

# Case Study

**The Project**                      **Ramsey Library**

**The Authority**                **Cambridgeshire County Council**

**Key Practice Areas**        **Acquisition and co-location**

**Before**



**After**



## The Challenge

To acquire a new High Street library in the market town of Ramsey and implement co-location with community partners to provide a ‘community hub’ presence.

## The Key Steps

The former library at School Lane, Ramsey was small and located in a secondary location. Library Services prefer High Street locations in the centre of communities where people are more likely to use their services.

A local housing association acting as a developer had acquired the former Grand Cinema site at Great Whyte in Ramsey after it was forced to close due to recession. The developer had embarked on site assembly to amalgamate the former cinema and adjoining dwelling together with land and toilets that were owned by Huntingdonshire District Council.

Negotiations had been taking place between the developer’s Project Manager and colleagues from Library Services. These negotiations were primarily based on dividing construction costs between the parties, and the proposal appeared to be beyond Library Service’s budget.

Strategy and Estates (S&E) provided valuation advice and were tasked to acquire an interest in the property for minimal possible cost. Local planning policy had allocated the ground floor frontage to Great Whyte for retail or community uses only, and this restriction was a positive advantage to the County Council.

The developer appointed an independent Chartered Surveyor to undertake negotiations with the officer from S&E (also a Chartered Surveyor). A valuation approach was adopted whereby the Council's contribution towards the project would be based on retail use valuation principles rather than construction costs, and negotiations reached a relatively speedy conclusion.

Colleagues from Property Commissioning were then asked to ensure that the design and specification of the building were delivered as directed by Library Services.

Huntingdon District Council and Ramsey Town Council were keen to share the benefits of such a central location, and such a modern and accessible new community facility. It was decided that co-location with these community partners could bring both added convenience to members of the public, and valuable contributions towards fit-out and operational costs.

## The Outcome

On completion of the development the County Council entered into a 125 year leasehold interest in the property. Prior to completion Strategy & Estates had negotiated licence agreements with the two community partners in order to facilitate their shared occupation of parts of the facility.

In September 2011 there was a ceremony to mark the formal opening of the new Ramsey Library and there has since been a great increase in use compared to the old library:

- 19,776 books and other resources (includes DVDs and story cds) were issued between 15th August and 7th November, 2011 compared with 10,744 for the same period in 2010. Therefore almost twice as many issues.
- 638 new members joined the library between 15th August and 17th November, 2011, compared with 102 new members for the same period in 2010.

## Learning Points

- Collaborative working to form strong partnerships has produced a "Win-Win" solution for all parties.
- Persistence and perseverance can deliver innovative solutions and add value to service delivery.
- Professional estates officers can identify opportunities for added value solutions.
- Design and flexible lease terms offer flexibility in order to convert premises to retail use if required.
- Operational maintenance and running costs will reduce whilst providing fit for purpose accommodation.
- In-house property professionals will increase asset value and utilisation, reduce project delivery time and deliver wider public sector objectives.

### For further information please contact:

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