

Richard James Weldon

Barton Road, Cambridge



We were asked to provide communications services to support the submission of an application to redevelop the former county headquarters of St John Ambulance, on Barton Road in Cambridge. Unusually, we were appointed after the application had been submitted to Cambridge City Council. Although we prefer to engage with local residents and elected members at the pre-application stage, we were pleased to complement the consultation work undertaken by the architect, successfully galvanising support for the scheme.

The application site in Barton Road, within the Newnham Croft Conservation Area, was formerly occupied by St John Ambulance. The charity had outgrown the 30-year-old premises and our client sought permission to redevelop the site to provide 26 post-graduate student rooms, plus support facilities, for Darwin College.

An earlier application had been withdrawn in response to consultee feedback relating to the design of the scheme. Although the architect had consulted neighbouring residents and designed a revised scheme that responded to the local context, there was still considerable opposition to the proposals.

Communications Potential were appointed at an unusually late stage to help secure support for, and minimise opposition to, the revised scheme. As the planning application had already been submitted, it was particularly important for us to observe Cambridge City Council's Planning Code of Good Practice and ensure that officers were aware of all communications with members.



Working closely with the architect, we addressed the various points raised by local residents. We were able to highlight the many benefits of the scheme to elected members and demonstrate how the proposals had been revised in response to consultee feedback. The application was considered by committee in February 2016 and members resolved to grant planning permission.

Summary of achievements

- Successfully communicating the key benefits of the redevelopment proposals
- Ensuring that elected members were fully aware of the engagement activities that had taken place
- Demonstrating how the plans had evolved in response to consultee feedback
- Demonstrating how consultee comments and representations made during the application process had been considered and addressed
- Supporting the scheme architect in working to ensure that officers felt able to recommend the scheme for approval
- Securing elected member support for the proposals
- Preparing and delivering a compelling speech at committee

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