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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
23 OCT 2006
TO E

25 Hale Close
Ipswich
IP2 9QP

21st October 2006

Ipswich Planning Services
Ipswich Borough Council
Grafton House
15-17 Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2DE

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to comment on planning application 06/00853/FUL for the change of use of a ground floor office area in Crown House, Crown Street

In my opinion, the notice at the property was somewhat misleading as it did not refer to the biometric scanning facility that can be seen on the proposed floor layout for the development, nor did it indicate that the office is to be run on behalf of the Identity and Passport Service (an agency of the Home Office), something I only realised when I saw the item on the plan marked "Security Cabinet by UKPS" I would consider both of these to be material facts that affect the planning decision

The above suggests that this office will be the ID card interview and processing centre for Ipswich (My words above are not intended as criticism of your planning department it is evident from the application that the Home Office, along with its private-sector partners, intended to pull the wool over your eyes as well as deceiving those of us who live in Ipswich, and it is too much to expect that you could do all the research necessary to expose this kind of duplicity I think the whole matter shows clearly the contempt that the arrogant Home Office has towards any idea of local democracy and the right to self-determination on the part of the people of Ipswich)

I am against ID cards as a matter of principle, as well as for pragmatic reasons On principle because I value my freedom and liberty and don't want to see them eroded any further On pragmatic grounds because I believe that the cards, and the database that backs them up, will be counter-productive and worsen the problems that they purport to tackle I also have problems with an indirect tax (once they have the scheme up and running the verification charges will probably amount to several hundred pounds a year for each of us) that costs the richest tycoon little more than someone on the minimum wage These reasons alone are enough for me to reject having this office in Ipswich However, your interest is planning, so for the rest of this letter I will address those matters more specifically

Unlike an innocuous customer-orientated business, the ID card office will operate through the threat of large fines (up to £2,500) for non-compliance Many, if not most, of the people attending will be unwilling, and a small, but significant, minority will probably cause all manner of problems for the other occupants of the building The plans suggest that entry to the building is to be shared with the other residents There is nothing in the application to show how Maberley ABI Provider Ltd intends to ensure the security and safety of those using the building There is also no mention of what plans Maberley has, if any, to deal with the casual vandalism that the site will almost certainly attract

Because of the widespread opposition to the government's unpopular ID card scheme, the office will probably be the focal point for demonstrations and it is important that the council, the police, and other relevant agencies, are in a position to assess properly the scale of these

and the disruption they might cause In my opinion, the current application does not allow you to do this effectively

People will have to travel to the centre from all parts of east Suffolk and many of those journeys will be by car The plans do not appear to show any parking for visitors – perhaps visitors are meant to use the lay-by outside

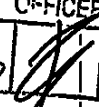
Finally, though I do not want to be too alarmist here and sincerely hope that nothing this terrible happens, if ID cards were as effective against terrorism as the government wants to believe, these high-profile government processing centres might end up being a target for terrorist activity Although access for emergency vehicles is probably no better or worse than anywhere in the town, I would have thought you would want to consult with your emergency-planning colleagues to determine whether the area could be evacuated safely in the event of an incident and the extent of the disruption that would be caused

I hope that this application will be referred to the planning committee to decide and not passed by the officers between meetings As you can see there is more to this than just a technical matter of an inconsequential change to the use and I think it deserves the attention that the committee would give it, guided of course by your recommendations I also think it would be helpful to everyone if you could persuade the agent or the applicant to confirm that this office is being set up on behalf of the Identity and Passport Service

Yours faithfully,



Jonathan Clift

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