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**Our ref:** PB105871  
**Your ref:** 11/0460/FUL

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Dear John

**CHANGE OF USE OF PROPERTY FROM OFFICES (USE CLASS B1(A)) TO D1 FLOORSPACE TO PROVIDE A LIBRARY, CAFÉ/COMMON ROOM AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES TO PROVIDE ANCILLARY STUDENT SUPPORT FACILITIES TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ABBEY COLLEGE NORMAN HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE PLACE, CAMBRIDGE**

Further to our recent telephone conversation I have now read through the comments raised recently. It is clear that there are some local concerns about the impact of the proposed use of Norman Houses on local highway safety conditions. In light of the comments raised I thought it maybe helpful if I clarify the nature of the proposed use and outline how the proposed floorspace will fit with Abbey College's existing facilities.

- At present Abbey College has the benefit of teaching facilities at 17 Station Road (its main building) 12 & 13 Regent Street, 3 Cambridge Place (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor only) and 3 Glisson Road, (ground and first floor only).
- The facilities at 3 Cambridge Place and 3 Glisson Road provide the College's science lab, computer teaching area and some more limited English teaching space. Staff facilities are provided within the buildings as well as a modest student common room and kitchen area.
- Given the proposed use of these buildings as the main science lab, the classrooms do not have a full teaching timetable and are not used continuously throughout the day
- Unlike the College's other teaching areas these building do not however benefit from traditional classrooms where students can study between lessons (given the laboratory nature of the buildings they are locked between classes)
- As a result students do not have adequate ancillary areas where they can study and meet with their fellow students or teachers. As result there may be instances where students gather outside of the respective buildings before and after classes, something which is noted in the comments you have received.
- This development will provide relatively modest ancillary facilities for the College. It will provide a Library/study area, a café area and associated office space (for staff).

- It will have a capacity of some 40 students and its use will be monitored and controlled by staff.
- It will provide facilities for the existing students who are already in the area. It is unlikely, given its size and location, relative to the College's other teaching facilities, that the proposed use will become a destination in its own right, attracting students from the College's other buildings that are more remote to this site.
- The applicant's considered opinion is therefore that this development will not materially increase pedestrian and cycle trips to the area but will simply provide much needed ancillary floorspace for those students who are already in the area and who, given the lack of facilities, are seemingly at times hanging around Cambridge Place between classes. The provision of this ancillary floorspace detailed within this application is therefore seen as part of the solution to the clustering of people around the junction of Hills Road and Cambridge Place, rather than being part of the problem

I note the concerns raised about the impact of the development on highway safety. The current situation is that Cambridge Place is used by the residential and commercial buildings located along the street, those commercial buildings fronting Hills Road, and Abbey College's educational floorspace provided in No 3 Glisson Road and No 3 Cambridge Place.

What this application is seeking to do is to replace the commercial office floorspace with ancillary facilities for the adjacent college buildings. The existing use of the application site as an office generates a certain quantum of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle movements. These will be taken off the local road network by this proposal. The proposed use will not draw a significant number of additional people to the area but will cater for those already in the area in a more appropriate fashion that reduces the likelihood of students hanging around within the highway. I do not consider therefore that this development will have an adverse impact on highway safety.

The new trips (by all modes) that this proposed use will in itself generate will not be materially greater than those trips generated by the existing commercial use of the property. The vehicular generation will in fact be much reduced over and above what might be reasonably expected to be generated by an office with three car parking spaces provided. The local cycle parking provision for the Abbey College is also set to be substantially improved which will significantly reduce the likelihood of cycles being left in the highway .

In this regard I note the comments of the County Council's Highways Officer, set out within the email from Mr Dyer. The applicant's views set out above are very much supported by the advice offered by Mr Dyer. To summarise, Mr Dyer concludes that:

- Cambridge Place is not an unsuitable environment for pedestrians
- Vehicle numbers are low and these can mix safely with pedestrians
- The access onto Hills Road is constrained but this acts to reduce vehicle speeds
- While the development may increase pedestrian movements it will not increase them to a degree where danger results
- The vehicle movements associated with the proposed development will not be materially different to the existing use.

In summary therefore it is the applicant's opinion that this proposed change of use of an office will not have a material impact on trips to or from the site and is likely to improve local highway conditions, given facilities will be provided for the existing students present in the area who currently hang around the junction with Hills Road. The Case Officer's recommendation of approval is therefore supported.

Yours sincerely

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Associate