**DELEGATED REPORT**

Report considered and agreed by Team Manager, Planning Policy & Development Management:

………*Sarah Iles*……………………… Date: 10 October 2017

Report considered and agreed by Principal Planning Officer, Planning Policy & Development Management:

…*David Vickers*……………………………...Date: 4 October 2-17

Report by: **Head of Planning and Environment**

Application No: **HS/3373/CC**

Proposal: **Partial change of use of non-public areas of Hastings Library (D1) to allow a flexible use being a mix Library service (D1) and County Council Parking Services Offices (B1).**

Site Address: **Hastings Library, Brassey Institute, Claremont, HASTINGS, TN34 1HA**

Applicant: **Assistant Director (Communities), Communities, Economy and Transport**

Key Issues: **1. Need**

**2. Impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area**

Case Officer: **Katie Rayner, Tel no: 01273 481833**

Local Member: **Councillor Godfrey Daniel**

**RESOLUTION OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT:**

**Under the powers delegated to me by the Governance Committee on 30 July 2003, I resolve to approve the proposal subject to the conditions set out in this recommendation.**

**CONSIDERATION OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

1. **The Site and Surroundings**

1.1 Hastings Central Library is a Grade II Listed four storey building within the Town Centre Conservation Area on the western side of Claremont, a short distance from the seafront. Originally built for Thomas Brassey (1878-1881) as a multi-purpose building, it was presented to the town in 1888 to house a library, museum and School of Arts and Science. It has been a public lending library since 1914 and is constructed in a Gothic revival style with Italianate influences, including a balcony at the second floor and a two-storey bay fronted window. The main access to the building is from Claremont through an arched porch located at the ground floor of the stair tower to the left and side of the principal façade. The tower has a series of windows corresponding with the various landings and is crowned by a steeply-pitched hipped roof with a flat top.

1.2 Claremont forms the western side of the “Trinity Triangle” of roads with Trinity Street and Robertson Street. The surrounding buildings are predominately three to four storeys in height, although some have five or six storeys. The Priory Meadow Shopping Centre is located a short distance to the east and Hastings Railway Station some 400 metres to the north. The surrounding roads are characterised by a typical town centre mix of shops, cafes and other related uses at ground floor level, with residential above.

1. **The Proposal**

2.1 Planning permission is sought to change the use of the lower ground floor and part of the upper third floor of the Hastings Library building from Class D1 (library - non-residential use) to a mixed use of Class D1 (library - non-residential use) and Class B1 (office – business use). The proposed change is considered necessary to support the co-location of County Council services to make efficient use of available office space within existing assets.

2.2 Under the approved refurbishment scheme for the Brassey building, within which the Library is situated, the lower ground floor and the western section of the third floor have been developed as non-public staff spaces, including welfare and office facilities. Following completion of the refurbishment programme it is anticipated that these non-public spaces will be underutilised and therefore permission is sought for the part change of use to allow for the co-location of other Services and in particular the East Sussex County Council Parking Service. The Parking Service team comprise of 15 civil enforcement officers and 6 office based staff. As a result of the proposal the primary function of the building as a public lending library (Class D1) will remain unchanged. The main access to the building will also remain unchanged from Claremont.

1. **Site History**

3.1 In 2016, listed building consent (Ref: HS/3301/CCLB) and planning permission (Ref: HS/3302/CC) were granted to allow for the refurbishment of the Grade II Listed Brassey building, to facilitate its continued use as a public lending library. The aim of the on-going refurbishment is to remove the unsympathetic alterations that have, over the years, been cumulatively detrimental to the character and appearance of the building. The programme of works are also considered necessary to further optimise the building as a public lending library incorporating the relocation of the Children’s Library, currently in Robertson Passage, to the main public library.

3.2 As part of this scheme, the existing layout of the Library is being reconfigured to allow the public areas of the library to occupy the main ground, first and second floor spaces of the building, which are easily accessible to the public. In turn, dedicated staff welfare and office spaces have been created on the lower ground and third floor, which are intended to be utilised as part of this proposal.

3.3 There are no other consents of relevance to this application.

1. **Consultations and Representations**

4.1 Hastings Borough Council: No observations submitted.

4.2 Highway Authority: Do not wish to restrict the grant of consent, however, it is noted that there will be an increase in staffing levels but this change of use will not exacerbate any existing parking pressures in the area when taking into account the existing parking restrictions, proximity to the Town Centre and the variety of travel choices available within walking distance.

4.3 County Archaeologist: Wish to make no further recommendations and consider that any significant below ground archaeological remains are unlikely to be affected by this proposal.

4.4 Local representations: None received.

1. **The Development Plan and other policies of relevance to this decision are:**

5.1 Hastings Planning Strategy, 2011-2028 (adopted February 2014): Policies EN1 (Built and Historic Environment), EN3 (Town, District and Local Centres) and FA2 (Strategic Policy for Central Area).

5.2 Hastings Development Management Plan (adopted September 2015): Policies DM3 (General Amenity) and HC3 (Community Facilities).

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework, 2012:

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not change the status of the Development Plan as a staring point for decision making but does constitute guidance as a material consideration in determining planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Part 8 (Promoting Healthy Communities) is of relevance to this proposal, with particular reference to paragraph 70, which requires Authorities to plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and ensure that established facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable.

1. **Considerations**

**Need**

6.1 Policy EN3 of the Hastings Planning Strategy seeks to encourage diverse town centre uses and Policy FA2(i) of the same Plan, identifies a strategy for the Central Area (within which the Library sits), which encourages the provision of mixed use developments. The County Council are seeking to rationalise how its properties are currently being used in order to modernise and improve its services for residents and enable the Council to make better use of its assets. Following the completion of the refurbishment works to Hastings Library, the proposal seeks to enable the flexible use of the existing non-public (staff) spaces of the Library to accommodate mixed use office space. These would be available for use by the Library staff and other County Council services and in particular the Parking Service.

6.2 Over the last 10 years it has been recorded that library usage is changing, with a significant reduction in visits and book issues. As such, the Library service provided at Hastings is able to operate within a smaller footprint of the Brassey building. This allows the lower ground floor and the western section of the third floor to be dedicated as non-public areas for the welfare facilities and office space of the staff. The Library currently employs 8 full time members of staff, and the non-public space available far exceeds that required. It is therefore intended that these spaces will be co-occupied by the Parking Service who are currently located in rented accommodation elsewhere in the town.

6.3 Subsequently, the relocation of this Service to the Library will utilise the otherwise redundant office space and release the existing Parking Service accommodation for other employment uses. Furthermore, the Library is located in the town centre of Hastings and has been an accessible location for local community for many years. Therefore, the co-location of services in this location is considered to be of benefit to the local residents who will be able to make combined trips to use both the Library and access some parking services, whilst also using local shops, services and facilities, in the wider area.

6.4 As such, the proposal accords, in principle, with Policies EN3 and FA2 of the Hastings Planning Strategy and the provisions of Paragraph 70 of Part 8 of the NPPF.

**Impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area**

6.5 Policy HC3 of the Hastings Development Management Plan supports development proposals for community facilities provided that they are acceptable in terms of location, design, access and impact on the locality. In addition, planning applications involving the loss of a community facility will only be granted permission where it can be demonstrated that the existing community use is no longer required. Similarly, Policy DM3 of the same plan, seeks to achieve a good living standard for future users of developments and its neighbours by demonstrating that amenity has been considered and appropriate solutions have been incorporated to protect amenity.

6.6 As previously mentioned the Brassey building, in which the library is situated, is Grade II Listed and located within the Town Centre Conservation Area. Policy EN1 of the Hastings Planning Strategy 2011-2028 sets out a presumption in favour of the conservation of heritage assets and their settings and expects particular care to be given to protecting the significance and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas.

6.7 It is anticipated that the Parking Service will utilise the available office space on the upper third floor as a permanent base for 6 members of staff during standard office hours and the parking enforcement team will utilise the lower ground floor as a base during their shift work, although their likely use is expected to be limited owing to the staggered shift patterns. Whilst the hours of operation are likely to vary, the majority of staff based at the Library are expected to be operating during normal office hours causing minimal disruption to the surrounding businesses and residential properties.

6.8 There are currently no dedicated parking facilities at the Library and on-street parking in the area is limited. The Parking Service currently uses 3 vehicles, although this is likely to drop to 2, which are predominately kept in rented car parking spaces within a Hastings Borough Council operated car park. A suitable alternative car park closer to the town centre has been identified to park the vehicles when not in use and talks are currently on-going with Hastings Borough Council to secure this. As such it is not considered that the relocation of the Parking Service to the Library will exacerbate the existing parking pressures within the vicinity of the Library. The proposal will also allow the Parking Service employees to continue to be based at an office that is local to the area they cover, minimising the need for unnecessary travel and existing staff travel arrangements will be maintained. Moreover, the Library is located within a town centre location which is an accessible location by sustainable modes of travel.

6.9 Furthermore, the applicant has stipulated that the proposal will not result in the loss of the D1 use (non-residential) as this will remain alongside the proposed B1 office use. Accordingly, the proposal does not seek to change the use of the identified public Library areas of the building and no external or intrusive internal changes are required as a result of the proposed change of use. The proposals are therefore not considered to result in the loss of a community facility or have any adverse impact on the character or historic interest of the Listed Building or on the wider Conservation Area.

6.10 Overall, the proposal seeks to make efficient use of available office space within an existing County Council building. The proposal will occupy part of the non-public (staff) spaces of Hastings Library, which is an established community facility and given the town centre location and type of operations undertaken is not considered to have an adverse impact on the amenity or highway conditions of the locality. The proposal will also not result in the loss of a community facility or have an adverse impact on the character or historic interest of the Listed Building or the wider Conservation Area. As such, the proposal accords with Policies HC3 and DM3 of the Hastings Development Management Plan and Policy EN1 of the Hastings Planning Strategy.

1. **Conclusion and reasons for approval**
   1. In accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
   2. The proposal is for a change of use at Hastings Library to accommodate a mixed use (D1 non-residential and B1 office use) to facilitate the re-location of the East Sussex County Council Parking Service. The County Council is seeking to make more efficient use of its assets and this has resulted in the need for partial change of use at Hastings Library. It is not considered that the proposal will have an adverse impact on the amenity or highway conditions of the locality, nor result in the loss of the community facility or have an adverse impact on the character or historic interest of the Listed Building or wider Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore in compliance with Policies EN1, EN3 and FA2 of the Hastings Planning Strategy 2014 and Policies DM3 and HC3 of the Hastings Development Management Plan 2015.
   3. In determining this planning application, the County Council has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner. The Council has also sought views from consultees and neighbours and has considered responses in preparing the recommendation. This approach has been taken positively and proactively in accordance with the requirement in the NPPF, and as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
   4. There are no other material considerations and the decision should be taken in accordance with the development plan.
2. **Recommendation**
   1. To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed in the Schedule of Approved Plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Schedule of Approved Plans

Previous L Ground & Ground Floor Plans, Approved Third Floor Plan , Existing Third Floor Plan, Previous First & Second Floor Plans, Approved L Ground & Ground Floor Plans, Proposed L Ground & Ground Floor Plans, Proposed Third Floor Plan, Approved First & Second Floor Plans, Proposed First & Second Floor Plans, Site Location and Block Plan

EDWARD SHEATH

Head of Planning and Environment

10 October 2017

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Planning Application File HS/3373/CC

The Development Plan

National Planning Policy Framework