

Case Study

The Project

Sackville House, Cambourne

The Authority

Cambridgeshire County Council

Key Practice Areas

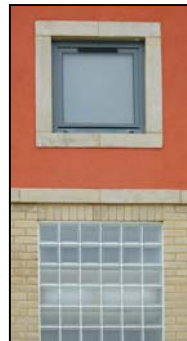
Co-location

Working with partners

Architect: West Hart Partnership

Contractor: Jackson Construction Limited

Date of Construction: Oct 2004-Oct 2005



The Challenge

The section 106 agreement for the new village of Cambourne provided for contributions towards, and sites for, local authority functions such as social services and a library, but not for medical services (the agreement only provided for the developers to sell a plot of land to the health service at a commercial rate). Replacement accommodation was urgently needed for the County's trading standards division. Planning constraints required the allocated site to have a two storey building.

The Key Steps

Agreement was reached with the primary care trust that the County Council would build accommodation large enough for a library, offices for trading standards, and space to lease as a medical centre. Funding for the building was from developer contributions and receipt from the sale of older trading standards premises, with the majority from the capital programme. The option of sale of a long lease of the medical centre in the investment market was retained by designing the building such that it could, if desired, be completely separated into two buildings, each having separate access and services. Economies of scale in the building were secured by sharing reception space, meeting rooms and staff accommodation. A joint management structure, including partner representation, was set up for the procurement and delivery of the building.

The Outcome

Sackville House opened in October 2004 and the popularity of the library immediately exceeded expectations. The library is open most days of the week, including two late evenings and Saturday mornings. Flexibility of the building is achieved through the use of roller shutters that enable the library and medical centre to be opened independently of each other - and of reception. The light and airy modern building is a flagship building for the council and opportunities to show it off are rarely missed. It will be used as a polling station in May 2005. The Police has recently taken a lease to establish a base for community beat officers that will reinforce security in the building and underline the commitment of all parties to partnership and sharing facilities.

The Learning Points

- Complex partnerships such as this require commitment of partners to ensure success. Establishment and maintenance of high-level liaison through face-to-face is essential.
- Partner consultation on the design of the building enables the architects and contractors to deliver a building that meets expectations.
- Use appropriate tools to communicate plans and to record progress. Not all partners are versed in the use of gantt charts and complex progress reports.
- Ensure that the deeds to the land set out clearly what is expected by way of services to the site and ensure that they are provided by the vendor/donor before accepting the site.
- Allow lead consultant to select their own design team as they will have worked with them before and will want to work with them again: this gives incentives for better performance.
- Partnership working is resource-hungry and will challenge the design team and contractors. Ensure that only nominated people are enabled to instruct the designers. A full-time dedicated project manager is needed for a project of this complexity.
- Advantages may be obtained by procurement through a partnering framework arrangement rather than through the conventional tendered route.
- However good a building is, success is always marred by attention drawn to snags.
- Avoid temptation to accept hand-over of the building before it is completely ready. Partial occupation brings with it special problems that are not easily resolved in a building site.
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For further information please contact:

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