

Planning Applications Committee

11th December 2008

Section B

Agenda Number:	B8
Section/Area:	INNER
Ward:	Mancroft
Officer:	Jo Negus
Valid Date:	20th September 2008
Application Number:	08/01013/F
Site Address :	Sussex House Sussex Street Norwich NR3 3DE
Proposal:	Demolition of all existing structures on site except boundary walls and fences. Erection of 20 No. houses and flats on site previously used for offices.
Applicant:	Morley Fund Management Ltd
Agent:	Mr Peter Blois

THE SITE

The site for the proposed redevelopment is located to the north of Sussex Street, bounded by St Martins at Oak Wall Lane to the north, the housing development Ebenezer Place to the west and dwellings to the rear of St Augustine's Street to the east. The site can be viewed from Bakers Road across the open space where remnants of the city wall are located. Between Sussex House and Sussex Street are a row of terraced buildings, which form three storey flats. To the south west of the site and adjacent to the access route is the Spread Eagle public house.

The site is located in the City Centre Conservation Area and the Area of Main Archaeological Interest. There are also Grade II statutory listed buildings on Sussex Street adjacent to the site (including 17, 19, 21, 27 and 29 Sussex Street) and the Spread Eagle public house is a locally listed building. Along with the city wall to the north of the site there is also a wall of historic interest on the north boundary of the site,

running along St Martin's at Oak Wall Lane. There are a number of trees on the site although these are relatively young trees.

PLANNING HISTORY

The existing building was most likely constructed before 1947 as there are no records of permission to construct the building. Permission was granted however to extend the building in 1958 to add a three storey extension to the building. The use of the building at this time was a show factory. The use changed from a factory to offices in 1987, which was its current use until recently when the offices became vacant. There is no relevant recent planning history on this site to this planning application.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal entails the demolition of the building that forms Sussex House and associated outbuildings on the site. The proposal for redevelopment is for residential dwellings, consisting of 11 two bedroom dwellings, 2 two bedroom flats over garages and 7 three bedroom dwellings. The general layout of the dwellings would lead to a communal open space to the north of the site. The dwellings would range between three storey for the 3 bedroom dwellings and two storey for the 2 bedroom dwellings and 2 bedroom flats. A pedestrian link is proposed through the site with a new opening in St Martins at Oak Wall Lane. The entrance for vehicles to the site will be from the south through the current access route. Bin stores are proposed at the entrance of the site and cycle storage for visitors to the south west of the site. One tree is proposed to be removed to the north west of the site.

CONSULTATIONS

The application has been advertised in the press, on site and neighbours were notified. One letter of objection was received, which outlined the concerns of:

- Closure of St Martin at Oak Wall Lane to through traffic would restrict access for properties on this lane to St Augustine's Street only

Environment Agency:

- No objection subject to conditions

English Heritage:

- No objection in principle to demolition of Sussex House, as it has been identified as making a negative contribution to the Conservation Area.
- The scale, massing and form are considered to be acceptable in the context of the surrounding development and the Conservation Area
- The proposals to alter the brick and flint wall that borders the site and St Martin at Oak Wall Lane can be considered by the Local Planning Authority as the wall is not listed or scheduled.

Central Norwich Citizens' Forum: Raised concerns over;

- Inadequate parking for visitors and deliveries to site
- Inadequate maneuvering space for parking spaces
- Entry onto St Martins at Oak Wall Lane from St Augustine's Street would be difficult for the residents on St Martins at Oak Wall Lane

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology:

- No comments further to information received with application. Standard condition to ensure archaeological works completed on site if application approved.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant National Planning Guidance:

Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
Planning Policy Statement 1 – Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1
Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment
Planning Policy Guidance 16 – Archaeology

Relevant East of England Plan Policies:

ENV6 – The Historic Environment
ENV7 – Quality in the Built Environment
ENG1 – Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance

Relevant Local Plan Policies:

NE9 – Comprehensive landscaping scheme and tree planting
HBE3 – Archaeological Interest in the Area of Main Archaeological Interest
HBE8 – Development in Conservation Areas
HBE12 – High quality design
HBE19 – Design for safety and security including minimising crime
EP1 – Contaminated land and former landfill sites
EP18 – High standard of energy efficiency for new development
EP22 – High standard of residential amenity
HOU1 – Provision of new housing to meet needs and monitoring
HOU6 – Contribution to community needs and facilities by housing developers
HOU13 – Proposals for new housing
SR7 – Provision of children's equipped playspace to serve development
TRA5 – Approach to design for vehicle movement and special needs
TRA6 - Parking standards maxima
TRA7 – Cycle parking standards
TRA11 – Contributions for transport improvements in wider area

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents and other policy documents:

Transport Contributions (Draft for Consultation, January 2006)
Open Space and Play Provision SPD (Adopted Version, June 2006)
City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (September 2007)
Northern City Centre Area Action Plan – policy OSN3 (Submission report November 2008)

Introduction

The proposal for this planning application is to demolish the current buildings that form Sussex House and redevelop the site for residential use. The principle of the redevelopment is considered to be acceptable but there are significant concerns over the layout of hard surfacing and some detail aspects of the elevations. Further to this no S106 agreement has been finalised for this application. The following sections deal with each consideration.

Principle of demolition

The building that forms Sussex House is of a modern construction and is identified in the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal as a 'negative building'. When considering any demolition in a Conservation Area the preservation and enhancement of the character and setting of the Conservation Area are key considerations. As this building is identified as a negative building the removal of this building is considered to be acceptable, by the fact that its removal would not be considered to have an adverse impact on the character or setting of the Conservation Area. However the removal of the building would only be acceptable if satisfactory detailed plans were in place to redevelop the site in accordance with saved policy HBE8 of the local plan.

Principle of redevelopment of site for residential

The principle of redevelopment of this site has also been outlined in the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan. Policy OSN3 that relates to Sussex House on Sussex Street identifies that the site should be redeveloped for smaller scale family housing of no more than 3 storeys. The policy also identifies that St Martin at Oak Wall Lane should be closed to vehicles along the length of the site of Sussex House and that a pedestrian route should be created through the site. The development should also overlook the green space adjacent to Bakers Road and the City Wall. The development proposed in this application is considered to largely follow the principles of development for Sussex House outlined in this emerging policy, with two to three bedroom housing of no more than three storeys in height. The pedestrian access through the site is also provided for with vehicle access from Sussex Street.

In terms of the local plan policy HOU13 the proposed scheme is considered acceptable in principle, subject to suitable layout, design and vehicle access, above 40 dwellings per hectare in density, provide adequate private amenity space around dwellings, good accessibility of the site to local shops and employment, no detrimental impact on the character of the area, the provision of a range of types and sizes of dwellings and enabling the regeneration of historic or other buildings in the area. The proposal is considered to generally be in accordance with this policy with the exception of concerns over the layout of vehicle parking and the lack of provision of private amenity space adjacent to unit 6. These matters are discussed below.

The principle for redevelopment as residential is considered to be acceptable it would not result in a detrimental impact on the character or amenity of the surrounding area. The surrounding area is primarily residential with some light industrial units to the west on Oak Street. The development of this site for residential use is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to the following considerations below being met.

Design, scale and form

The design approach was discussed at pre-application stage. A contemporary approach was recommended to provide a contrast to the listed buildings along Sussex Street. Initial plans were not acceptable in relation to the elevation treatment but these were revised to produce the current design which was considered more acceptable. The general layout of the site has remained the same since the first plans although through a series of correspondence and discussions the applicant's agent has attempted to improve the layout. To avoid issues with the quality of the open space through potential parking on the grassed areas it was proposed that the development was rearranged to

provide car access to the rear of dwellings 7 to 13. This was not accepted by the applicants due to the impact on the rear private dwellings of these units. Therefore plans have been put forwards with the retention of the access in the central area.

The general form and massing of the development is considered to be in-keeping with the surrounding development. When viewing the proposed development from the north the residential dwellings step up to the three storey dwellings on the centre of the site.

There are several concerns with regards to the proposed development. The layout of the site follows the principles of overlooking the green space and maximising this space. However the proposed hard surfacing and car parking arrangement lead to concerns that there will be indiscriminate car parking on the route through the site to the car parking area to the south east of the site. Parking for residents is currently at a level of one space per dwelling, which is considered to be acceptable in this location in the city centre. However the proposed car parking scheme functions poorly with difficult access to garages and parking spaces. As such there are severe concerns that parking will occur in spaces not designated, such as surrounding the open space. This would significantly reduce the quality of the open space, with a strong potential for cars to dominate the central area. Concerns were raised over this at an early stage in pre-application discussions but it is considered that the plans have not been amended to sufficiently address these concerns. Although this may be able to be addressed through a suitable landscaping scheme with barriers to prevent parking on the open space it is considered that this must be resolved at the application stage. Raised planting beds on the south perimeter of the open space were suggested to the applicant to address concerns but revised plans have not been received.

Amendments were also requested to the inward facing elevations to increase their window size, as with the north facing windows on units 1 and 20 to maximise the opportunity to overlook the green space. The arrangement of unit 6 was also requested to be amended. At present this unit is separated from its' private amenity space and the archway entrance into the site is too high and results in an awkward visual relationship with the resulting fenestration pattern. The archway is not required to be this high as larger emergency vehicles such as fire engines will be able to access the site from Bakers Road. The provision of amenity space that is separated from unit 6 is also considered to be contrary to saved policy HOU13 as outlined above.

These amendments have not been made and as such the scheme results in an unacceptable arrangement for parking and open space.

Bin store and entrance to the site

Bin storage has been provided on site adjacent to the vehicle entrance onto site. This was recommended to be improved by locating the bins either side of the entrance to create a more visually appealing entrance to the site and to ensure the bins were within 5m of the highway as required in the DC Refuse Practise Note the Council uses for residential development. This has not been taken on board and so the bin store remains as one unit.

Further into the site beyond the bin stores would be a brick wall surrounding the private amenity space of residential unit number 6. Firstly this does not create a highly visually acceptable entrance into the site and secondly the amenity space to unit 6 is

disconnected and potentially less likely to be used. No amendments were however received.

Amenity/neighbours

The scheme has been designed to have the main living spaces overlooking the open space. As such dwellings 1 to 5 and 7 to 20 reduce the impact on neighbour amenity. Further to this window sizes have been kept to a minimum where adjacent to existing dwellings to prevent a further loss of amenity. The proposed dwellings are therefore not considered to have an adverse impact on the residential amenity of existing occupiers.

Energy Statement

As a requirement under policy ENG1 of the East of England Plan 10% of energy required for the development must be sourced from decentralised, renewable or low-carbon sources where possible. A Sustainability Statement was received indicating that passive solar hot water panels would be used to generate 10% of the required energy demand and the location of the solar panels were indicated on the elevation plans. This could be conditioned to ensure that the required level of renewable energy was generated on site.

Trees

One tree is proposed to be removed to the north west of the site. This tree is not considered to be of great enough value to warrant a tree preservation order but replacements are proposed within the site. If the application were being recommended for approval a full landscaping scheme would be required indicating the exact location and species of proposed trees in an Arboricultural Method Statement, with a condition ensuring their maintenance over a five year period. A condition would also have been recommended to ensure compliance with the Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement.

New opening in St Martin at Oak Wall Lane

To enable the pedestrian access proposed across the site a new opening in the brick and flint wall of St Martin at Oak Wall Lane is proposed. Further to a report received on the historic value of the wall the proposed location of the opening is considered to be acceptable, subject to conditions on the works to the wall.

Transport Contributions and Alterations to St Martin at Oak Wall Lane

Through the transport contribution required for this size development under saved policy TRA11 and the Transport Contributions Draft Consultation document a contribution is required through a S106 agreement. This matter of the S106 is discussed further below.

S106

The application triggers a number of items which would need to be secured via a S106 agreement or undertaking as follows:

- A contribution towards children's play space of £29,808
- A transportation contribution of £5,643.00
- Ensuring the public access through site on the designated footpath

- Ensure the maintenance of the communal open spaces

The funds from the transport contribution are to be used towards a Transport Regulation Order to close St Martin at Oak Wall Lane to vehicles, but allow pedestrian and cycle access. The closure of the road will be considered under a separate application as this application only provides a contribution towards the works. The technical feasibility of these alterations and the final decision will be considered under a highways application at a later date. The concerns raised by a neighbour over this issue cannot therefore be resolved under this application.

The above contributions would be triggered on the first occupation the dwellings. As the S106 agreement has not been completed the application should be refused on the basis of a lack of such an agreement.

Conclusion

With the current concerns over the layout of the open space, design of unit 6 and in the absence of the final S106 agreement this application for redevelopment is recommended for refusal. Due to the absence of an acceptable scheme for redevelopment the application to demolish Sussex House is also recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

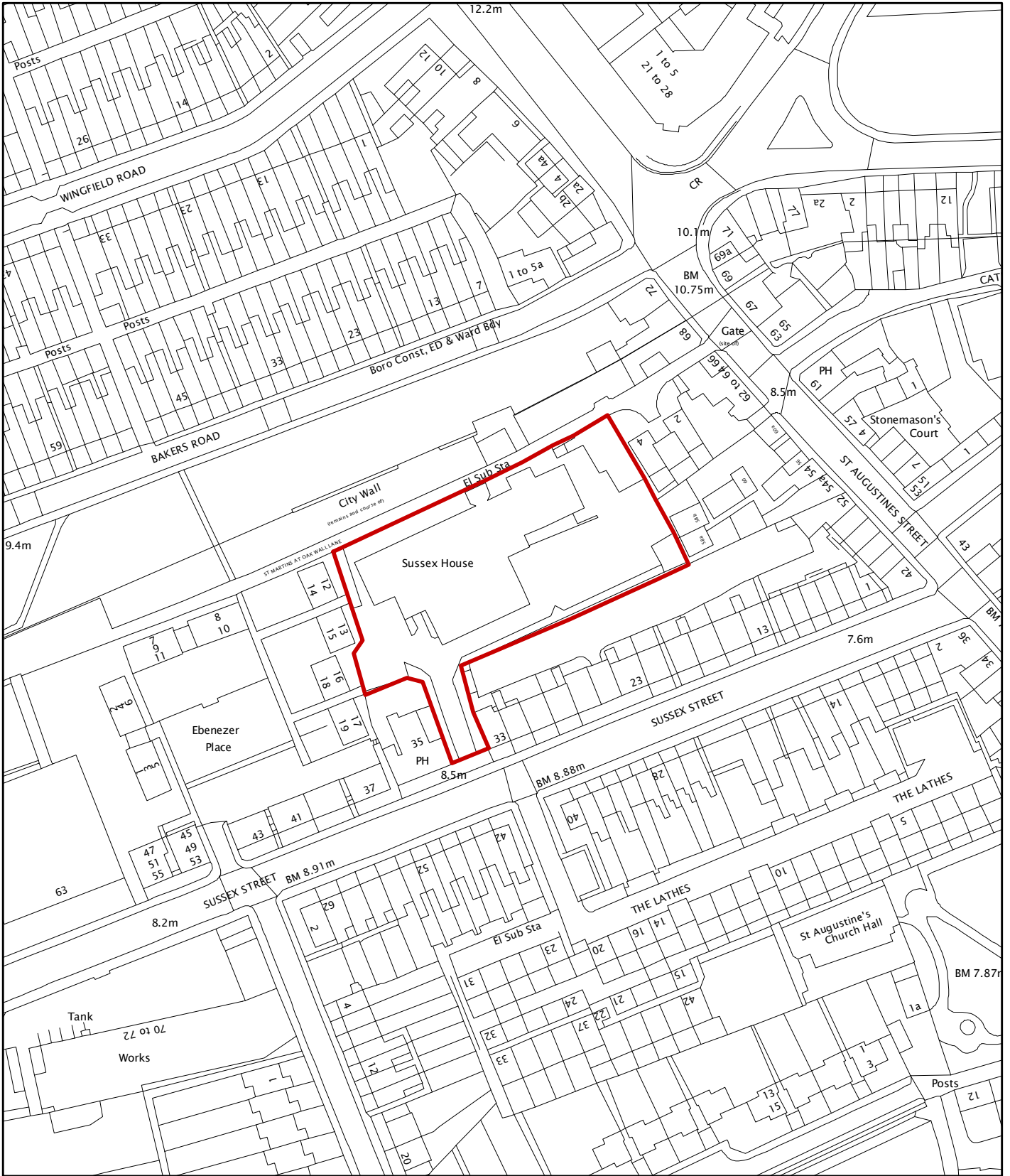
REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION on the following grounds:

08/01013/F

- 1) The proposed layout of parking and landscaping is considered to function poorly, leading to awkward vehicle movements and a potential for inappropriate parking. It is also considered that there would be a strong potential for car parking to visually dominate the existing open space of the scheme, leading to a poor quality open space. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to saved policies HOU13 and TRA5 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, Adopted Version (November 2004).
- 2) In the absence of a legal agreement or undertaking relating to the provision of children's play space and transportation contributions the proposal is contrary to saved policies SR7, TRA11 and HOU6 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, Adopted Version (November 2004).

08/01012/C

- 1) It is considered that the demolition of Sussex House and surrounding ancillary buildings in the absence of an acceptable and detailed scheme to redevelop the site would have an adverse impact of the character and setting of the Conservation Area by virtue of the empty site which would be of low visual amenity in comparison to retaining the existing development on site. The proposed demolition of Sussex House is therefore considered to have an adverse affect on the character and setting of the City Centre Conservation Area and therefore contrary to saved policy HBE8 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, policy ENV6 of the East of England Plan (May 2008) and Planning Policy Statement 15.



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Planning Application No - 08/01012/C and 08/01013/F
 Site Address - Sussex House, Sussex Street
 Scale - 1:1250



NORWICH
 City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
 AND DEVELOPMENT

