hour. One full-time or two part-time shop managers will be employed and supported by local volunteers. Initial capital required to open the stores will be raised by applying for grants, community shares, donations, and fundraising events such as craft fairs.

The society will work in partnership with other groups on projects for all residents including those with additional needs. The Devon Wildlife Trust, walking groups, the Pennsylvania International Friendship Group are just three examples. The values of race and gender equality, the celebration of cultural diversity and a focus on the impressive skills of local people will be central to this project. We aim to create something highly sustainable by becoming the *greenest* community setting in the city, and the testimonials from various community leaders show the positive impact we will have on the wellbeing of so many.

A community hub for the people of Pennsylvania



The following pages will take you on a journey through our exciting project. You will read about our preparation work, the funds we have raised, the funds we aim to raise to enable us to open and the benefits of our community hub to our diverse community.

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For more details about this project and how to sign up as a volunteer, please visit:

<https://sylvania-community-stores.business.site/>

If you have any queries or suggestions then please email us: pennstores.ex4@gmail.com.

1. Motivation

Pennsylvania is a populous neighbourhood, with 2316 households, on the northern fringe of Exeter. Despite its size, it lacks community infrastructure such as a shop, café, public house, or places of worship. A group of residents met during August 2020 to discuss the possible use of an empty shop on the estate as a community store. We formed a committee and approached the leaseholder, who is very supportive of the proposal. Extensive canvassing of over nearly all of the houses in the local area revealed a very high level of community support (see Section 4). It was quickly agreed that we should proceed to create a store and café to support community needs and to provide a central place for people of the estate and beyond to meet.

The stores are to be developed by leasing and renovating the vacant premises located at 1 Sylvania Drive, which has previously been a convenience shop that was well used by the local community for many years. The premises are sited at the bottom of the large residential estate built in the 1970s that extends from Mincinglake Valley Park up the hill to Pennsylvania Road. From the middle of the estate, the nearest school is on Stoke Hill 0.5km away and the nearest supermarket is a 1.6km walk through an undulating park. The centre of the estate is 2.5km from the city centre - a brisk 30-minute walk for those who are fit, but the hills and distance render it inaccessible for others. Therefore, people are highly likely to use their cars or inconsistent public transport to do their shopping.

The estate is highly multicultural with an estimate of over 50 international languages. Owing to the suburban layout, there are few opportunities for local people to connect with each other. The only potential meeting areas are the public green spaces and events held at the small Sylvania hut in Mincinglake Valley Park. Many houses are set back from each other with little chance for neighbourly social contact.

The proposed site is adjacent to Collins Road, a main thoroughfare for traffic heading into and out of Exeter. It is also well positioned to attract walkers from nearby Mincinglake Valley Park, the Green Circle and young families visiting the nearby playgrounds of Sylvania Drive Play area and Great Hill View park.

2. Project Overview

2.1 Our Vision

Our vision is to provide the residents of the Pennsylvania estate and neighbouring areas of Exeter with the essential community services of a convenience store, a café and space for social engagement and interaction. We will encourage personal development through volunteering opportunities and will create a warm, inclusive and welcoming environment where everyone can work together to create a sense of belonging and community. We will also offer work experience and and community service for those engaged in national award schemes.

2.2 The Proposed Scheme

The plan is to use an existing empty shop building, which has been vacant for the past three years in the centre of our large housing estate. We aim to create a community store, café and social meeting space. We aim for the store to be open from 8am until 6pm weekdays and 9am until 4pm on Saturday and Sunday. We expect to employ one full-time or two part-time store managers who will be assisted by local volunteers (at least 30 have said they wish to help in the store in our most recent survey) and hold regular community activities such as a board games club, art classes, a parent and toddler group, storytelling and more. A mobile post office will be considered after the first year.

2.3 The Venue

The shop has been empty since January 2018. In recent years, it was a SPAR, a LONDIS and most recently a Beer Cellar convenience store. Each of these ventures did not remain long but ceased to operate due to strategic decisions made by the parent companies rather than any lack of profitability. Turnover in all of these stores was healthy exceeding £7000/week in the most recent store. Operating as a community store and café will have further benefits in that we can better satisfy the needs of the local community, can increase shopping time by providing a convivial meeting space, and can hopefully benefit from reduced business rates.



2.4 Our Mission

Our mission is to create a not-for-profit business for the benefit of the community:

- We will provide a community store selling items produced by local makers and growers as well as basic essentials.
- We will also provide a café and community space for our neighbourhood where we are able to facilitate a diverse range of regular activities including internet advice surgeries, a book club, art classes, storytelling for pre-school children and much more.

- We will provide employment, volunteering and learning opportunities to the residents of the estate and beyond.
- We will function as a social hub for the community. The Pennsylvania locality contains no shop, café, club, church or public house. Therefore the experience of isolation is strongly felt by many residents. We know this because of a series of public listening events and an extensive survey, and we are determined to change this situation for the better.
- We will promote diversity and inclusion. The community encompasses a diverse range of ages, household compositions, socioeconomic backgrounds and nationalities. Many have no transport and are forced to rely on public transport or taxis to visit a supermarket 1.6km away. Therefore, to actively include such residents in our project is a high priority. Ours is a strongly international community, which will be reflected in the items we plan to source and sell.
- We will strive to be environmentally sustainable wherever possible. We will use energy-efficient equipment to maintain a low carbon footprint and we will minimise and responsibly manage any waste produced. Green values will be strong features of this project.
- We will give back. Surplus monies from funding not required for the maintaining or developing of the business or prudent reserves shall be used for the benefit of the local community. So, sports clubs, parent and carer groups and more are likely to receive donations.

2.5 Our Objectives

- We will be a not-for-profit enterprise owned by the community and for the benefit of the community.
- We will rent and refurbish the existing shop located on Sylvania Avenue
- We will develop within the premises a food store and café/meeting space and be a centre for community information and social interaction.
- We will develop close relationships and strong supply chains with local sustainable food growers and producers within Exeter and East Devon.
- We will become a sustainable business reinvesting surpluses back into the business **or** other community projects.
- We will create a sustainable facility with as low a carbon footprint as possible:
 - The store's location will enable multiple households to reduce their carbon footprint by shopping in a local store and avoiding the use of transport for small purchases.
 - We will use grant funding to purchase energy efficient refrigeration and freezer units, as the existing cold storage shelves in the shop are old with no doors, and likely to be very costly and use more electricity.
 - We will also explore the opportunity of purchasing an electric bicycle, which will enable volunteers to carry out deliveries for customers who are unable to physically use the shop. An electric bike is essential given the steep slopes of the majority of roads on the estate.
 - We are committed to researching the option of installing solar panels on site and how this alternative energy could help to reduce the building's electricity consumption from the grid.

3. Community Benefits and Ownership

3.1 Community Benefits

The advantages of having a community stores and café on the estate will reach far beyond the goods we will sell and the services we will provide. Communities with a community store say that they are important meeting places and are vital social and economic hubs for their area. The community shop will not usually be the main source of shopping for most local residents but will be a convenience store or a top-up shop. The café will provide a meeting place and a hub where community activities can take place. Here below is a table of the potential benefits of this enterprise and the measures required to facilitate them.

BENEFIT	MEASURES
<p><u>Local Produce</u> – sourcing from local growers and producers we will be able to offer good quality food, such as freshly baked bread, pastries, fruit and vegetables. This provides local residents with quality fresh produce, supports local businesses, and reduces food-travel miles.</p>	<p>Record the proportion of sales from producers within a 30km radius.</p> <p>Assign a percentage quota for sustainable, organic and fair-trade products. Continue to foster a strong working partnership with Good Food Exeter, a community benefit society which aims to make good food available to all in Exeter.</p>
<p><u>Health Benefits</u> - It is hoped many people will walk to the shop and for much of the journey this will include an uphill walk. For many people this is the daily exercise needed for a healthy lifestyle.</p>	<p>Surveys of physical activity levels of both shoppers and volunteers.</p>
<p><u>Social benefits</u> -Through our listening events we have found that many people on the estate feel isolated and know few other people nearby. In the shop and café people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures will be brought together to create a social hub. This will be a service to all, but particularly those living alone or without a car. By either volunteering, using the shop, or using the café regularly, people will get to know others in the community. Having the opportunity to interact helps to develop a sense of belonging as well as helping to reduce issues such as social interaction and loneliness.</p>	<p>Numbers of volunteers. Continue with regular listening events and surveys of how much shoppers and volunteers value the shop for social reasons.</p> <p>Raise awareness and support other causes that are aligned with our values, which include intercultural awareness, accessibility and dementia awareness.</p>

<p><u>Work experience</u> – aside from the social benefits, volunteering also provides an opportunity for work experience, which can be helpful to those seeking paid experience, particularly in the retail or hospitality sector.</p>	<p>Surveys of how much better skilled/employable volunteers feel</p>
<p><u>Environmental benefits</u> – the nearest large supermarket to the estate is Morrisons, which is 1.6km away, or a 30 minute walk for someone fit, through the park. There is no direct bus route to it. Using the community shop would reduce the number of car journeys made by local residents, thereby reducing their carbon footprint. Using locally sourced food also means fewer food miles, and a reduction in packaging. We will strive to be as plastic free as possible, and to use paper as an alternative to plastic where possible.</p>	<p>Calculate the footprint of the delivery of our products, compared to customers travelling elsewhere.</p> <p>Introduce our ‘choose how much you want’ policy in the café to reduce food waste.</p>
<p><u>Economic benefits to the community</u> Community stores are resilient forms of business. The success rate of community stores is 95% compared to the average small business success rate which is 46% (The Plunkett Foundation 2018). Employing and serving local people throughout the year will help to ensure that money stays within the local community. Where possible, local suppliers and contractors will supply goods and services. Custom will also come from visitors, passing trade, and walkers using Mincinglake Valley Park. Make healthy, quality food accessible for all, regardless of personal circumstances.</p>	<p>Survey businesses within and around Pennsylvania to assess how they value the shop and it’s benefits to them.</p> <p>Implementing a ‘pay what you can’ pricing scheme in the café.</p> <p>Have a comments’ board to value the views and wishes of everyone.</p>
<p><u>Sense of shared ownership</u> – The shop will be run for the benefit of the community, with any profits being reinvested back into the business, or supporting activities within the local community. It will be controlled by the community through open and voluntary membership, whereby members are part owners of the business, and all members have an equal say in how the business is run, regardless of the level of their investment.</p>	<p>Carry out frequent surveys of members, volunteers and customers on how far they feel the business is owned by the community. Produce regular newsletters to all members to keep them informed of all progress and developments. Post information notices in the shop windows.</p>

<p><u>Additional Services</u> - as well as offering a shop and a café we will aim to provide additional services such as parcel drop-off point, dry cleaning and more, depending on demand. We will be open to any reasonable request. A home delivery service using an electric bicycle is planned.</p>	<p>Survey customers to see how far the shop meets their needs, and how responsive it is to them.</p>
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One of the major benefits of this project is that it will help to alleviate isolation and loneliness of local residents. Research from *Independent Age, Campaign to End Loneliness and Age Concern UK* shows alarming evidence of the eroding impact of living in isolation. There is substantial evidence that having a lack of social connections significantly increases the risk of premature mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015). Loneliness is also associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke (Valtorta et al. 2010) and an increased risk of high blood pressure (Hawkley 2010). We know that lonely people are more prone to depression (Cacioppo et al. 2014), however, the most potent research into loneliness is the data that supports the greater risk it poses for cognitive decline and dementia (Global Council on Brain Health 2017). In 2017 a major study, conducted over a ten-year period, was published by the London School of Economics and Political Science which investigated the economic case for tackling loneliness. It is estimated that over that time, the cost to the public purse of loneliness in the elderly could be in excess of £6,000 per person. Further research indicates that COVID-19 further diminishes the opportunities for isolated elderly people, and people of all ages, to connect with others.

3.2 Community ownership

To enable the stores to be owned by the community, we have established Sylvania Stores Ltd as a Community Benefit Society (CBS) registered with the Financial Conduct Authority in March 2021. According to The Plunkett Foundation (of which we are members), 69% of community stores are registered as CBS. A CBS exists to benefit the wider and collective interests of a community, rather than that of its staff, members or committee. A community benefit society is governed by its members, each of whom has one vote.

Additionally, a CBS, through the 2014 Co-operative and Community Benefit Society Act legislation, is the only legal structure, other than a co-operative society, that can issue community shares. We will issue community shares to attract investment from individuals and organisations within the community in order to raise the initial capital required to open the stores and café. We will supplement this community fundraising with applications for grants from external organisations. These will fund additional features and improvements to make the new community stores more environmentally sustainable and to ensure that it is a welcoming and attractive place to visit.

4. Background Research

4.1 Outreach Research

During the autumn of 2020 we visited four community stores within our area - Cheriton Fitzpaine, Payhembury, East Budleigh and Plymtree, with phone and Zoom conversations and helpful email dialogues with colleagues at Ide and Talaton. The managers and chairs of committee were highly supportive and helpful. We learned about successful community store models which included a share offer to the local community; the valuing and training of volunteers (one store has over forty); the employment of a part-time manager for one or two years; profit mark-up percentages; the sale of basic goods and the inclusion of local craftspeople, growers and farmers; the need for official food hygiene certificates; and the use of a computerised till system (EPOS). We were shown lists of local suppliers and met several volunteers and customers. It was a tremendously uplifting experience.

One store committee chair has become our informal advisor. David Plumridge from the Cheriton Fitzpaine Community Shop has given our chairperson a great deal of advice and he has attended several of our steering group meetings. David has pledged to support us to our opening day and beyond.

4.2 Survey Results: Support and ideas from local residents

In summer 2020, an extensive survey of Pennsylvania residents was undertaken. There was an impressive response with 523 completed surveys (452 online and 71 on paper) that showed a high level of support for a store and café. The main findings are summarised below:

- 95% of respondents would like a shop at the venue
- 69% would like a post office (or parcel drop off if not a full post office)
- 49% would like a café

Concerning the shop, responses showed that there was significant support for the shop to be open 7 days a week from 0730 - 1930 and stock:

- Daily essentials
- Locally-sourced milk, eggs, meat, fruit, vegetables
- Printed newspapers
- A small range of wines and local beers
- Quality baked goods, breads and cakes
- Good coffee to take away
- Balance quality, local sourcing and cost

There was a mix of responses about ethical, sustainably-sourced produce. Comments made it clear that whilst it is very desirable, sustainable sourcing should not mean that produce becomes too expensive for day-to-day purchasing. Some commented on the need for plastic-free packaging and vegetarian options in their response. Nearly 92% of respondents indicated a preference for locally-sourced produce. This was emphasised further in comments, with some also offering to help contribute home-grown vegetables and eggs.

Almost half the respondents indicated a café would be desirable; this was often selected in addition to a shop. The comments in this response indicate that if a café were to be opened, it should offer light bites, baked goods and good tea/coffee. Some comments:

- “A café would be a good meeting spot and community hub”
- “Good quality coffee and fresh baked goods”
- “Not too complicated; a decent coffee and cake”
- “Nice to make use of the outdoor space with tables”
- “Good to sit down for a coffee with free Wi-Fi”
- “Could provide seating and drinks for things like the Flour ‘N Flame pizza van”
- “Licensed for a glass of wine and a meeting spot would be nice”

There were also suggestions for these activities:

- Community hub with space for small-scale events and workstores (arts, poetry, computer help, yoga, skills workstores)
- Regular 3rd party street food (e.g. Flour ‘n Flame pizza van, fish and chips, etc.)
- Place to secure bicycles and a dog-friendly approach (water bowl, treats) to reduce car usage
- Could we trial a small-scale local delivery service for telephone orders?

Following this initial survey, we held five additional listening events including two community Christmas Fairs in December 2020 in the shop, which gave us further encouraging feedback. A summary of the results follows:

- We met 114 people, all of whom expressed positivity towards the project
- A majority expressed interest in the shop being used as a community centre
- 17 people offered to become store volunteers.
- 21 people under the age of 18 spoke of the need for a meeting place for young people.
- 10 students spoke of the value of having a store and café with several members of university clubs such as running and orienteering saying that they would start and finish their activity at the store.
- 9 young people under the age of 16 spoke of the need to have regular activities such as art and story-telling. One eight-year-old offered to run a dance class.
- 53 older residents spoke of the discomfort of isolation and the pleasure in having a local shop to visit to purchase goods but also a place for conversation.
- A mother spoke of the need for her teenage son with additional needs to have a place to visit and perhaps work as a volunteer.

See Appendices I & II for more comments and ideas from the local community.

4.3 Traffic Survey

To get a better idea of how many people pass by the venue, we conducted a pedestrian and traffic survey for an hour each day (randomly chosen between 10am-5pm) over 7 days in the period of 1st to 8th December 2020. The results revealed a substantial flow of people past the shop with 10-15 walkers/runners per hour (mean of 12/hour), 0-8 cyclists per hour (mean of 3.2/hour), and 128-239 motor vehicles per hour (mean of 169/hour) of which around 85% were cars. One reason for this frequent traffic past the venue is that it is located next to Collins Road, which is the main thoroughfare leading into and through the estate. Parking on

Collins Road near the venue makes it convenient for passing motorists to drop in quickly to buy sandwiches, snacks, groceries, etc.

4.4 Competition

There is little competition for foot traffic in the neighbourhood. There is a Morrison's supermarket 1.6km away (a thirty minute walk or eight minute drive from the centre of the estate). A nearby seasonal café, The Secret Garden café, is 1.5km away uphill, but arriving by foot requires walking a distance on a busy road with no pavement. The nearest cafés are otherwise in the town centre 2.5km away. The adjacent park, Mincinglake Valley Park, has a community hut which is available for booking events. Rather than compete with this resource, we will seek to complement it and collaborate with it.

5. Financial Plan

5.1 Assumptions

Profit and loss

The figures are calculated assuming a pessimistic 'breakeven on trading' position before set up costs and depreciation: it is anticipated that the store / café will perform better than this once operating.

Income:

1. Calculated on three assumptions:

- the shop is open daily for a total of 67 hours per week:
- an average number of customers per hour (as shown on the accounts)
- an average spend per customer of £5.50.

Year one: To break even we require 14 customers per hour spending an average of £5.50. Over a week that represents 938 customers. Assuming we can attract a core customer base of 300 using the store twice per week: there is a requirement to attract another 338 other visitors. Weekly income target: £5,159

Year two the target will be 16 customers per hour at an average spend of £5.50. Weekly income target £5,896

Year 3: The target will be 18 customers per hour at an average spend of £5.50. Weekly income target £6,633.

Information from previous shop tenants informed us that sales of between £6,500 and £10,000 per week were being achieved.

2. Our Gross Profit target (sales less the direct cost of the goods) is 23%: 1% above the average for community stores as quoted by the Plunkett Foundation 2019 survey.
3. We hope to be granted a discretionary reduced business rate.
4. We are planning to raise £4800 a year from fund raising activities and grants.
5. Costs are assumed to rise by 2% per year.

Fixed Assets and Depreciation:

Our planned initial expenditure on fixed assets is £13,000 (see note below). We have assumed a 20% depreciation rate calculated on residual value for the shop equipment and 33% rate on equipment. Included in the figures is an annual capital expenditure of £4,000 capital expenditure in years two and three.

Balance Sheet:

We have assumed:

1. The need to hold up to two months stock based on the purchases figure.
2. That we will get a maximum of two weeks credit.
3. We have assumed we will raise £60,000 in the first instance and be able to sell £2,000 in shares each year.

Sylvania Stores: Projected income and expenditure.

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Per month	Annual	Per month	Annual	Per month	Annual
Sales	22,709	272,506	25,841	310,093	28,190	338,283
Less Cost of Sales	17,486	209,829	19,898	238,771	21,706	260,478
Gross Profit	5,223	62,676	5,943	71,321	6,484	77,805
Plus Other Income	325	3,900	400	4,800	400	4,800
Gross income	5,548	66,576	6,343	76,121	6,884	82,605
Less Overheads						
Property						
Rent	125	1,500	500	6,000	500	6,000
Rates	0	0	300	3,600	500	6,000
Heat / Light / Power	152	1,820	155	1856	158	1894
Direct Costs						
Wages incl on costs	4,160	49,920	4,160	49,920	4,160	49,920
Office costs	87	1,040	88	1061	90	1082
Equipment rental	52	624	53	636	54	649
Telephone / internet	50	600	51	612	52	624
Consumables	100	1,196	102	1220	104	1244
Cleaning and Sundries	100	1,200	102	1224	104	1248
Professional fees	50	600	50	600	50	600
Insurance	100	1,200	102	1224	104	1248
Repairs and maintenance	100	1,200	102	1224	104	1248
Vehicle expenses / travel	100	1,200	102	1224	104	1248
Waste collection	50	600	51	612	52	624
Advertising	50	600	51	612	52	624
Financial Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bank	0	0	0	0	0	0
EPOS charges	284	3406	323	3876	352	4229
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total expenses	5,559	66,706	4,132	75,502	6,540	78,484
Trading Surplus	-11	-130	2212	620	343	4,121

Less Depreciation	5,040		3,689		3,781
Less Turnover rent	0		0		824
Less Set up costs	13,000		0		0
Plus other Fund raising	5,000		5,000		5,000
Net Trading Surplus/loss	-13,170		5,620		8,297

Cost of sales 77%

Activity assumptions	No of customers per hour	Average spend per customer (£)	hours shop open per week	Weekly income (£)
Year 1	14.5	5.50	67	5343
Year 2	16.5	5.50	67	6080
Year 3	18.0	5.50	67	6633

Assumed inflation	yr 2	yr 3
	2.00%	2.00%

Sylvania Stores Balance Sheet forecast

	Yr	Yr	Yr
	2022	2023	2024
Assets			
Fixed Assets			
Fixtures and Fittings	14,960	15,945	15,941
Current assets			
Cash and Bank	6,190	8,852	16,548
Stock	33,573	38,203	41,676
Debtors	500	1,000	1,000
Total Assets	55,223	64,000	75,165
Liabilities			
Creditors	8,393	9,551	10,419
Current liabilities	8,393	9,551	10,419
Long term Liabilities	0	0	0
Capital			
Share Capital and Initial Grants	60,000	62,000	64,000
Loan Capital			
Profit and Loss	-13,170	-7,550	746
Total Capital	46,830	54,450	64,746
Total Liabilities	55,223	64,000	75,165

Fixed Asset Register

Asset	Initial cost	Dep rate	Dep 21/22	Value 2022	Dep 22/3	Value 2023	Dep 23/24	Value 2024
Cabinets and fittings	12,000	20%	2,400	9,600	1,920	9,680	1936	9,744
Café Equipment & outside area	5,000	33%	1,650	3,350	1,106	3,745	1236	4,009
Electronic Equipment	3,000	33%	990	2,010	663	1,847	609	1,737
	20,000		5,040	14,960	3,689	15,271	3,781	15,490

Note 1: Initial Capital Requirement

Fixed Assets	
New food cabinets especially freezers	12,000
Café equipment	£5,000
Electronic equipment including tills	£3,000
Total Fixed Asset Requirement	£20,000
Other Set up costs	
Decorating and Fitting out including improvements to the toilet facilities	£7,000
Signage	£3,000
Professional fees	£1,000
Initial publicity	£2,000
Other Set up costs	£13,000
Initial working capital for stock and trading cashflow (10% approx. of annual turnover)	£27,000
Total Initial capital requirement To be raised by sales of community shares, grant income and donations	£60,000

6. Progress to Date

The project started in August 2020, four months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Our work has been hindered by this challenging situation but we have made good progress by holding informal, socially distanced meetings in the shop with the leaseholder and outdoor listening events to gather information from the local community. We even managed to hold two Christmas fairs in the shop, in which a number of local artisans brought along items to sell. This gave local residents a taste of what the shop and café could look and feel like. We had hoped for monthly fairs from the start of this year but the lockdown has postponed this plan. However, we aim to hold a Spring Fair in May 2021. Our management group and sub-group meetings are held via Zoom as are specialist tutorials from the Plunkett Foundation.

With support of the leaseholder, we have begun initial work on the site to prepare it:

- we have removed plastic window advertising from a former business
- the leaseholder kindly had the electrical circuits certified and intruder and fire alarms serviced
- we have been successful at receiving an Exeter council grant that will allow us to refurbish the building e.g. repairing and painting the exterior in May 2021.

We continue to cultivate interest and involvement from the community through:

- international community photo outreach campaign
- promotional video (March 2020)
- Facebook page
- Mailing lists for committees, volunteers and supporters

We realised after gathering the many comments at the listening events that the venue must be more than a shop. An inter-cultural friendship group has been formed to be at the centre of this project to bring people together to share stories, skills and plans for the development of the store. The *Pennsylvania International Friendship Group* was formed in February 2021 to recognise the wide range of cultures represented on the estate. Everyone will be welcomed.

7. Stores and Café Operations

7.1 Opening Hours

We plan to open 7 days a week and not close for lunch. We have budgeted for the shop to be open 67 hours per week 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 10am-5pm on Saturdays and Sundays (to be confirmed).

7.2 Proposed Management

The stores will employ either one full-time or two part-time shop managers who will be by up to thirty volunteers overseen by the management committee.

We aim to provide a mix of affordable goods plus items from local suppliers such as jams, cakes, bread, chutneys etc. Please ask for things you would like to have!

7.3 Café

Our chosen model is to be a community café. We aim to be a place where people from all parts of the community can meet and socialise. We will run on the principle of a customer's payment being dependent on their portion size and what they can afford to pay. We will be able to operate this way as the high staffing costs associated with for-profit enterprises are almost entirely offset in our model by volunteer labour.

The café will initially offer hot drinks, cakes and biscuits. It is envisaged that as the project develops and more people volunteer the range of refreshments will expand.

The café activities will be accommodated within the shop trading space. The existing counter space will be allocated for shop trading and café food and drink preparation. The main shop floor area will allow for informal seating around tables. We also hope to provide outdoor seating on the grass outside, and will look at installing awnings, which would make this space usable all year round.

Within the café space we hope to support many different activities, as suggested by members of the community during our listening events. These will include parent and toddler mornings, toy and book swaps, a repair café, story tellers, junior music and drama sessions, a board games club, art and craft activities, oral history sessions, sing-a-longs and community advice surgeries.

8. Risk Assessment

Risk	Risk Type	Actions to reduce / mitigate
Insufficient funds raised through share offer	Financial	Further grant funding applications in progress to cover any potential shortfall in capital funding requirements. More craft fair events can be run in 2021 to help raise funds (earnings about £500/fair). Contingency plan made for reduced outlay if ideal share offer target not made.
Grant applications unsuccessful	Financial	Initially reduce employed hours of shop manager and rely more on volunteers to help to build up surplus. Wait longer to buy fewer essential items further down the priority list.
Building and fit-out costs higher than expected	Financial	Use professional volunteer labour for appropriate work (e.g. landscaping, decorating, building). Cut back on specification if necessary. Buy second-hand equipment. Use volunteer labour or unskilled work. Include 10% contingency cost.
Difficulty in recruiting shop manager	Operational	Promote widely through local networks. Retain option of two part-time workers and flexibility around working hours.
Difficulty in attracting volunteers	Operational	Establish a mailing list of volunteers using sendinblue marketing software. Shop manager will support volunteers and ensure people have the training they need and enjoy their time in the shop. Offer rewards such as social events to volunteers.
Failure to meet sales and profit targets	Financial	Review customer offer to meet local needs. Improve marketing and encourage visitor spend. Review margins and wastage. Organise events and activities to promote the shop. Review manager's role and develop a greater reliance on volunteers.
Difficulty competing with neighbouring stores and online services	Operational	Allow customers to suggest improvements and ideas for products they would like. Send out regular news about the stores via social media, online mailing lists, flyers etc.. Encourage community activities at the café to attract people down and create a buzz.
Further lockdowns	Operational	Sell off perishable items quickly before lockdowns start. Provide take away service if that is permitted. Furlough the shop manager. Negotiate the rental lease to allow for the possibility of rent holidays in case of such eventualities. As one of our core offerings is essential foods, we are unlikely to have to close and a takeaway café service will help ensure we can continue to break even.

Breach of personal data	Operational	To ensure GDPR compliance, we will aim to minimise the amount of personal data collected and stored (e.g. by using 3rd party mailing tools such as sendinblue). We will store data securely in one location (google drive) and will write a data protection policy and procedures document to be read by all committee members.
Difficulty finding and retaining active committee members	Operational	Develop ways of looking after committee members so as to avoid burnout. Success of the stores will also help to encourage people to join the committee and also workload should decrease once the stores are open and being run by a paid manager.
Leaseholder contract ends or changes	Operational and Financial	Try to find out well in advance when this might occur (current estimate in 7 years' time). Meet and develop a good relationship with the freeholder.
Local competition	Business	While there are stores within 8 minutes' drive, we plan to have a product offering that differs from them.

9. Management

Local residents formed a steering committee in October 2020 that has now evolved into the management committee of the community benefit society, Sylvania Stores Ltd, which received FCA-registration in March 2021. The management committee consists of residents having a rich diversity of complementary skills and professional experience. Due to lockdowns, the committee has developed the ability to work successfully remotely using WhatsApp, email, google drive and fortnightly zoom meetings. The management committee currently has four working subgroups: shop management, buildings, finance and legal, and community and communications. A new management committee will be re-elected from shareholder members at the first annual meeting of the community benefit society.

Current membership of the committee is as follows:

- **Pete Stevenson (chair of steering group)**
Pete is a former headteacher and now works as a primary school story teller, university lecturer and care home creative therapist. As a human rights activist and performance poet he specialises in the fields of race equality, cultural diversity, disarmament and community cohesion.
- **Alistair Heron (company secretary and legal adviser)**
Alistair is a commercial property lawyer and a non executive director of a national housing association. He is also a trustee of three local charities.
- **Rachel Lyons (treasurer)**
Rachel is a retired nurse, and until May was a city councillor. She is a past Lord Mayor of Exeter, is treasurer of Polsloe Community Association, a Trustee of St. Katherine's Priory, and president of the Exeter branch of Lions International.
- **Rosie Heron (minutes secretary)**
Rosie has IT and administrative skills gained through over thirty years as a teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired. She has high level skills in signing and is also a charity trustee.
- **Deborah Murphy (shop management lead)**
Deb is a Paediatric Occupational Therapist for the NHS. She has experience in retail and hospitality. She is committed to the values of gender equality, diversity and sustainability.
- **Milly Barnes (buildings and shop management)**
Milly is a teaching assistant at a local comprehensive and also has experience in ethical retail, marketing and social media. As a French and Spanish tutor, Milly values education for all and intercultural exchange.
- **Brandon Invergo (community / communications and shop management)**
Brandon is a biologist and computer scientist. He has years of experience coordinating hundreds of volunteers in the GNU Free Software project as well as experience working in retail stores and cafés.

- **David Stephenson (community and communications lead and strategic adviser)**
David is a climate scientist and professor of mathematics at the University of Exeter with management, communication, and IT skills. He is also a governor at Exwick Heights Primary School.
- **Tim Groombridge (community / communications)**
Tim currently works as a software tester for a European education technology company. He has also worked as a training and development manager, and as a cartographer for the Royal Engineers.

We are strongly supported and advised by the following, amongst others:

The Plunkett Foundation Trust offers helpful advice on all aspects of a community store project including community benefit society status, the financial conduct authority, the community share offer, the training of volunteers and more.

Ebbie Peters, the Pennsylvania Community Builder for Wellbeing Exeter is an essential member of our team promoting our project but also playing an essential role in our listening events, gathering views and ideas from local residents.

Dawn Eckhart of Exeter Connect offers excellent advice on the writing of a business plan to help us to become *investment ready*. She has offered advice on other aspects of the project such as the delegation of duties when progressing the project and strategies to use to overcome difficulties.

Mike Howe is the leaseholder. Our relationship with Mike is an essential part of the process to move us forward. He has generously assisted by allowing us to use the building for two Christmas Fairs which introduced the project to a large number of people, and he has paid for the servicing of the electrical circuits and the fire and intruder alarms.

David Plumridge of Cheriton Fitzpaine Community Store, as mentioned above.

Exeter City Council with good support from the three sitting city councillors.

Anja Oliver of Devon Wildlife Trust, who can facilitate and promote events and activities with nearby Mincinglake Valley Park.

10. Policies

10.1 Safeguarding

We recognise that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility and we have a duty to promote their welfare. All members of the steering committee, staff and volunteers should be alert to potential indicators of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect. All staff and volunteers will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction process and there will be regular briefings and updates for all staff. Staff will be encouraged to attend appropriate training courses. We will take advice from the appropriate agencies and professionals such as the police and social services.

10.2 Health and Safety

The steering group recognises its duty in upholding this policy and to provide the necessary funds and resources to put it into practice. It is committed to ensuring that all its activities are safe, and it will do whatever it can to provide for the health, safety and welfare of all volunteers, members and visitors ensuring that risks to all are minimised at all times.

It will observe the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 ("HASAWA") and all relevant regulations and codes of practice made under it.

All accidents or unsafe incidents will be investigated by the manager and, if required the chair of the steering group, with appropriate reports to the next meeting of the steering group. We will assess the risk to the health and safety of volunteers, members and visitors and identify what measures are needed to comply with its health and safety obligations. We will ensure that equipment is safe and well maintained and provide information, instruction, training and supervision to volunteers in safe working methods and procedures as required. We will encourage volunteers and members to co-operate in ensuring safe and healthy conditions and systems by effective joint consultation and we will establish emergency procedures as required. All accidents and incidents must be reported and recorded. All users must be aware of fire and evacuation procedures.

Training will be offered in line with current legislation, as required.

10.3 Equalities

We will be committed to all aspects of equality and diversity. Everyone will be welcome in our store and café. We are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion for all, eliminating unlawful discrimination. Our aim is for our steering group, advisers, employees, volunteers, customers and guests to be truly representative of all sections of our community and for everyone to feel respected and valued. We will promote best practice in line with the 2010 Equalities Act which ensures that no one will be unlawfully discriminated against because of characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender realignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, belief and sexual orientation. We will oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination including pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances, discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave, requests for flexible working, selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities. We will create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued. We will make opportunities for training available to develop

their potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the shop and café. We will monitor the steering group, advisers, employees, volunteers, customers and guests to ensure we are constantly including and valuing all sections of our community.

10.4 Data Protection Policy and Procedure

We have developed a data protection policy and procedures document that aims to make our handling of personal data GDPR-compliant. We will only collect and process the minimum amount of personal data in order to operate the stores. We intend to be registered in June 2021 with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Messages of support for Sylvania Community Stores and Café

A revitalized community shop could serve many purposes. As well as selling basic supplies, it could also act as something of a community centre, bringing people together and thereby enhancing community cohesion. By providing groceries at the local level, it could also reduce car journeys to Morrisons or elsewhere, and thereby reducing pollution. In a community that includes families, older people and students from around the world, a local focus could also help with community relations, supporting diversity and inclusion.

Ghee Bowman, University of Exeter and Woodcraft Folk

As a senior psychotherapist I would like to support this super initiative that will bring a great deal of emotional support to individuals, couples and families in Pennsylvania. So many of our emotional challenges can be healed by bringing people together in a meaningful and positive spirit. Well done to Pete and all of the team. I wish you all the best.

Claire Johnson, Franklin Hospital Exeter

As a community activist I pledge my whole hearted support for this initiative. A shop with a space for community interaction is essential for the sharing of information and resources. It is vital that people, especially women, feel welcomed and accepted and my initial feelings about the Sylvania Community Store and café project are highly positive. Good luck everyone.

Mandy Barnes, Reclaim the Night

I think this is a much needed and valuable project in an area devoid of any infrastructure. I'm aware of a request for funding and have indicated my support for it.

Ian Quance, City Councillor

I am in full support of the community shop and would be delighted to use it as often as I can. Community stores are an invaluable part of the local economy.

Rosie Heron Broadclyst Parish Clerk

I am happy to support your project! There are a significant number of Bangladeshi families living on this residential estate. The lack of local services has impacted these families in various ways. Having a local community hub would encourage families and young children to invest their time in a local initiative that would be beneficial not just to the wider community but to the local economy. This may become a model for other local residential estates in showcasing the diversity of the area. This project shows signs of becoming a celebration of the richness and vibrancy of this area that just requires an opportunity to make it shine.

Neomi Alam Inclusive Exeter Drop-In Support Services Coordinator and Exeter Mosque

On behalf of the Patient Participation Group at Mount Pleasant Health Centre, we would like to offer our full support to the Community Shop project and the work in developing the previous premises to the Sylvania Community Stores.

The process of engaging the local community in sharing ideas for how the shop could be creatively developed and used has been encouraging to see and to help in understanding the benefits of having such a valued community asset. The potential for local people to connect with others will be very beneficial for people's health and wellbeing.

We wish you all the best for the future.

**Stephen Hudson MBE, Mount Pleasant Health Centre Patient Participation Group
(Chair)**

I have a chronic health condition which means I can't drive and have limited energy. I also live on my own. A local community shop would make shopping much easier for me as it's only 10 minutes from my house. It would also be a useful social space which would improve my well-being as I could participate in volunteering, and any social or community events organised there. The close proximity to my house makes it much more accessible for me.

Local resident

Establishing a community shop will be a fantastic idea. There is a definite need for a shop that sells the basics to cater for our locality, yet this could be so much more. There have been so many fabulous ideas to set up a community hub in this bright clean space. For example reading groups, repair workstores and a café. I am a local crafter keen to use a rented space to promote and sell my seasonal items, but I am also keen to organise craft sessions for children or adults as I am a qualified teacher.

Catherine Wilcock

Appendix 2: Community Comments

Here are a few examples of the comments which were written on leaves and hung on a tree or posted on a large canvas board during five community listening events in October and December 2020.

- *"It would be so good to have a café to chat and play board games"*
- *"Can we include local honey makers?"*
- *"Perhaps local craftspeople could display their wares?"*
- *The place must contain a friendly welcome. The last shop was a miserable place to visit!*
- *"Let's signpost the shop from the park so that walkers can find us and buy an ice cream!"*
- *"Walking distance is essential. I'm fed up with driving my car almost every day"*
- *"Perhaps we could have a book club with a book swap every week. I'd love that!"*
- *"A café would be great / lovely / brilliant!" (x18)*
- *"I just want to buy essentials. I've got two small children and I don't drive"*
- *"Could a café contain a sing-along session once a week?"*
- *"We would love to have a café so we could have cake after running!!"*

- “My church would support you”
- “I will tell friends at the mosque”
- “A bike repair meeting once a week - sharing ideas for routes and equipment”
- “A mix of basic goods and food made by local cooks and allotment holders would be super”
- “A dementia café would be great for those who are lonely and confused” (x3)
- “Parent and toddler gatherings with music and stories” (x14)
- “A space for serendipitous encounters with fellow members of the community”
- “A place for young people to hang-out”
- “Don’t forget the dog walkers! There are dozens of us. Doggie treats please!”
- “You could have a shed where local growers and farmers could donate surplus apples and potatoes”
- “Have an oven to bake bread. The smell will draw people in!”
- “Make the place as Green as possible. No packaging and please don’t sell The Sun” (x4)
- “Please make the store attractive for the growing number of Vegans on the estate” (x3)
- “Organic produce please” (x3)
- “Just to have a chat would be super / lovely / essential” (x17)
- “A clothes swap club would be handy”
- “Plants and crochet to sell”
- “Art and poetry evenings lease” (x5)
- “We could form an international friendship group and have evenings where we learn to cook food from around the world. I’ll start with sushi”
- “Make it ethical and support the values of equality and diversity. Everyone must feel welcomed - from Exeter Pride”.

Appendix 3: Research Into Loneliness – References

Cacippo et al 2014, Older adults reporting social isolation or loneliness show poorer cognitive function 4 years later. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 17 (2), pp. 59 - 60.

Global Council on Brain Health 2017, The brain and social connectedness: GCBH recommendations on social engagement and brain health.

Hawkley et al 2010, Loneliness predicts increased blood pressure: 5 year cross-lagged analyses in middle-aged and older adults. *Psychology and Aging*, 25 (1). p.132.

Holt-Lunstad et al 2015, Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta - analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10 (2) pp. 227 - 237.

Valtorta et al 2016, Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke: systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal observational studies. *Heart*, 102 (13), pp. 1009 - 1016.

Appendix 4: Location map

The store is located at the junction of Collins Rd and Sylvania Drive, in the Pennsylvania area of Exeter, on the Northern edge of the city:



