

Planning Application for Leicester Forest East Library replacement

Supporting Statement

Leicester Forest Library was opened in 1982 and had previously been a classroom and a dance hall.

It is constructed of encapsulated asbestos based products that make it difficult to adapt or improve, it is classed as a temporary structure and is within the latter half of its anticipated economic life-span.

Due to its construction the building has a difficult working environment and the library service has received many complaints from users about this, especially in the summer.

The building has a gross internal area of 111 square metres whereas the minimum specification for any new build library for a community of this size is 180 square metres. A recent survey of users highlighted the need to replace the library with a building which could offer a modern service

Category	Adequate (%)	Poor (%)	Very poor(%)
Provision of seating and tables	37.3	4.9	0.7
Attractiveness of the library outside	48.3	16.8	2.1
Attractiveness of the library inside	29.9	6.8	0.7
Choice of books	23.8	5.3	
How good are the computing facilities	16.7	2.6	0.9

Despite its size the building is well used by the community it serves and its proximity to nearby shops, including the post office and local school leads to a significant number of users from outside of the 'normal' catchment area using the library.

When the department was considering how and where best to locate a replacement library, it undertook a comprehensive options appraisal. In terms of library location these included looking at building on church owned land, building within the grounds of the local school (found insufficient available for own use), land in private ownership (including restaurant/hotel car parking space and garage) and land held by the parish council.

The results of this appraisal coupled with the results of the parish councils own public consultation exercise into the library replacement location, and an analysis of where library users were living, came to the conclusion that the current site was the preferred solution albeit a much larger building was needed. Ideally it was felt this new facility should include other community

services such as parish council officers and a room for police/other organisations surgeries.

In addition, in line with a desire to provide low cost living accommodation and to use the space more efficiently and reduce the projects overall costs two flats have been included in the proposed development.

In the parish council survey non users of the library were asked what would encourage them to use the library. 36% identified larger/better stock and 20% a new and larger library building. In the survey of youth 58% identified the need for a larger library with more space for books, CDs and computers.