

Report for Resolution

Report to Planning Applications Committee
Date 14 February 2013
Report of Head of Planning Services
Subject 12/01976/F Norwich Playhouse Bar 42 - 58 St Georges Street Norwich NR3 1AB

Item

5(5)

SUMMARY

Description:	Single storey extensions to the west and south of the Norwich Playhouse Bar to form bar extension; toilets and storage. Proposed removal of external bin storage area, to be replaced by paving to St Georges Street (Revised Proposal 31/01/2012).	
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Objections	
Recommendation:	Approve with conditions	
Ward:	Mancroft	
Contact Officer:	Mr Gary Howe	Team Leader (Inner Area) 01603 212507
Valid Date:	6th October 2012	
Applicant:	Ms Caroline Richardson	
Agent:	Mr Robin Bertram	

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The application site is situated on the west side of St Georges Street between the river Wensum to the south and Merchants Court to the north. St Georges Street at this point has been the subject of a successful scheme (St Georges Street Enhancement Scheme) to stop through traffic over St Georges Bridge and to carry out improvements to the streetscape. Opposite the site is the green space/play area in front of Friars Quay whilst the rear of the site faces the side of the Art College (Guntons Buildings) and Dukes Palace Wharf on the other side of the river.
2. The adjacent St Georges Bridge (also known as Blackfriars bridge) was built in 1784 and is Grade II Listed. The site is within the City Centre Conservation Area

Constraints

- City Centre Conservation Area
- Adjacent Listed Building (St Georges Bridge) – grade II

Topography

3. The area currently occupied for the covered bin storage area is at the same level as the bar itself (approx. 3.28 AODN). The land slopes down towards the river to the south sharply. Similarly the land slopes down towards the river beyond the landscaped courtyard to the west although immediately outside the bar it is fairly flat at approximately 3.20 AODN).

Planning History

4/1989/0861/F - Refurbishment to provide theatre with associated uses, shop and offices (approved 18/07/1989)

4/1995/0263/F – Erection of theatre bar with landscaped river terrace. (Approved 27/07/1995 with conditions)

11/01757/F - Single storey extensions to the west and south of the Norwich Playhouse Bar to form bar extension; toilets and storage. Proposed removal of external bin storage area, to be replaced by paving to St Georges Street. Construction of lightweight walkway link south of the Playhouse extension. Installation of viewing platforms sitting over the riverbank with access adjacent St Georges Bridge. (pending decision)

Equality and Diversity Issues

There are no significant equality or diversity issues.

The Proposal (as revised 31/01/2013)

4. This application proposes:-

- Removal of covered bin storage building, and open storage to south of bar;
- Removal of low wall between St Georges Bridge and Playhouse bar;
- Erection of single storey extensions to the south of the bar (to provide fully accessible toilets, bottle storage and open air bin and keg storage);
- Erection of lightweight glazed canopy (12.5m x 2.5m) at rear (west) of bar;
- Repaving over suspended concrete slab to St Georges Street..

Representations Received (Originally submitted scheme 06/10/2012)

5. Advertised on site and in the press. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. Fifteen letters of representation have been received citing the issues as

summarised in the table below.

6. Councillor Stammers has also requested that this proposal be considered at Planning Applications Committee under Appendix A of the Delegation of powers from planning Applications Committee.

Issues Raised	Response
Complain about existing noise from the Playhouse bar	This cannot be resolved through this application but the applicant is actively seeking to discharge a condition of the original planning permission (See para.20) It is also recommended that the residents seek a review of the Premises Licence (See para. 21)
Viewing platforms bring people closer to Dukes Palace Wharf properties - increasing noise	Now not part of the proposal.
Concern that the removal of some trees along river bank to accommodate the viewing platforms will increase noise – the trees shield the flats from noise	Now not part of the proposal.
Consider noise will increase as a result of the proposal – intensification of use.	The public bar area is not being increased.
There will be an increase in litter in the river due to customers throwing items from the platforms.	Now not part of the proposal.

Consultation Responses (Originally submitted scheme 06/10/2012)

English Heritage:

No objection. Supportive of the scheme; accepts that the existing storage arrangements are unsightly and in some views, they detract from the setting of St Georges Bridge. The proposed extension to the Playhouse bar will resolve this problem and English Heritage is content for that part of the application to be determined in accordance with national and local planning policies and in consideration of in-house specialist advice. Remain concerned about the detailing of the new walkway and the design alongside the walkway (solid timber guarding will appear over intrusive in the riverside context and draw unnecessary attention to the walkway; also that the timber may weather badly and encourage vandalism; suggest a single toughened glass balustrade or stainless steel rigging wire).

Heritage Environment Service (Archaeology):

No objection in principle. Would however wish to see the normal standard archaeological conditions applied.

Environmental Protection Officer:

Aware that there have been historic instances of noise disturbance by patrons on the outside terrace of the Playhouse Bar, particularly on Summer evenings which have disturbed residents living in the vicinity. Suggests that this issue would be best dealt with by a review of the premises licence.

ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework:

- Section 7 – Requiring good design
- Section 10 – Meeting the challenge of climate change
- Section 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Relevant policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2011

- Policy 1 – Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets
- Policy 2 – Promoting good design
- Policy 8 – Culture, leisure and entertainment
- Policy 9 – Norwich policy area
- Policy 11 – Norwich city centre

Relevant saved policies of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan 2004

- NE1 – Protection of environmental assets
- NE3 – Tree protection
- NE9 – Comprehensive landscaping scheme
- HBE3 – Archaeology in main area of interest
- HBE8 – Conservation areas
- HBE9 – Listed Buildings
- HBE12 – High quality of design
- TRA8 – Servicing provision
- EP22 – High standard of amenity for residential occupiers
- AEC1 – City Centre leisure area
- SHO22 – Food and drink uses

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

- City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (Northern Riverside character area)

Other Material Considerations

- Written Ministerial Statement (March 2011)

Principle of Development

Introduction

7. The applicant wishes to improve the storage, toilet and bar facilities at the premises. At present the bar suffers from having inadequate customer toilet facilities in an inconvenient part of the site; covered storage for kegs, bottles and refuse is inadequate and the open area south of the river is used for overflow storage.
8. It should be noted that the proposal has been altered to remove the viewing platforms from the application.

Policy Considerations

9. The principle of the site's suitability as an extension to an existing drinking establishment (use class A4) is accepted. The site is within the City Centre Leisure Area and as such uses are directed towards these locations by replacement local plan policies (AEC1 and SHO22).
10. Nevertheless, under policy SHO22 the proposal should still take account of the potential effects of noise and disturbance upon surrounding occupants of adjoining dwellings. It should however be remembered that this can only be assessed in relation to the proposed extension to the bar and any effects that it is considered that this element might have. It is not possible to revisit any adverse effects from the existing bar use. This element will be discussed further under Environmental issues.

Design

Background

11. This site is situated in the city centre conservation area and part of the Playhouse building is locally listed. The adjoining St George's Bridge to the south is grade II listed and dates from 1784. The site also fronts St George's Plain to the east and the river to the south. The river bank in this location is verdant and natural in character and it is important that this be retained. All of the trees on the river frontage are to be retained.

Conservation Area – Impact on Setting

12. The part of the Playhouse extension containing the new store and additional WCs is contemporary and simple in design and because the timber-clad extension is so different in appearance to the main building and due to the choice of material, it is considered that it will be relatively unobtrusive and will be visually read as subservient to the main building, despite the fact that it projects slightly beyond the frontage of the main building. The height of the extension relates well to the main building.
13. A lean-to aluminium-framed canopy is proposed at the rear of the bar with a glazed roof. The principle of this addition is considered to be acceptable. However, the proposed canopy has decorative spandrels in a Victorian-style. This is not entirely in keeping with the adjoining new extension or the other Playhouse buildings. Although a simpler, more contemporary or more industrial approach could be taken to the detailing of this canopy, it is not considered that this element is sufficiently prominent to be of real concern in this instance.

Listed Building – Impact on Adjoining St Georges Bridge

14. It is proposed that the existing embankment walls adjacent to the bridge be retained (along with the high water level plaque) and increased in height as necessary. It will be important that bricks match as closely as possible the existing bricks. The more modern wall above the embankment (on St Georges Street) will be demolished. It is not of any historic significance and at present blocks the view from the southern end of St George's Street towards the Playhouse. The balustrade to the bridge is independent from the wall and at lower level the works should not affect the bridge structure. It is proposed that new railings, to match those on the opposite side of the bridge are erected between the bridge and the side of the Playhouse. It is considered that the railings will be a relatively unobtrusive form of barrier that will not compete with the listed bridge. The increase in the area of St George's Plain should be beneficial, as should the loss of the various walls and bin structures which are unattractive.
15. There is currently a floodlight (lighting the bridge) on the river bank and this is to be replaced within the new embankment wall. Details of the replacement lighting will need to be conditioned. Also the new embankment brick wall alongside the river will be built off the existing flint rubble embankment. This is in poor condition with large cracks. The works required to repair this structure will need to be the subject of a condition.

English Heritage Comments

16. English Heritage are supportive of this application to rationalise storage in the vicinity of the grade II listed St Georges Bridge. They had some concerns about the design of the guardrails associated with the walkway and the viewing platforms but these elements have now been removed from the proposals.

Environmental Issues

Adjacent Neighbour Objections and Noise Disturbance

17. As noted in paragraphs 5 and 6 above there have been 15 letters of representation from the residential occupiers of the flats which face the application site to the south-west. Although at the nearest they are approximately 25m from the application site they allege that the bar has historically caused noise disturbance, particularly late at night in the Summer months. In addition they are also concerned that the proposed viewing platforms will have the effect of bringing noise disturbance closer to their properties; that tree works (including the removal of some trees on the river bank to accommodate the viewing platforms) will have the effect of removing what they see as a 'dampening effect' on noise as well as reducing the visual softening effects of the trees; that the extension will increase the intensity of the bar use, thus increasing noise and that there will be a tendency for litter to be thrown in the river.
18. As also noted under Consultation Responses, the Public Protection officer has confirmed that noise disturbance has been a problem in the past.
19. As has been mentioned in paragraph 8, the proposal has been revised (31/01/2013) to remove the viewing platforms from the application. This should have the effect of significantly reducing the concerns of the nearby residents with regard to this application.

Existing planning permission

20. Planning permission for the bar was granted back in 1995 (App. No. 4/1995/0263/F) for 'Erection of theatre bar and landscaped river terrace'. The bar was subsequently built and has operated for a number of years. There were a number of conditions on the planning permission but the most relevant condition relating to noise control is condition 5. This condition sought to control the noise level within the building by setting a maximum level for amplified sound. Unfortunately the operator has not previously sought to discharge this

condition. However the applicant has recently indicated a wish to remedy this situation and has invited the Council's Environmental Protection officer to visit the premises with a view to setting a maximum level.

21. As well as the planning permission, the operator, in order to trade as a public house, also requires a Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003. It is normal practice that the control of areas where activities such as drinking or smoking are to take place is dealt with under licensing regulations. The operator has a current premises licence which sets out where, how late and what sort of activity can go ahead in the premises. At present the licensable area covers both the present bar building itself and the terrace and landscaped area fronting the river Wensum. The bar is licensed for live and recorded music, late night refreshments and sale of alcohol, dance, plays and other entertainment facilities until between 1.30 to 2.00 (Mon-Sat) and later on special occasions. The terrace and landscaped area is licensed for consumption of alcohol and for performance of plays and visual entertainment until 11.45pm and later on special occasions.
22. The residents (or their representatives) have been advised that, given the above circumstances that it would be more appropriate for them to seek a review of the Premises Licence. People living close to, and feel they are being affected by a licensed premises can ask the council to review the premises license. The ground for a review must relate to one of the licensing objectives. In this case the grounds would be in respect of 'Prevention of public nuisance'.

Flood Risk

23. Now that the originally proposed viewing platforms which protruded out into the river bank have been removed from this proposal it simplifies the requirements as far as any Flood Risk Assessment is concerned. The Environment Agency have however confirmed that the applicant should be advised that any works associated with this proposal within 9m of the top of the bank of the main river will require Flood Defence Consent. This applicant can be advised via the use of an informative on any decision notice.

Trees and Landscaping

Retained Trees

24. The river bank trees frame the view looking west along the river from St Georges Bridge. They soften the river edge, help screen the car-park to the south of the river adjacent to Duke Street and counter balance the scale and mass of the buildings on the northern bank. This view has been identified within the current Conservation Area appraisal as important to the character of the area.
25. Conversely the river bank trees compliment the view of the Playhouse and St Georges Bridge as viewed from the Duke Street Bridge.
26. The trees situated along the front of the Playhouse along with other trees around St Georges bridge frame views north and south along St Georges Street and contribute significantly to the attractiveness of this area and the adjacent seating area opposite the Playhouse.

Extension of St Georges Plain

27. The proposed increase in the area of St George's Plain should be beneficial, as should the loss of the various walls and bin structures which are unattractive. In order to extend the Plain the applicants are proposing to construct a concrete slab which will extend out from the Street towards the river bank. Whilst this is not a particular concern in itself in terms of its visual impact or construction, it will be necessary to ensure that the existing two trees (two mature hybrid Black Poplars) which are prominent on St Georges Street are protected

during construction and can prosper subsequently. This will need to be dealt with via a condition. It will also be necessary to ensure that the concrete slab is paved in a suitable manner and this too will need to be conditioned.

Conclusions

28. This proposal is in accordance with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and local policies which promote the City centre leisure area for food and drink uses and well designed schemes in general. There is no significant additional floorspace for bar use by the public and therefore it is not considered that this modest proposal (in itself) will lead to any significant loss of residential amenity to nearby residents. There is a need to ensure that the site takes account of any archaeological requirements in accordance with the NPPF and local policy HBE3 together with the other suggested details in the body of the report.
29. Subject to the imposition of conditions therefore, this proposal is considered acceptable and in accordance with the objectives of Sections 7, 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Policies 1, 2, 8, 9 and 11 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2011), saved policies NE1, NE3, NE9, HBE3, HBE8, HBE9, HBE12, EP22, AEC1, SHO22 and TRA8 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (2004) and all other material considerations.
30. The applicant has recently indicated a wish to seek to resolve an outstanding condition on an earlier planning permission for the original bar use and the Public Protection Officer is actively pursuing this issue in order to attempt to set a maximum level for amplified music in the premises.
31. The nearby residents have been advised to seek a review of the Premises Licence for the property which may resolve issues of noise disturbance at unsocial hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve Application No (12/01976/F) and grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:-

1. Commencement within 3 Years;
2. In accordance with drawings;
3. Archaeology1;
4. Archaeology2,
5. Archaeology3,
6. Archaeology4;
7. Details of:- 1)Replacement floodlighting in embankment wall: 2) Repairs to flint wall structure; 3) Replacement of plaque;4) New gate.
8. Details of construction of concrete slab to protect trees and hard landscaping;

Reasons for Approval:

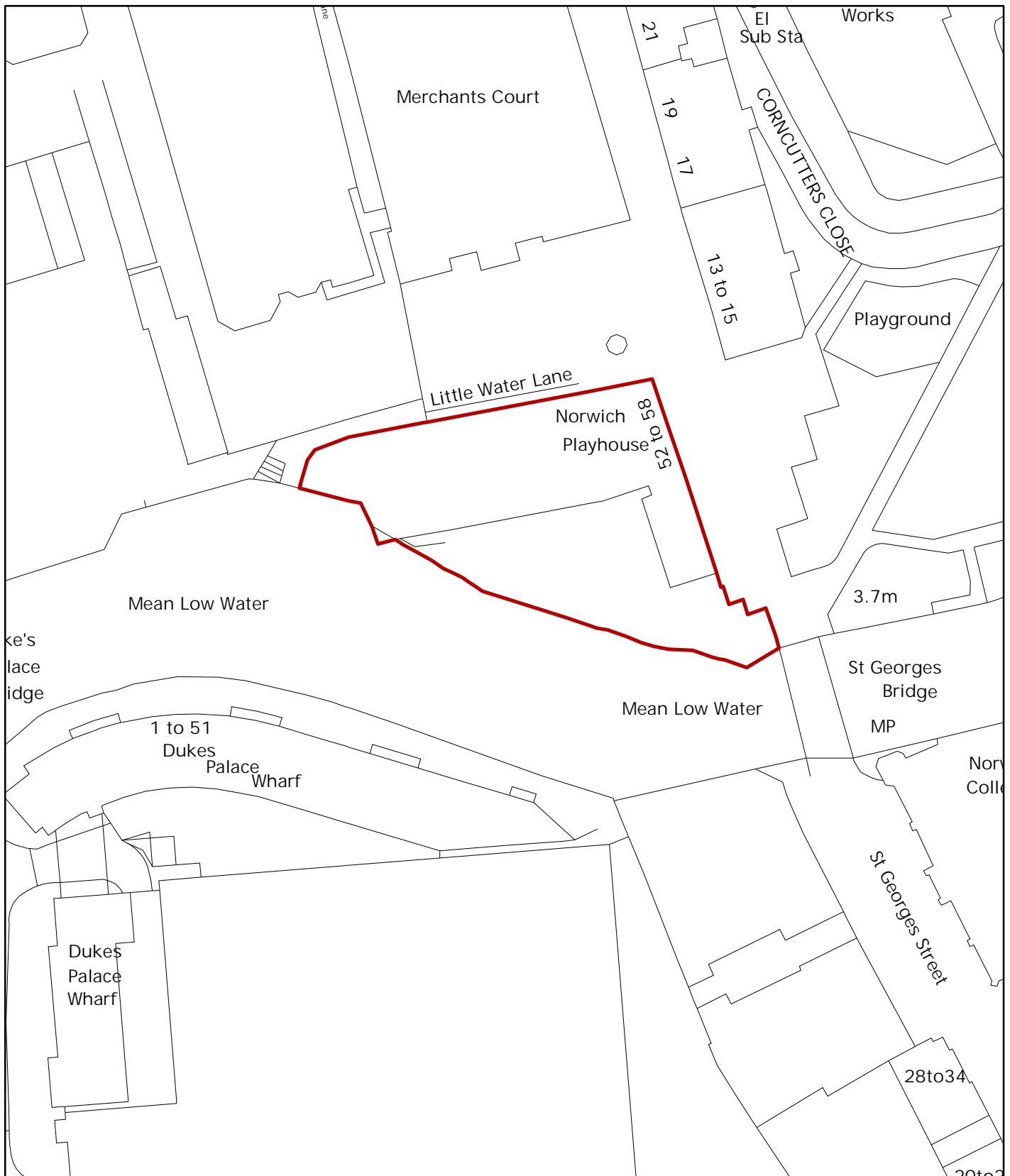
1) This proposal is in accordance with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and local policies which promote the City centre leisure area for food and drink uses and well designed schemes in general. There is no significant additional floorspace for bar use by the public and therefore it is not considered that this modest proposal (in itself) will lead to any significant loss of residential amenity to nearby residents. There is a need to ensure that the

site takes account of any archaeological requirements in accordance with the NPPF and local policy HBE3 together with the other suggested details in the body of the report.

2) Subject to the imposition of conditions therefore, this proposal is considered acceptable and in accordance with the objectives of Sections 7, 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Policies 1, 2, 8, 9 and 11 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2011), saved policies NE1, NE3, NE9, HBE3, HBE8, HBE9, HBE12, EP22, AEC1, SHO22 and TRA8 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (2004) and all other material considerations.

Informatives:

1. Flood Defence Consent required from Environment Agency;



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Planning Application No 12/01976/F

Site Address Norwich Playhouse Bar 42-58 St Georges Street

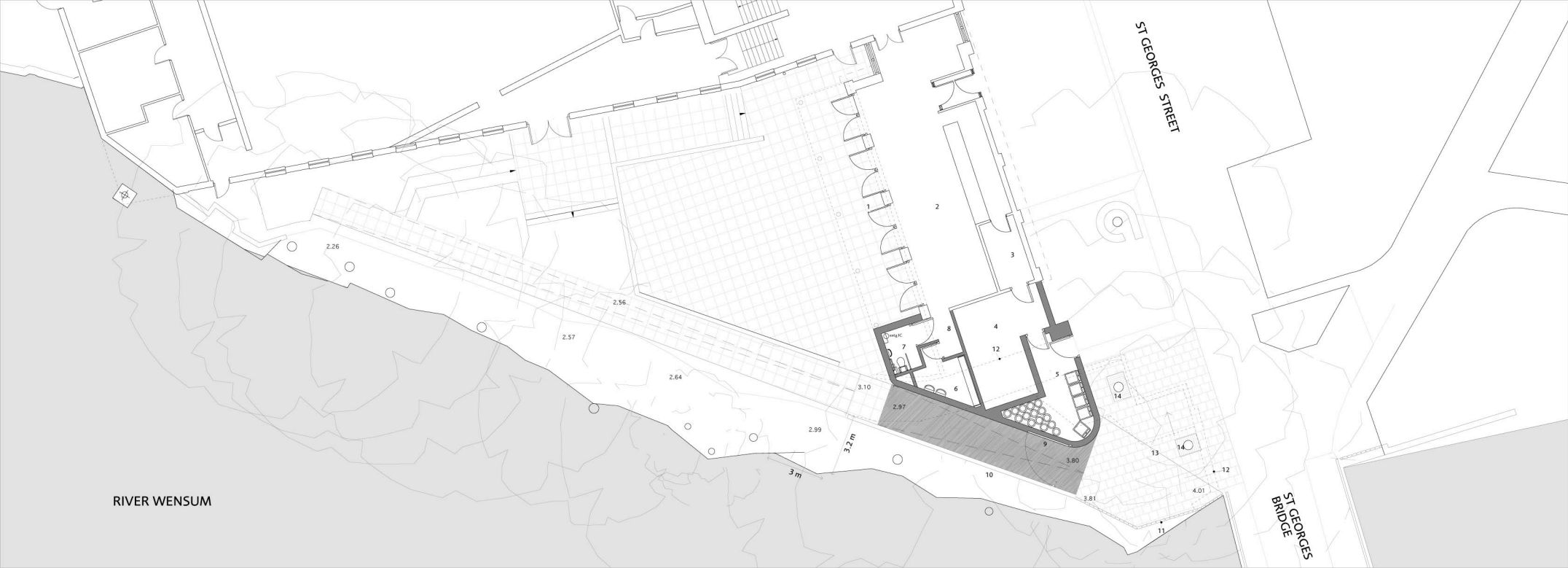
Scale 1:750



NORWICH
City Council

PLANNING SERVICES





Site / Ground Floor Plan



Roof Plan

Ground Floor Plan Key
Increase in Floor Area = 15.9 m2

1. Proposed canopy above
2. Existing bar area
3. Existing cold store
4. Main store: (Proposed = 19m2 Current= 17.7m2)
5. External storage Lobby: 5 wheely bins , 30 kegs stacked 2 high
6. Male WC.
7. Disabled WC
8. Lobby
9. Proposed gate
10. Solid guarding to proposed lightweight link to courtyard
11. Line of new railings to match existing on east side of St Georges Bridge and built off existing/ proposed wall - proposed railings to be kept clear of the existing bridge
12. Outline of existing extension/walls/paving to be removed
13. Proposed 'extension' to St. Georges Street: Paving on suspended concrete deck. Paving to match existing along St. Georges Street. Paving laid to falls.
14. Grille detail to aboriculturalists recommendations to protect existing tree roots.

Roof Plan Key

15. Glazed canopy roof
16. Roof light
17. Condenser unit
18. Ventilation pipe
19. Storage lobby open to air
20. Proposed maintenance access point to roof

Please note that this drawing supersedes the drawing included within the Design and Access Statement



status Planning		HUDSON Architects	
revisions		9-10 Redwell Street Norwich NR2 4DN tel: 01603 766 225 fax: 01603 636 463 www.hudsonarchitects.co.uk info@hudsonarchitects.co.uk	
A 30.01.2013		minor revisions; platforms omitted	
job NORWICH PLAYHOUSE EXTENSION		Norwich Playhouse - 42 - 58 St. George's Street address Norwich, NR1 1AB	
drawing title Proposed Ground Floor and Roof Plan		scale 1:100 @ A1 date 07/09/12	
WEP		PL-06	
info reference		drawing number	
Do not scale off dimensions. Check all dimensions on site and report any apparent discrepancy immediately. This drawing is copyright.		version	