

Planning Applications Committee

23 April 2009

Section C

Agenda Number:	C2
Section/Area:	Inner
Ward:	THORPE HAMLET
Officer:	Sarah Platt
Valid Date:	7 March 2009
Application Number:	09/00194/U
Site Address:	First Floor 77 Prince Of Wales Road Norwich NR1 1DG
Proposal:	Change of use of first floor from shop (Class A1) to taxi private hire office (sui generis).
Applicant:	Mr Mark Streeter
Agent:	Mr Mark Streeter

THE SITE

The application site is situated on the Southern side of Prince of Wales Road. The proposal relates to the first floor of this building only.

Adjacent buildings are the Railway Mission and Magic City which is currently vacant but has a planning application in for a change of use to a bar. The property below is a newsagent.

The application building is currently empty. The site is on the periphery of the City Centre Leisure Area and the Late Night Activity Zone but Policy AEC1 is considered to apply. The site is within the City Centre Conservation Area.

PLANNING HISTORY

It is believed that the most recent use was as a nail bar/beauty salon although this change of use has no record.

The premises are currently vacant.

THE PROPOSAL

Change of use of first floor from shop (Class A1) to taxi private hire office (sui generis).

The main purpose of this proposal is to provide a taxi office at 77A 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

Advertised on site and in the press. All adjacent neighbouring properties were notified in writing.

4 letters of objection have been received citing reasons of increase in traffic, lack of parking, increased noise to residential amenity, disabled access, and need.

1 letter has been received raising concern about availability of parking for patrons of the Railway Mission on a Sunday when there is free parking provision on Prince of Wales Road, but overall does not raise any objections to the proposal.

2 letters of support have been received.

Norfolk Police Architectural Liaison Officer: No comments have been received at the time of writing the Committee report.

Environmental Health: No objections.

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 Policy:

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS1 Supplement – Planning & Climate Change
PPG4 – Industrial & Commercial Development of Small Firms
PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres
PPG13 – Transport
PPG24 – Planning & Noise

Relevant Regional Policy:

ENV7 – Quality in the Built Environment

Relevant Local Plan Policy:

HBE8 - Development within a Conservation Area
HBE19 – design for safety and security including minimising crime
EP22 – Residential Amenity
EMP1 – Small Scale Business Development
AEC1 – Late Night Activity Zone
TRA5 – Approach to design for vehicle movement and special needs
CC9 - City Centre Chapter – Prince of Wales Road Area paragraph 12.88ff.

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 base for waiting taxis; 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 is a large parking bay directly outside the premises which can accommodate approximately 5 vehicles. This bay is subject to the normal parking restrictions and charges until 21:00hrs. Parking is prohibited after this time until 04:00hrs. NB This does not prevent pick up and drop off of passengers by taxis or any other vehicle. Taxis under this proposal, will not be parking at these premises as stipulated by the applicant. This bay is not designated for the use of hackney carriages so hackney carriage business and access to parking will not be affected as the nearest hackney carriage rank is on the opposite side of the road.

With regard to parking for the Railway Mission, patrons there can have no guarantee, as with other areas, that parking will be available for their use.

The proposal contains information in the supporting letter dated 3rd March 2009 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.

These premises are better located for the collection of customers than the previous proposals at 58 Prince of Wales Road (08/00980/U – Reported to Planning Committee on 12th December 2008) and it is considered that the highway grounds for refusal have been addressed. There is 1 no. pedestrian crossing 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. The applicant is willing to use a marshalling system to escort people safely to the taxis waiting in the parking bays.

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 is considered to 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.

Community Safety Issues:

Concern has been expressed by the 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.

Residential Amenity:

The proposals are located on the periphery of the Late Night Activity Zone. There are a few residential flats to the upper floors of nearby buildings but this use is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers and no objections have been received from residents of the immediate locality. One objection letter specifically refers to St Faiths Lane. It is considered that City Centre residents should expect to be more flexible in terms of protection from noise pollution than those living outside the city centre as they are immediately adjacent to the Late Night Activity Zone (saved policy AEC1).

Conclusion:

A similar application was made at 38 Rose Lane (08/00610/U – Reported to Planning Committee on 31st July 2008). Planning Committee raised several issues over the provision of toilet facilities for customers and the adequate size of the waiting area. It is considered that these issues have all been addressed in this application.

A further similar application was made at 58 Prince of Wales Road (08/00980/U – Reported to Planning Committee on 12th December 2008). Planning Committee in this instance raised concern over parking and pick up facilities and the impact on traffic flow. These issues have also 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

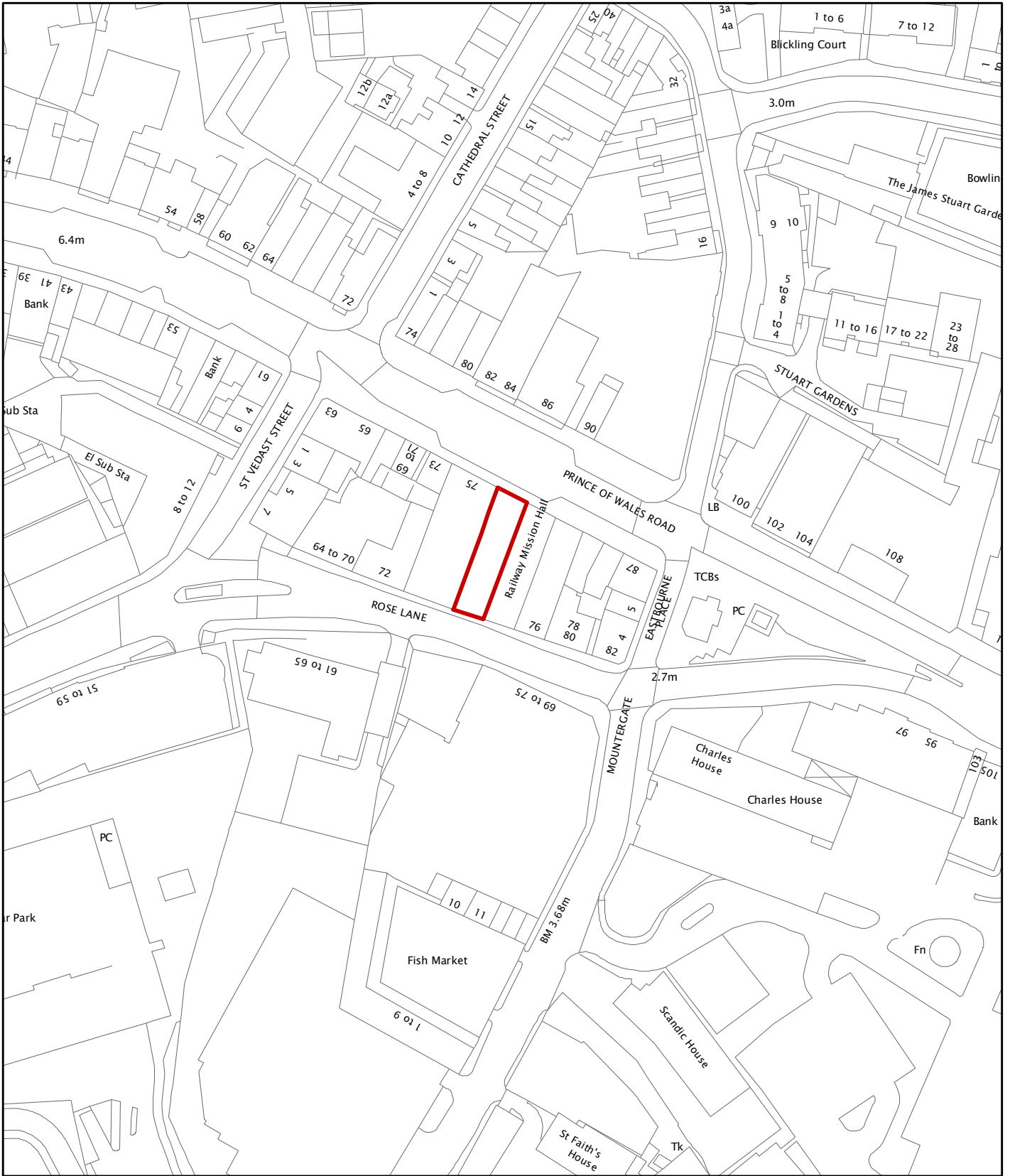
APPROVE PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

- 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.

Reasons for Approval:

- 1) 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).
- 2) The change of use is considered acceptable adjacent to 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.



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Planning Application No- 09/00194/U

Site Address - First Floor, 77 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich

Scale - 1:1,250



NORWICH
City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT

