

Planning Applications Committee

Section C

11 December 2008

Agenda Number:	B2
Section/Area:	Inner
Ward:	Thorpe Hamlet
Officer:	Sarah Platt
Valid Date:	9th October 2008
Application Number:	08/00980/U
Site Address :	58 Prince Of Wales Road Norwich NR1 1LL
Proposal:	Change of use from offices (B1) to taxi private hire on ground and first floor (Sui Generis) and offices on second floor (B1).
Applicant:	Mr Mark Streeter
Agent:	Mr Mark Streeter

(Please note that this is an amended version of the report prepared for the meeting of the Committee on 13 November 2008 and incorporates the further comments to the consultation.)

THE SITE

The application site is a terraced property adjacent to an access lane to the rear of this and the adjacent properties. The adjacent properties at 56 and 60-62 Prince of Wales Road are two late night activity venues: a private karaoke bar and a late licensed bar respectively. The land to the rear is used for parking for all businesses. There are 2 no. allocated parking spaces for this property. To the rear is the site of 60 St Faiths Lane which has been granted approval for use as an Apart Hotel.

The building is currently empty. The site is within the City Centre Leisure Area and the Late Night Activity Zone and as such Policy AEC1 applies. The site is within the City Centre Conservation Area.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

38 Rose Lane: 08/00610/U – Change of use from B1 Offices to Sui Generis (Taxi Hire Business): Refused 31st July 2008 on ground of adverse affect on residential amenity, increased noise pollution, traffic movements and highway safety due to parking in a bus lane.

THE PROPOSAL

Change of use from offices (B1) to taxi private hire on ground and first floor (Sui Generis) to provide waiting room and toilet facilities for customers and offices on second floor (B1).

The main purpose of this proposal is to provide a taxi office at 58 Prince of Wales Road, to include the provision of a city centre, 24 hour surveillance waiting area for customers to ensure their safety and comfort. The premises will also be a radio base for the allocation of jobs. The taxis will only collect people from this location. An automated ticket waiting system will be used with a member of staff present on site to escort customers to taxis.

CONSULTATIONS

The application has been advertised on site and in the press and neighbours notified by letter.

Nine letters of objection have been received including 2 no. petitions from the Hackney Drivers of Norwich (150 signatures) and Five Star Private Taxi Hire (58 signatures). The objections cite the following reasons for objection:

- 1) Parking
- 2) Increased traffic movements
- 3) Loss of trade to hackney carriage taxis
- 4) Highway safety – located near to a pedestrian crossing
- 5) Use of hackney carriage parking bays
- 6) Loss of trade to private hire taxis

Six letters of support have been received citing the following reasons:

- 1) Increased demand for taxis in the area – this addition will facilitate getting people out of the area quickly and reduce waiting times.
- 2) Customer safety would be increased with the provision of an inside waiting room with marshals.

Norfolk Police Architectural Liaison Officer: raised concern over community safety and increased traffic movements and parking problems.

Environmental Health: raised concerns over customer safety when under the influence of alcohol, increased traffic movements and parking.

Community Safety Manager: raised concerns over community safety with the addition of another taxi firm in the vicinity. It is their objective to remove taxi firm bases from the

Late Night Activity Zone in order to facilitate the quick dispersal of people from the area in an attempt to reduce levels of crime and public disorder.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant National Plan Policies:

PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres

PPG4 – Industrial & Commercial Development of Small Firms

PPG13 – Transport

PPG24 – Planning & Noise

Relevant Regional Plan Policies:

ENV7 – Quality in the Built Environment

Relevant Local Plan Policies:

AEC1 – Major Art & Entertainment Facilities

EP22 – High Standard of Amenity for Residential Occupiers

HBE8 – Development within a Conservation Area

EMP1 – Small scale Business Development

CC9 – City Centre Sub Area 9

Introduction:

The applicant wishes to provide a city centre taxi site where a radio base can be operated from and safe and secure waiting facilities for customers will be provided. It is not intended to use this site as a taxi base; the existing depot on Whiffler Road will be retained for this facility.

Transportation Issues:

Parking: Concern has been raised over the stopping and parking of taxis at this location. There are 2 no. loading bays restricted for the use of hackney carriage taxis between the hours of 21:00 and 04:00 directly outside the premises and there is concern that private taxis will park in these designated hackney carriage bays. This will obstruct the bays for the hackney carriages.

The proposal contains information in the supporting letter dated 9th September 2008 which states that the main taxi base for the company will remain at the Whiffler Road depot for which a new 12 month lease has been signed. This is where taxis will wait whilst on breaks and wait for jobs to be dispatched to them. The base on Prince of Wales Road is to be used solely as a radio base with customer waiting facilities. Taxis will collect only from this base. The 2 no. parking spaces at the rear of the property will be used by the radio operative staff and not for waiting taxis.

Whilst it is appreciated that these premises are not ideally located for the collection of customers in terms of traffic pulling into the roadside, there are 2 no. pedestrian crossings in the locality of the premises which could be used by pedestrians in order to access the lay-bys where the private hire taxis can park without restriction and there is waiting availability on Cathedral Street. The applicant is willing to use a marshalling system to escort people safely to the taxis waiting in the parking bays on the opposite side of the road and to Cathedral Street.

On balance it is considered that it would be difficult to sustain a refusal for this proposal based on the grounds of a lack of waiting/dropping off/parking facility.

Increased traffic movements: Concern has been raised that the addition of another private hire taxi firm will lead to an increase in traffic movements. This firm is already operating within this area and so traffic increases would be to a minimum. Policy CC9 of the Local Plan states that the plan for this area is to “maintain and enhance the lively atmosphere of the area with its leisure and related activities”. The provision of further taxi provision in this area is considered to be a “related use” and as such a small increase in traffic movement would be acceptable.

There are currently 2 other private taxi hire businesses in the locality and on balance it is considered that it would be very difficult to sustain a refusal for this proposal based on the grounds of increased traffic movements.

Highway Safety: Concern has been raised over customer safety when crossing a road which suffers from heavy traffic volumes. The marshalling system would enable those customers considered to be “under the influence” to be escorted safely to a waiting taxi.

Community Safety Issues:

Concern has been expressed by both the Norfolk Police Architectural Liaison Officer and Norwich City Council Community Safety Officer regarding the safety of the community in the Late Night Activity Zone. They considered that the location of this proposal is inappropriate. It is their objective to facilitate the quick dispersal of users of this area by locating some taxi facilities on the periphery of the Late Night Zone. This locational criteria is not supported by any planning policy as such. The main issue to consider in this case is if the proposals would have a direct impact in terms of disorder and antisocial behaviour. There is no evidence to support the claim that the addition of this facility will necessarily lead to an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour. The Police have requested that CCTV cameras should be installed to National Security Inspectorate Criteria. This can be conditioned on an approval should it be granted.

Again, in the absence of any hard evidence that this proposal will result in a decrease in community safety, it would be difficult to sustain a refusal based on community safety grounds.

Loss of Trade Issues:

Concern has been expressed about the loss of trade to hackney carriages and other private hire taxi firms in the area. In a Government published document “The Planning System: General Principles” published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2006 it is stated that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of objectors and that it is not normally considered that the financial loss or other loss of neighbouring properties or businesses is considered to be a material planning consideration.

Conclusion:

A similar application was made at 38 Rose Lane. Planning Committee raised several issues over the provision of toilet facilities for customers and the adequate size of the waiting area. These issues have all been addressed in this application.

PPS6 requires that city centres should be accessible by a choice of means of transport and refers to the need to manage the night time economy. On balance and in the light of relevant planning policy and other material considerations the proposals are considered to be acceptable.

There will be no detrimental impact on the wider conservation area and so the proposal is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with national, regional and saved local policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

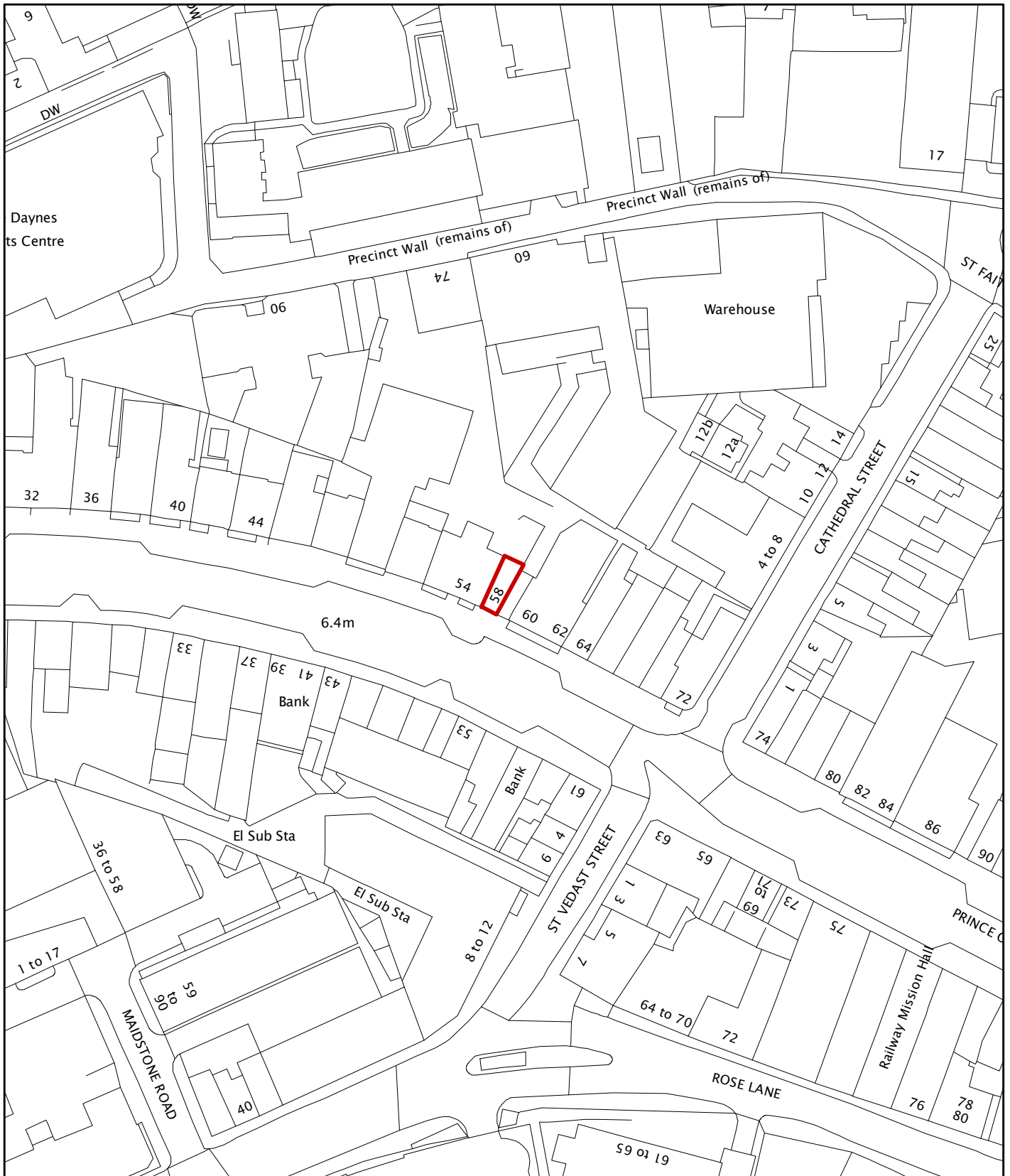
APPROVE PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard time limit
2. Installation of CCTV cameras to National Security Inspectorate Criteria
3. Whenever the premises are open for business all doors shall remain open and public access will not be restricted into the waiting areas for customers of the service.
4. All public facilities will remain accessible at all times whilst the premises are in operation.
5. The two parking spaces at the rear shall only be used by office staff and not by operational taxis.

Reasons for Approval:

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to national policy PPS6, PPG4, PPG13 and PPG24, policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan and saved policies AEC1, EP22, HBE8, EMP1 and CC9 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (Adopted Version November 2004).

The change of use is considered acceptable within the Late Night Activity Zone as a related use to the night time economy. It is not considered that the use would have a detrimental impact on highway or community safety.



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence No. 100019747 2004

Planning Application No - 08/00980/U
 Site Address - 58 Prince of Wales Road
 Scale - 1:1000



NORWICH
 City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
 AND DEVELOPMENT

