

Case Study

The Project

New Library and Five Keyworker Flats, 10-12 Woollards Lane, Great Shelford

The Authority

Cambridgeshire County Council

Key Practice Areas

Regeneration

Working with partners

Key Worker Accommodation

Partner: Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (bpha)

Architect: The Design Partnership

Contractor: Hill Partnerships

Date of Construction: Sept 2008-Oct 2009

The Challenge

Great Shelford library was identified in the Libraries Strategy Review as utterly inadequate in all respects except in its location. The building was very cramped, awkwardly subdivided and incapable of making DDA complaint at reasonable cost and without major disruption. However, the community was identified by the service as needing a 'key' library of some circa 225m².

The old library comprised an extended Edwardian building, a former Post Office and adjoining house- the ground floor of which had been converted to form part of the library and the first floor of which comprised a run down flat which had had to be vacated in 2006 due to structural cracking.

Great Shelford library is very well located for its users being a prime site right in the heart of the community's key shopping street, Woollards Lane. The village enjoys excellent rail links to London and Cambridge, easy access to the M11 and is a circa 20 minute cycle route to the City edge and Addenbrookes Hospital. There is a huge demand for affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire where prices are little different to the City. It is, in short, a very sustainable location.

The Key Steps

A feasibility study undertaken in 2001 had examined various alternatives for re-provision, upgrade or replacement.

Strategy and Estates sought to test whether a new library could be provided at no/minimal cost to the County Council whilst simultaneously helping to provide much needed affordable housing in this, one of the most expensive villages south of Cambridge. The first joint scheme for a library and affordable housing was conceived and after various negotiations with RSL's a partnership was struck with Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA) who worked up a detailed scheme which they took through the full planning process.

Before...



After...



A bat roost was discovered which temporarily caused major concern as there was a fear they may roost before demolition commenced and the prospect of several months delay at the start. A temporary home was provided by means of bat boxes on the Recreation Ground opposite the site and the roof was redesigned to be bat friendly once completed.

The Outcome

Planning consent was finally secured in March 2008 for a visually very attractive scheme which positively enhances the Conservation Area and makes best use of the site. The library has been designed to provide commercial flexibility for the Council and could easily be adapted to provide 1 or 2 retail units if required.

The scheme comprises in detail a 225m² (gross) ground floor library (130% larger than the old library) and five one bed (46m²) affordable flats - four above the library and one as the first floor part of a coach-house style building to the rear.

An Agreement for Lease for 125 years at a peppercorn rent was signed in October 2008 and the lease completed in October 2009.

Learning Points

- A poor inadequate library has been replaced by a modern purpose built energy efficient and DDA compliant building in an excellent location making best use of the site.
- Collaborative working to form strong partnership has produced a "Win-Win" solution, improving the library service, delivered affordable accommodation for key workers, and enhancing the village street scene.
- Persistence and perseverance can deliver innovative solutions to add value to service delivery.
- New building offers flexibility in that it could be converted to retail use if required.
- Affordable housing for key workers provided in a highly sustainable location close to Addenbrookes hospital.
- Provide a temporary home for the pipestrelle and long eared bats and in engineering a bat friendly roof in the new building.
- Creative use of asset value to secure improved service facilities at minimum capital cost to the authority.
- Peppercorn rent for 125 lease.
- Council's maintenance and running costs dramatically reduced whilst providing a better building.
- Provision of a new building that respects the character of the Great Shelford Conservation Area and positively enhances it.

For further information please contact:

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