
MAIN CASE

Reference No:	15/03001/CCA	
Proposal:	Change of use from D2 (leisure) to D1 (non-residential institutions) including addition of a mezzanine floor comprised of B1 (office) and D1 use to create public Archives, Registration service and County Council Offices	
Site Address:	Strikes Ten Pin Bowling, The Dock, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4GS	
Applicant:	Cambridgeshire County Council	
Case Officer:	Penelope Mills Senior Planning Officer	
Parish:	Ely	
Ward:	Ely East	
Ward Councillors:	Councillor Lis Every Councillor Richard Hobbs	
Date Received:	26 March 2015	Expiry Date:
		[P247]

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1** Members are requested to endorse the consultation response proposed by Officers set out below:
- The proposed development is for a town centre use in an out of town location. However, due to the previous use of the site, the specific requirements of the new building and the characteristics of the location, it is considered that the location of the proposal is acceptable in principle.
 - The proposal results in the replacement of one community facility with another. The new facility is considered to provide benefits, in relation to the special significance it would have as a county-wide resource and the anticipated number of visitors it would attract. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle, in relation to policy COM3 of the draft Local Plan.
 - In order to ensure that the use remains primarily a community one, it is requested that a planning condition be applied limiting the office space to 450m², as specified on the application form.

- The level of parking, which falls below the Council's Maximum Parking Standards is of some concern. The reduced numbers have been partly argued due to the specific nature of the D1 use and the amount of floorspace given over to records storage. The proposed use should be restricted by condition to that set out in the application rather than a broad D1 use Class, to ensure parking issues do not arise should the use change in the future to one requiring a higher level of parking.
- It is strongly advised that any development proposals for the existing Ely Registration Officer be discussed with the District Council through engagement in the pre-application advice service.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 This application is a being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council. **East Cambridgeshire District Council is a consultee** and not the determining body.
- 2.2 The application seeks permission for a change of use of the existing building from the existing leisure use (D2) to Public Archives, Registration Service and County Council Offices (D1 and B1).
- 2.3 The proposed facility would bring together a number of separated County Council functions. It is expected that the following services would move into the new facility: records office / public archives; Ely Registration Office; Cambridgeshire Collection and office accommodation for Children's, Families and Adult Services.
- 2.4 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>. **Alternatively a paper copy is available to view at the East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, in the application file.**

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There have been a large number historic planning applications on and around the site. The current use was approved under the following applications:
- 97/00223/OUT – Proposed 10 pin bowling centre – APPROVED
97/00681/RMA – Proposed 10 pin bowling centre - APPROVED
- More recent applications include:
04/00267/FUL – Single storey extension to form additional games and party rooms to existing facility

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 The application site, which is approximately 0.53 hectares, is located to the north of The Dock Business Park, close to the Tesco Petrol Filling Station, and Tesco

Superstore. The site currently falls outside the development envelope for Ely, although it is within the envelope as drawn in the draft Local Plan. The site comprises an L-shaped warehouse building, which is currently occupied by Strikes Bowling Alley, and a car park area, which wraps around the building to the east and southeast. An access road, which also provides access to an adjacent builder's merchants, currently divides the site in two, with a smaller parcel of land on the northern side of the road currently being unused. The site falls within flood zone 3 of the Environment Agency's flood risk maps.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

5.1 The District Council is a consultee for this application. The consultation exercise has been undertaken by the County Council. Never-the-less, the District Council has received comments from one member of the public, objecting to the application and raising the following concerns:

- There is a need for family facilities such as the bowling alley, and the site should be retained for this purpose.
- The proposed use is inappropriate: it is an isolated and intimidating area; no safe footpath or cycle access; too little space for researchers with too little facilities.
- Expensive to convert to full archive storage and expensive to maintain.
- No commercial benefits to the City.
- Generate little public use and too far away from shops and other facilities to bring increased trade.
- If the County Council needs offices for its staff they should rent office accommodation, not deprive the City of such a potentially important leisure facility.

6.0 The Planning Police Context

6.1 East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009

CS1	Spatial Strategy
CS4	Employment
CS5	Retail and town centre uses
CS6	Environment
CS8	Access
CS9	Ely
S1	Location of retail and town centre uses
S3	Retaining community facilities and open space
S6	Transport impact
S7	Parking provision
EN2	Design

6.2 East Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan Pre-submission version (as modified)

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
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- COM 1 Location of retail and town centre uses
- COM 3 Retaining community facilities
- COM 4 New community facilities
- COM 7 Transport impact
- COM 8 Parking provision
- ELY 7 Employment-led / mixed use allocation, Station Gate

6.3 Supplementary Planning Documents
Ely Conservation Area 2010

6.4 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Core Planning Policies

- 1 Building a strong, competitive economy
- 2 Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 4 Promoting sustainable transport

6.5 Planning Practice Guidance
Ensuring the vitality of town centres.

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

7.1 There are two key policy issues relating to the principle of the proposed development: whether the out-of-centre location is acceptable; and, whether the replacement of an existing commercial community use with a different community use is acceptable.

Out of Centre Location

7.2 The proposed development is considered to be a 'town centre use'. As such, it should only be allowed in an out of centre location where it can be demonstrated that specific criteria are met.

7.3 Policy COM1 of the draft Local Plan states that outside the town centres, proposals for 'town centre uses' may only be permitted under the following circumstances:

- The sequential approach has been followed and there are no suitable sequentially preferable sites available.
- The site is suitable for the proposed use and the building form and design is appropriate in the local context.
- The scale and type of development is directly related to the role and function of the centre or its locality, in accordance with the hierarchy in Policy GROWTH 2
- For retail developments of 280m² net or larger, there would be no adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the nearest town centre, or on any other centres, as demonstrated in a Retail Impact Assessment.
- The development would enhance the character and attractiveness of the centre and its locality, and not adversely affect residential amenity; and

- The development would be accessible by a choice of means of transport (including public transport, walking and cycling), and the local transport system is capable of accommodating the potential traffic implications.

- 7.4 Local and National Policy would normally dictate that proposals for town centre uses in out of town locations are subject to a sequential test. However, in this case the presence of an existing town centre leisure use, which has occupied the site for a number of years, is a material consideration that may be given considerable weight. In addition, the County Council's specific requirements for the building, particularly in relation to the Records Office, makes it highly unlikely that a suitable building within a town centre would be available.
- 7.5 In light of the above, it is considered that a sequential test is not required in relation to this proposal.
- 7.6 The site is considered to be suitable for the proposed use both in terms of the form and design of the building, which would accommodate the unique requirements of the records storage, and its location close to the Ely 'Station Gateway', as it is anticipated that the gateway area will, in the future, provide a mix of uses including office, retail and residential alongside an enhanced public transport interchange. The location is also accessible by a range transport options.
- 7.7 Ely is the main focus for development in the district, and as such it is considered to be the appropriate settlement in which to locate a cultural facility of county-wide significance. Given the specialist nature of the provision, it will not compete with alternative facilities and should contribute to the vitality and viability of the City by drawing an anticipated 6000 – 9000 users annually. The use may involve the relocation of the Registry Office, however, it is considered that the movement of this from a town centre to an out of centre location would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the vitality of the Town Centre.
- 7.8 The use does not involve any external alterations and as such the building would continue to reflect the character and surroundings of the area. The absence of nearby residential dwellings means that there would also be no adverse impacts on residential amenity.
- 7.9 On balance, it is considered that the out of town location is acceptable for the proposed use.

Loss of Community Facility

- 7.10 Community facilities play an important role in maintaining the quality of life in settlements and include a range of uses including leisure facilities such as those affected by this proposal.
- 7.11 Policy COM3 of the draft Local Plan, states in relation to commercially-operated community facilities, proposals that would lead to the loss of such facilities will only be permitted if:
- The current use or an alternative community use are not viable and that a marketing exercise has taken place; or

- There would be the provision of either an equivalent or better replacement community facility or the provision of an alternative community facility; or
- Development would involve the provision of an alternative community facility which brings demonstrable greater benefits to the settlement or neighbourhood – except in the case of open space, sports and recreational facilities, which should be retained where possible in accordance with paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 7.12 Given the advanced stage of the Local Plan, it is considered that policy COM3 must be given very significant weight as a material consideration.
- 7.13 Having already established that the existing use is a leisure ‘town centre use’, paragraph 74 of the NPPF which relates specifically to sports and recreation, would not be applicable here. It is the first portion of the final bullet point in Policy COM3 which is therefore relevant to this case.
- 7.14 The applicant acknowledges that the bowling alley and soft play provides leisure opportunities and economic benefits, through employment. However, they also highlight that these benefits are not unique to that use. Indeed, Ely offers a range of other leisure and cultural facilities, including museums, gyms and fitness centres, a swimming pool and outdoor leisure opportunities. In addition, the Planning Committee has recently resolved to approve a planning application for a new cinema and leisure centre complex at Downham Road. It is therefore argued by the applicant that there is already adequate provision in this respect to serve the local population.
- 7.15 The proposed development would provide an alternative community use, establishing a new educational and cultural facility, which is anticipated to be of county-wide significance. The facility would incorporate the Records Office and its Public Search Room, the Cambridgeshire Collection local studies library and the Ely Registration Office and it is expected that it would attract between 6,000 and 9,000 visitors each year.
- 7.16 The centralised Records Office will allow members of the public access to a range of historical records and literature in a single building, rather than being dispersed across different locations, as is currently the case. The inclusion of the Cambridgeshire Collection, will also allow a wide range of other documents to be accessed from the same location. This bringing together of materials allows for a much more sustainable pattern of travel for visitors, reducing the need to travel between locations.
- 7.17 The proposed storage facility will replace the existing unsatisfactory storage area at Shire Hall, and will be able to meet the relevant British Standards, assisting the County Council in its duty to protect and maintain documents and records for the future.
- 7.18 On balance, it is considered that the proposed use is likely to achieve wider community benefits than the existing bowling alley. This is due to the special significance the site would have as a County Centre for historical records and other documents, and the ability this will have to draw visitors to Ely. The proposal also offers sustainability benefits by bringing together a presently dispersed collection

and benefits in terms of contributing to protecting the historic records. The proposal therefore meets the requirements of Policy COM3 of the draft Local Plan and is acceptable in principle.

- 7.19 It is also considered that the proposal meets the requirements of policy COM4 of the draft Local Plan, which deals specifically with new community facilities.
- 7.20 It is noted that the proposed use would also include an element of office accommodation, set out in the application as 450m². In order to ensure that the use remains primarily a community one, it is recommended that the office space be limited by way of a planning condition.

Highways and Accessibility

- 7.21 The applicant has submitted a Transport Statement with the application and the local highways authority will be consulted on the proposals.
- 7.22 It is stated that the proposed development is likely to be comparable to the existing use, with a slight increase in traffic in the weekdays at peak times and a slight reduction on Saturdays.
- 7.23 The Core Strategy and the draft Local Plan set out parking standards for different types of uses. In terms of B1 (office) and D1 (non-residential institutions) the requirement based on the floor area (and staff members) of this development would be up to 85 spaces and up to 28 spaces respectively, giving a total of 113 spaces. This is above the existing parking provision on the site which is 52 parking spaces.
- 7.24 The Transport Statement argues that the floor area calculation referred to above results in an unnecessarily high number for this particular development. This is due to the fact that a considerable amount of the D1 floorspace is used for storage of historic records and documents and is not directly open to the public. Taking this into account, the requirement drops by 40 spaces to 73.
- 7.25 The parking standards set out in the Core Strategy and the draft Local Plan are maximum figures and not a minimum and as such it may be acceptable to provide a lower number of spaces in some cases. In this instance due to the excellent public transport links and the close proximity of the East Cambridgeshire District Council pay-and-display carpark, the level of parking available is considered to be acceptable for this proposal.
- 7.26 Notwithstanding the above, it is possible that should this use be approved and implemented, then a change of use could take place in the future to a different use falling within the same overall use category (D1). If this were to happen there may be knock on effects in terms of parking, as a use that did not involve such a high level of storage may well generate greater need for parking spaces. In order to protect against this, it is considered that the specific use applied for in this application should be conditions, preventing future changes to different D1 uses without the benefit of a planning application, where issues such as parking could be re-examined.

Other Material Matters

- 7.27 There is reference in the application to the Ely Registry Office relocating to the new facility. Any new use of the existing Registry Office which falls outside the existing use class would require the benefit of planning permission and would be the subject of a separate planning application.
- 8.0 SUMMARY
- 8.1 This application is being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council and Officers have recommended a consultation response for Members of the Planning Committee to endorse.
- 8.2 The application seeks permission for a change of use of the existing building from the existing leisure use (D2) to Public Archives, Registration Service and County Council Offices (D1 and B1). This facility would bring together a number of separated County Council functions and would provide a cultural resource of county-wide significance.
- 8.3 The proposed use, which is a town centre use, is considered to be acceptable on this out of town site due to the previous use of the site, the specific requirements of the new building and the characteristics of the location.
- 8.4 The replacement of the existing commercial community facility with the proposed alternative community facility is considered to be acceptable in relation to policy COM3 of the draft Local Plan, as the new facility is considered to provide benefits, in relation to the special significance it would have as a county-wide resource and the anticipated number of visitors it would attract to the City.
- 8.5 In order to ensure that the use remains primarily a community one, it is requested that a planning condition be applied limiting the office space to 450m², as specified on the application form. It is also requested that a condition be used to restrict the use of the building to the specific one proposed rather than a general D1 use, to prevent future changes of use without a planning application, which may lead to an increase in the amount of parking required.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer(s)</u>
Application and supporting documents.	Penelope Mills Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Penelope Mills Senior Planning Officer 01353 665555 penny.mills@eastcambs.gov.uk
http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications		

Core Strategy 2009

www.eastcambs.gov.uk

Draft Local Plan

www.eastcambs.gov.uk

NPPF

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>