



ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 NOVEMBER 2023

UPDATE ON ARCHIVES, COLLECTIONS AND LEARNING CENTRE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update and seek the views of the Committee on the work undertaken to develop an Archives, Collections and Learning (ACL) Centre.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. This project supports a number of outcomes within the County Council's Strategic Plan 2018–2022. In particular, 'Great Communities', by helping ensure "cultural and historical heritage and the natural environment are enjoyed and conserved. 'Clean and Green', by reducing energy consumption, increasing the use of renewable energy, and reducing carbon emissions. Supports "Improving Opportunities" by enabling the Council to continue to provide high quality and targeted cultural and historic resources to schools and young people which will be facilitated through the Centre.
3. The project supports the Council's Strategic Property Energy Strategy 2020-2030 and is designed to help achieve the climate emergency declaration to become a net zero Council by 2030.
4. The project supports the Adults and Communities Directorate's ambition to "save and make accessible the cultural and historic heritage of the county", which is also a key commitment in the Adults and Communities Strategy "Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity 2020–2024".
5. The statutory basis of the Archive Service rests on the Local Government Act 1972 s224-229. Section 224 instructs principal authorities (which includes the County Council) to make 'proper arrangements' for the safekeeping of their records and records in their custody.
6. A statutory Code of Practice issued under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 states that archives of public authorities should only be transferred to institutions with 'adequate storage and public access facilities'.
7. On 12 June 2018, the Cabinet agreed to develop proposals for an ACL Hub (now referred to as the ACL Centre).

8. The Committee received a report on this matter on 11 March 2019 and requested further updates as the business case developed.

Background

9. The ACL Centre brings together the County Council's Museum collections, Creative Learning Service (CLS) resources and the archive collections of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland (ROLLR) in one building, with conservation and technical facilities, public access spaces including the ROLLR search rooms, and flexible space to enable a wide variety of public activities. The Museum Service and the ROLLR are Accredited services, recognised by Arts Council England and The National Archives (TNA) respectively. Alongside its core function, the CLS delivers the learning offer for museum collections and ROLLR which is a requirement of Accreditation for both services.
10. The ACL Centre proposal would also accommodate Registration Service documents which have similar storage and security requirements and are covered by a statutory duty. The General Registration Office has highlighted that the current storage solution for these documents is not compliant.
11. The Cabinet's decision to develop proposals for an ACL Hub in 2018, recognised a single site facility as being the most efficient way to address the multiple challenges faced in terms of collection care, storage and public access to these unique cultural assets, and the lack of suitability of current buildings and capacity for growth. This was informed by an options appraisal and outline business case, which explored a range of options, with this project being the preferred approach.
12. This work was paused in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, following an internal review, the proposals were revived, and work began to develop a costed design solution. This included:
 - Accurate spatial analysis, planning and measured surveys for archive records and museum collections;
 - Commissioning of surveys to inform the design;
 - Review and agree the sustainability requirements of the project;
 - Stakeholder engagement, including the Local Planning Authority;
 - Development of the specialist racking design;
 - Develop the overall design including engagement with architects, structural, civil, mechanical, and electrical engineers;
13. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 1 design estimates the refurbishment of the Eastern Annex and new build external strong room to deliver the ACL Centre to have an upper cost estimate of £38m, assuming a construction start date of September 2025.
14. The plan, attached as Appendix A, to this report visualises the proposed design which shows the refurbished Eastern Annex and new-build archive strong rooms (colours are illustrative at this stage and yet to be determined). Figure 1 is the proposed main entrance; Figure 2 is an aerial view; Figures 3 and 4 show the ground floor and first floor design layouts showing spatial allocations and adjacencies; and Figures 5 and 6 show the double-decker mobile racking which will be used in the Archive Strongroom.

15. The design proposal demonstrates the ability to consolidate and reduce the current space allocated to the elements that would be accommodated within the ACL Centre from 12,500 sqm to 10,529 sqm and reducing from seven sites to one. The proposal also addresses the TNA requirement for an additional 25 years of expansion for the Record Office strong room and will accommodate the Registration Office requirement. There is no expansion allocation for museum collections.
16. There is no expansion allocation for museum collections. Since 2018, the Museum Service has had an active programme of rationalisation and disposal, resulting in significant reductions in the collections held, including large quantities of coal-mining and other objects; bulk finds from the archaeological archive and the Reid and Sigrist aircraft. This has reduced the museum storage requirement by an additional 1,200 sqm.
17. There is potential for income generation in the new proposed building, which is not currently possible due to a lack of appropriate facilities. This may include formal and informal learning activity, shared spaces outside of core hours, workshops, tours, and summer holidays activities.
18. Given the 25 years growth allocation for archival storage there is potential to temporarily lease this space at a commercial rate on a fixed term basis. Early conversations have taken place with an interested party regarding this.

Accreditation

19. The ongoing challenge for the care, management, and access of collections within current buildings will jeopardise the County Council's ability to retain Accredited status for its Archive and Museum services, as secure and fit for purpose buildings are a core requirement of both schemes.
20. The Record Office strong rooms have exceeded capacity and the temporary overflow storage at the Eastern Annexe fails to meet required standards for archive collections and has also now reached capacity.
21. The Record Office must submit its accreditation return in November 2023 and requires clear statements on how it will address its lack of storage space and how it will ensure buildings meet required standards. The lack of storage space was flagged as an area of concern in the last return (2017) and the service is expected to be able to respond on progress.
22. The Museum Service expects to be informed of the timetable for its accreditation return this year and will need to provide similar information. At the current time, the service regards the physical state of some of its storage facilities and their associated environments to be below the required standards for accredited museum collections.
23. It is worth noting that the service restructure in 2020 was based on the number of storage sites reducing from seven to one. However, as this has not progressed a now reduced staff team is required to service multiple sites spread across the County. Essential collections management and care, security and environment checks are therefore challenging and the ability to respond to access requests has been either reduced or is no longer possible under current arrangements.

24. If the ACL Centre does not progress, the challenges over the condition of collections facilities and the urgent requirement for future storage space for the Record Office collection will remain.
25. The ROLLR and the Museum Service need to meet accreditation standards for the care and access of collections. TNA will assess the ROLLR compliance as part of the accreditation review. They have previously flagged serious concerns over the lack of storage space and there is therefore a risk it could conclude the ROLLR no longer meets this standard.

Partnership arrangements

26. In 1997 legal partnerships were established for the management and operation of the ROLLR, involving Leicester City Council and Rutland Council. The County Council operates the service on behalf of the partnership and costs are shared on a proportionate basis. TNA considers the partnership approach to be a best practice model.
27. The County Council makes a 55% (£362,576) contribution to the overall revenue cost of the service, Leicester City Council makes a 35% contribution, and Rutland Council makes a 10% contribution. These contributions are based on proportionate population and related archival holdings. Contributions increase or decrease in line with actual costs.
28. In September 2019, a workshop with the ROLLR partners and facilitated by TNA, concluded that the ROLLR partnership was effective in supporting each partner to deliver its statutory duties and acknowledged all partners were committed to the partnership. As a result, it was agreed that the ROLLR storage and public access provision would be an integral part of the development on the County Hall site.
29. Engagement with Leicester City Council and Rutland Council, as the partners in the Record Office, continues to understand their commitment to the project and establish their proportionate capital contribution towards the Record Office elements of the ACL Centre.
30. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to care for and make accessible the public record. The existing partnership arrangements addresses this responsibility for the three authorities. If these arrangements ceased, each authority would need to individually make new arrangements to meet its statutory responsibilities and the cost of replicating the current provision individually is likely to exceed current contributions.

Environmental Implications

31. The new project will be designed and built to be very energy efficient and contribute to the County Council's Net Zero Carbon commitment. The crucial and most important element of the building will be the new strong room which will be designed with thermal mass principles to ensure any temperature fluctuations are minimised. A new building management system will automatically control dedicated air handling equipment to ensure the required temperature and humidity. Reducing temperature fluctuations will minimise the energy used to heat the building thus reducing its carbon impact.

32. It is intended that electricity will be used for heating and hot water when the Eastern Annexe is refurbished. Approximately half of the Eastern Annexe's roof will be fitted with photovoltaic panels to help generate a targeted 5% of renewable energy.
33. It is intended that the new ACL Centre will have an energy performance certificate rating of 'B'. This is compared to the current Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2022-26 Asset Challenge minimum requirement of 'D' or better for any asset currently held or occupied. The Asset Challenge is an evidence based process within the CAMP to determine the retention, re-use, or disposal of a property asset. The existing liquefied petroleum gas tank will be removed, and underfloor heating disconnected. The reduction in Carbon emissions will be calculated at RIBA Stage 4, a later design stage.
34. A Passivhaus design approach (which is a rigorous energy efficient design standard to maintain an almost constant building temperature) will be adopted utilising heat recovery and natural light into the building, with additional smart lighting controls in areas where there is no natural light. LED lighting will be provided with photocells and a dimmable function where appropriate.
35. Thermal mass heat retention has also been proposed to prevent significant fluctuations in temperature in conjunction with a new Building Management System to maintain automatic control. Where required dedicated air handling units will be installed to control temperature and humidity.
36. A full environmental impact assessment will be part of the further development of the project.

Risk Assessment

37. As highlighted above in paragraphs 19-25 of this report failure to resolve the current storage situation is likely to jeopardise the accreditation status of the Archive and Museum services.
38. In the event a satisfactory solution cannot be achieved it is possible that the TNA may decide to remove the ROLLR's status as an accredited place of deposit. The impact of this decision would be that the County Council (and the ROLLR partners) would be required to remove the public record from the Record Office in Wigston to a location which is compliant. The costs of this would need to be provided by each authority.
39. The reputational impact of loss of accreditation would be significant. In addition, the Archive and Museum Service would be excluded from access to certain funding streams, including Arts Council England National Portfolio Funding. The County Council is currently a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in receipt of an NPO contribution of £780,000 for its museum and library service (April 2023 and March 2026).
40. Comprehensive building, site, floor slab and foundation surveys have been completed and included as part of the value engineering exercise. These would normally be undertaken at a later RIBA stage but have helped reduce the level of unquantified risks at this early stage of development.

41. Should any of the partners not wish to contribute to the delivery of a single ACL Centre it would be necessary for the collections and staff to be disaggregated in line with the partnership agreement. This would be carried out in a similar way to the disaggregation of assets and services following the re-organisation of local government in Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland in 1997, namely, by proportion of service costs/budget and detailed analysis of collections and their relevance.
42. Some aspects of this work would be relatively straightforward (local government records etc). However, some would be complex, for example, NHS records where a professional view would have to be taken about how to divide these.
43. The cost of disaggregation is not covered by the partnership agreement and therefore funding and associated resource to deliver this work would need to be identified and financed by each authority.

Consultation

44. Record Office partners are currently being consulted on the proposal.
45. A full consultation and engagement plan will be developed if a decision to progress the scheme is reached.

Resource Implications

46. There is no budget in the latest approved Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2027 for the proposed ACL Centre. The project has been identified as a scheme potentially requiring funding, as a Future Development of the Capital Programme.
47. The RIBA Stage 1 design estimates the cost for the refurbishment of the Eastern Annex and new build external strongroom to deliver the ACL Centre to have an upper cost estimate of £38m. This cost also includes:
 - the specialist archive and museums' collections racking requirements and a measured survey of collections undertaken as part of design work has informed a comprehensive analysis of need.
 - the removal and transport of assets and temporary accommodation during the build period.
 - reflects increases in inflation and are based on industry forecasts.
48. Costs of £0.3m have been incurred to date, primarily relating to consultants' preliminary design work, and have been funded from Council's capital funding reserve.
49. The building running costs will change as a result of moving from seven units to one new unit, including the rateable value, insurance costs and utilities. These are and will continue to be investigated as the design develops. Temporary storage during construction period assumed to be within County Council or partner buildings to minimise costs where possible.
50. The estimate of the investment required for this scheme will continue to develop before any final decision on the scheme can be made. Further costs will need to be

incurred to develop the designs (explain what the next stage of work takes us up to e.g. is it planning permission).

Savings if a new scheme is developed

51. The creation of a new ACL centre would enable six sites, currently costing in the region of £309,000 per annum to run, to be decommissioned, leases terminated, or buildings sold. Whilst this project will never be justified on a spend to save basis it is important to make the most of the opportunities to rationalise buildings.
52. Additionally, as two of these form part of the Investing in Leicestershire Programme they can be leased out and a further £17,000 per annum can be generated as income.
53. If the sites continue to be used there is a maintenance and repair cost that will need to be dealt with within the next five years. The amount will depend upon the future use of the sites, for example the office accommodation in the Eastern Annexe is unlikely to be required irrespective of this project's outcome.
54. The current Record Office in Wigston and Sherrier Centre in Lutterworth have a current asset value of £800,000. It is anticipated that the two buildings will be sold as part of this project and deliver a capital receipt.
55. There will be dilapidation costs once leased properties are vacated. These costs have not yet been evaluated. Whilst six out of the seven properties are County Council owned, there will still need to be an element of cost allocated to the dilapidations.

Legal Issues

56. Paragraphs 26-30 outline the existing partnership arrangements for the ROLLR. If partners confirm their ongoing commitment to the ROLLR partnership and their intention to make proportionate capital contribution to the elements of the ACL Centre which directly benefit them, it is expected that additional legal agreements will need to be put in place to reflect each authority's interests during the development and delivery of the new ACL Centre.
57. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

58. The additional investment required to develop the project is being put forward for consideration as part of the County Council's capital programme and a report will be taken to the Cabinet as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process for a decision on whether to progress the scheme through the RIBA design processes.

Conclusions

59. The ACL Centre would represent a major capital commitment for the County Council at a time of financial challenge. However, it offers a long-term solution to a significant challenge for the authority, and its partners in the Record Office, in terms of its

commitment to care for and make accessible the cultural and historic heritage of the County.

Recommendation

60. The Committee is asked to comment on the proposal to help inform and shape its development.

Background papers

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>

Strategic Property Energy Strategy 2020-30

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s160429/Appendix%20-%20Strategic%20Property%20Energy%20Strategy%202020-2030.pdf>

Delivering Wellbeing and opportunity in Leicestershire – Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020-2024

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/resource/files/field/pdf/2020/9/30/Vision-and-Strategy-for-Adults-and-Communities-Department-2020-2024.pdf>

Local Government Act 1972 s224-229 -

<https://cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/local-government-act1972.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet: 12 June 2018 – Archives, Heritage and Learning Collections Hub

[http://cexmodgov01/documents/s138163/6_June_Heritage%20Mus%20and%20Records%20Collections%20Hub%20final.pdf?\\$LO\\$=1](http://cexmodgov01/documents/s138163/6_June_Heritage%20Mus%20and%20Records%20Collections%20Hub%20final.pdf?LO=1)

Report to Adults and Communities, Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 11 March 2019 - Collections and Learning Hub and Museum Service Collections

[http://cexmodgov01/documents/s144829/2_March_Collections%20Hub.pdf?\\$LO\\$=1](http://cexmodgov01/documents/s144829/2_March_Collections%20Hub.pdf?LO=1)

Corporate Asset Management Plan 2022-26

[https://politics.leics.gov.uk/\(S\(bceou120k23rqv55d2qvfa3d\)\)/documents/s171212/Appendix%20-%20CAMP%202022-26.pdf](https://politics.leics.gov.uk/(S(bceou120k23rqv55d2qvfa3d))/documents/s171212/Appendix%20-%20CAMP%202022-26.pdf)

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

61. None.

Equality Implications

62. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report, as the proposal will improve the access arrangement for archive, museum and learning collections. Should a decision be taken to proceed the Equality Improvement Assessment will be reviewed and updated.

Human Rights Implications

63. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Appendix

Proposed design of ACL Centre

Officer(s) to Contact

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