

## Case Study

### The Project

To review all property assets against consistent criteria

### The Authority

Cambridgeshire County Council

### Key Practice Areas

To challenge asset utilisation, suitability, location, retention and sustainability

### Project Manager

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### With support from

Sara Thomas, Project Development Officer

### Project Completed

2004



### The Challenge

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) holds 652 property assets with a value of over £600 million. A review of all CCC property assets has provided a baseline of information on the current usage of its assets and a challenge to the utilisation, suitability, location, retention and sustainability of the assets.

### The Key Steps

An 'Asset Challenge Methodology' was devised for application to all assets, providing consistency, objectivity and ease of use. Due to the high number of assets, the County Council undertook four separate smaller reviews based on District Council boundaries and worked south across the County towards the area with the highest property values.

There are four main steps to the 'Asset Challenge Methodology' process: -

1. A simple questionnaire on each property asset was completed by the service manager in conjunction with a corporate property officer. An initial decision was to collect key high-level data on each property rather than large amounts of detailed data. The questionnaire centred on nine key questions: -
 

➤ What is the <b>DETR</b> Grade?	➤ Does the property meet current and future <b>service needs</b> ?
➤ Does the property meet the <b>space standards</b> ?	➤ Is the property in the right <b>location</b> for the current use?
➤ How is the <b>property held</b> ?	➤ Are there <b>partnering opportunities</b> ?
➤ Are there more appropriate <b>non-CCC uses</b> ?	➤ Are there more appropriate <b>CCC uses</b> ?
➤ Are there opportunities for <b>intensification</b> of use?	

2. The data from the questionnaire was entered into a simple spreadsheet and analysed against agreed criteria. Each answer to the nine key questions produced one or more of the predetermined initial recommendations (see below). The frequency of these initial recommendations was then calculated and the overall asset recommendation was determined by the highest frequency of a single recommendation.
3. The recommendation made on its overall classification determined what future action would be taken.

There are five categories of recommendation: -

- Continued Maintenance (CM) - Maintain status quo.
- Better Utilisation (BU) - These properties have utilisation issues arising that require further consideration, more than likely through a 'project'. The project can explore various options as appropriate, e.g. for alternative use, change of tenure, flexible working, partnerships, amalgamations.
- Major Investment Required - (MIR) The future direction of these properties has already been determined, and major works are required, i.e. major refurbishments, extensions, relocation.
- Long-term development - (LTD) These sites have long-term commerciality potential and are to be retained pending future sale for development or for use by CCC.
- Surplus (S) - Not required; sell now / when vacant.

#### 4. Dissemination of Findings

The initial recommendation for each property was reviewed by the Corporate Asset Management Planning & Estates Group (attended by the Services Managers) and then endorsed by the Strategic Property & Procurement Group (attended by Senior Officers from across CCC). The final recommendations were then shared with Members, Partners and external organisations e.g. Primary Care Trusts.

### The Outcome

- All properties were reviewed and categorised
- The assets requiring further investigation i.e. Better Utilisation assets were identified
- Mapping the property assets with a Better Utilisation recommendation enabled clusters of the assets to be identified. These were termed 'Hot Property Clusters'.
- BU properties within a Hot Property Cluster were investigated in greater depth against a second set of criteria, and a solution or range of solutions were identified to address the known property service issues.

### The Learning Points

It was crucial that it was a service driven review. The engagement of the service managers ensures that CCC will have the right type of properties, in the right location, in suitable condition and being used effectively and efficiently.

#### For further information please contact:

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