



Using political backing underpinned by public support, Planning Potential has secured consent for 33 much-needed new homes and a modern ALDI food store on former University premises in Cottingham that meets the conservation requirements of the local area.

Cottingham is located north-west of Kingston upon Hull and has a strong identity, with roots back to Anglo Saxon times. Understanding the local landscape was therefore key to implementing the most effective and sensitive community relations plan, helping Quora to achieve planning consent for this mixed-use scheme.

### A tough backdrop

Cottingham Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan was well underway and question marks continued to surround a supermarket application that was granted consent years ago at Station Road, yet the site still remains untouched. The site's location within a Conservation Area, nearby listed buildings and protected trees also posed a number of challenges. A tricky brief, but that's how we like it.

Focusing on a combination of political insight, clear strategic communications and practical, results-driven delivery, we shored up local support and built trusting relationships with authorities, site neighbours and community groups – a significant accomplishment given the challenging environment.

### From design to reality – information gathering

A public consultation event was coordinated, allowing residents to comment on the proposals. The changes that were made to the planning application reflected the feedback, including the decision to retain Needler Hall, which has been used as student halls of residence since the 1970s.

Building confidence was paramount and we implemented a community relations plan that informed all interested parties about the scheme and, through resident feedback, helped to shape it. Residents, who knew the area better than anyone, told us exactly what was needed locally – namely, properties for young families planning for the future and older people looking to downsize. This feedback was invaluable and fed directly into the final proposals.

We also needed a robust evidence base to support our key messages and prepared a comprehensive retail impact assessment to demonstrate the suitability of the proposal.

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### Maintaining the momentum

The University buildings were surplus to requirements and the site had been allocated for residential use in the draft local plan. The promotion of the land for residential use was in line with policy and allowed us to achieve a high standard of design and layout for residential development – this was reflected in the fantastic vocal backing the project received, demonstrating how an effective consultation programme can deliver a project that everyone will enjoy, visually and practically.

Having public support is one thing but being able to use it as means to influence key political figures is quite another. Cottingham Parish Council recommended the application for approval, as did the ward councillors, who commented on the clear local support from constituents. On decision day, the planning committee unanimously approved the scheme.

113 supportive letters were recorded on the planning file, including a number from the local traders who refreshingly saw the proposals as an opportunity for more footfall. This show of support from market traders was a clear indication that housing, supplemented by an ALDI food store, was wanted and also demonstrated that early, proactive engagement with local businesses can help to create a powerful voice that resonates with decision makers.

### Summary of achievements

- Coordinated an extensive and expansive public consultation programme
- Produced a comprehensive planning statement and retail impact assessment
- Secured positive responses and endorsements from the business community
- Leveraged local support and motivated the often silent majority
- Positioned Quora as a business that listens to the public's views and acts on them
- Obtained unanimous approval at committee