

Planning Applications Committee
11th December 2008

Agenda Number:	B6
Section/Area:	INNER
Ward:	MANCRO
Officer:	Mark Brown
Valid Date:	16th October 2008
Application Number:	08/01086/F
Site Address:	70 - 72 Sussex Street Norwich NR3 3DE
Proposal:	Demolition of existing industrial unit and redevelopment of site to provide 2x5-bed town houses, 2x4-bed town houses, 3x3-bed town houses 10x2-bed apartments, 2x1-bed apartments and 2 No. A2/A3 units. (Amended Design).
Application Number:	08/01085/C
Proposal:	Demolition of existing industrial units
Applicant:	Mr Andy Leferve
Agent:	Mr David Cumming

THE SITE

The site is located on the corners of Oak Street, Sussex Street and Chatham Street within the Northern City Centre. The site is within the northern riverside character area of the City Centre Conservation Area. This particular part of the Conservation Area is characterised by a number of light industrial units along Oak Street surrounded primarily by residential uses to the north and east. The existing light industrial units on the site are identified as negative within the City

Centre Conservation Area Appraisal. The listed C15 Great Hall is located directly opposite the site on Oak Street.

PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant planning history

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to demolish the existing industrial units on the site and construct a total of 19 residential units and a 211sqm A2 (financial and professional services) or A3 (restaurants & cafés) unit at ground floor level on Oak Street.

The Chatham Street elevation consists of three 2½ storey townhouses. Four 3½ storey townhouses are proposed to the eastern end of Sussex Street. On the corner of Oak Street and Sussex Street a 4 storey block of 12 apartments are proposed with the A2/A3 unit at ground floor on the Oak Street Elevation.

Access is proposed off Sussex Street and is roughly in the location of the existing access to the site. This leads to an internal courtyard where 18 parking spaces are proposed along with cycle storage and a communal open space. Above this at first floor level is a terrace providing small private gardens to the townhouses and some of the apartments. A communal bin store is provided with separate access onto Sussex Street.

The design has been amended during the course of the application, the main alteration being the reduction in height of the townhouses on Chatham Street by one storey. There have also been other more minor alterations to the elevational detailing.

CONSULTATIONS

Neighbours: Advertised on site, in the press and neighbours notified.

In total six letters of objection and 3 letters of support as detailed below:

Three letters of objection from neighbouring residents (to the un-amended proposals) in Sussex Street objecting on the following grounds:

- developments height and that this will result in a loss of light;
- concern over the increase in cars and lack of parking;
- concern over misuse and anti-social behavior in the communal areas.

One letter of objection from a neighbour on Sussex Street objecting on the following grounds:

- developments height and that this will result in a loss of light;
- loss of privacy;
- overdevelopment of the site;

- concern over the increase in cars and lack of parking.

Following inspection of the amended plans the neighbour has reiterated their concerns.

One letter of objection from a neighbour on Sussex Street objecting on the following grounds:

- developments height and that this will result in a loss of light;
- the building would be out of character with the street and would not blend with existing architecture;

Following inspection of the amended plans the neighbour has reiterated their concerns.

One letter from a neighbouring resident on Chatham Street commenting that the revised proposal addresses their concern over the scale of buildings on Chatham Street, but raising concerns and objections over other elements of the design including:

- height of buildings on Sussex Street;
- loss of light to properties on Sussex Street;
- houses to the south on Chatham Street will be overlooked;
- the proposal does not follow the guidance of the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan;
- traditional building materials are not being used;
- concern that there is no refuse storage facility;

One letter of objection from a resident on Chatham Street in support of the application on the basis it will have a positive impact on the area.

Two letters of support from nearby businesses commenting that the proposals will be a much needed improvement to the area, the industrial units are currently unattractive and run down and a new housing scheme would undoubtedly improve the area for the better. The bold building design will fit in well providing the area with a prominent focus. Sufficient parking is provided and the mix of unit sizes will cater for a range of people.

Norwich Society: 'It is good to see this area of Sussex Street being redeveloped. We consider the size and scale of the proposed Sussex Street Façade to be suitable but question the corner and oak street façade, which will be totally overbearing in scale and out of keeping with what already exists. It hardly needs mentioning that opposite is the early 15C Great Hall.'

Central Norwich Citizens Forum: 'A thoughtful and imaginative scheme. It features a cul-de-sac balcony serving "the front gardens" of the first floor flats and linked to the street by steps diagonally through the corner. Another balcony serving the second floor overlooks this and they both overlook a landscaped central space at ground level, all facing south. In conjunction with the good space standards of the apartments one can anticipate a really vibrant community growing within this complex. A development designed around people and

activities rather than elevations, which indeed, as they stand, are perhaps overcomplicated (but easily simplified). If the suggested cafe fronting Oak Street proves viable and, perhaps, connects with the gardens at ground level that would be great; there will soon be a substantial amount of housing in this stretch of Oak Street. However, we fear that the cafe and shop may not take off and we suggest that plan (and elevation) should be made easy to convert to residential or live/work units. Whilst we applaud the policy of low car parking provision and car-share facilities there is still a need for short term parking for visitors, carers and deliveries. Probably easy to arrange in this location but we suggest the need is flagged up at this stage of every project so that the relevant Authority can plan future parking spaces for this purpose.'

Quality Panel Response: (un-amended scheme) On the basis of the presentation the scheme is generally to be commended, although the lack of images placing the scheme in context meant the Panel could not fully endorse the scheme. There was some doubt about whether the architectural detailing will mean that the attempt to reflect the nearby Georgian properties will work. This needs to be controlled carefully though conditions. There is a need to ensure that solar gain is balanced with sufficient ventilation. Commercial elements may not be viable and the Panel wanted to avoid them being left empty by connecting them vertically to the living space above.

Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology: No objection subject to condition

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant National Planning Policy

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
Supplement to PPS1 – Planning and Climate Change
PPS3 – Housing
PPG13 – Transport
PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment
PPS22 – Renewable Energy

Relevant East of England Plan Policies:

ENV7 – Quality in the built environment
ENG1 – Carbon dioxide emissions and energy performance
WM6 – Waste Management in Development

Relevant Local Plan Policies:

Adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan Saved Policies:
NE9 – Comprehensive landscaping scheme and tree planting
HBE3 – Area of main archaeological interest
HBE8 – Development within conservation areas
HBE12 – High quality of design

EP1 – Contaminated Land
EP16 – Water conservation and sustainable drainage systems
EP18 – High standard of energy efficiency for new development
EP22 – High standard of amenity for residential occupiers
EMP1 – Small scale business development
HOU6 – Contribution to community needs and facilities by housing developers
HOU13 – Proposals for new housing development on other sites
SHO3 – Locational conditions for new retail development – sequential test
SHO22 – Food and drink uses and conditions on hot food takeaways
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 standard
TRA8 – Servicing provision
TRA11 – Contributions for transport improvements in wider area

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance (SPD and SPG):

Open Space and Play Provision SPD adopted – June 2006
Transport Contributions from Development SPD Draft for Consultation – January 2006
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy SPD adopted – December 2006

Northern City Centre Area Action Plan Submission Report (NCCAAP) – November 2008

City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal – September 2007

Principle

The site is unallocated and therefore the principle is assessed against policy HOU13. This allows for residential redevelopment on brownfield sites subject to a number of criteria covering access and accessibility, amenity, density, character and range of housing types, these are discussed further below.

In terms of density the proposals at 89 dwellings per hectare are considered appropriate for this part of the City Centre. The proposals include a mix of dwelling sizes and types which is considered appropriate for this area.

The A2/A3 unit on Oak Street is considered to be appropriate in this location under policies EMP1 and SHO22. Were the recommendation to approve a condition restricting change of use to A1 retail would be required as under policy SHO3 it is considered that such a use would be inappropriate in this location given the proximity of the Local Centre at St Augustines. Other conditions would relate to installation of plant and ventilation equipment.

Demolition of the site is considered acceptable subject to redevelopment of the site. The existing buildings are identified as negative within the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

Design

The site layout is considered appropriate facing buildings onto the street, the buildings are set back on Chatham Street and Sussex Street to follow the existing building lines on these roads. In Oak Street, 20th century, free-standing, often single storey industrial and commercial buildings are set back from the street, as a result building lines are less defined. In this case the footprint is considered to be in an appropriate location which will start to redefine the oak Street Frontage. The arrangement of the rear is a particular success as the provision of the terrace allows for provision of a good amount of amenity space whilst sufficient parking, cycling and bin store facilities are provided at ground floor level.

In terms of the elevations, the proposals are varied with a more contemporary approach taken along Oak Street and the western part of Sussex Street, with the corner element projected at a slight angle with balconies above. The rest of Sussex Street takes a more traditional form but with contemporary detailing. It is understood from the Design and Access Statement submitted that this approach has been taken to provide a transition from the historical housing along eastern Sussex Street and the contemporary proposals on Oak Street. However, it is considered that the two different approaches do not compliment each other; they appear awkward both in terms of their relationship with each other and the surrounding area. As such it is not considered that the design respects or is sympathetic to the form and character of the area.

This is not to say that there is a preference to either a traditional or contemporary approach but that either approach should be more robust, have more conviction and also take cues from the areas past.

Equally, those buildings facing Oak Street and turning the corner into Sussex Street do not appear to be the result of proper contextual analysis in terms of their design, scale, massing and the mixture of proposed materials, all of which reflect little of the building typologies in this part of the City Centre Conservation Area.

The corner block has a commercial nature, which is not characteristic of the area. The wider area is predominantly residential in character with light industrial units on Oak Street. Its height at four storeys, its position on a raised site where the land slopes down towards Oak Street and the river and it's deflection around the corner makes the building extremely prominent and, whilst prominent landmark buildings are appropriate in certain locations, this is not considered to be a node of significant scale to merit such a building. It is also considered that this prominence detracts from the historic scale of the area, the best example of which is the C15 Great Hall immediately opposite. As a result the proposals are

not considered to enhance the townscape of the area and the contemporary elements fail to successfully integrate with the surrounding historic environment.

In terms of materials, Local Plan policy HBE12 and the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan encouraging the use of predominant building materials, although detail that where buildings of a very contemporary style are proposed, more modern materials, if carefully chosen, may be appropriate. In this case a significant amount of black brick is proposed which is not characteristic of the area and makes the buildings appear even more out of context with the surroundings.

It is considered that there are clear benefits of the scheme in terms of removing negative buildings within the Conservation Area and in terms of the schemes layout. However, on balance, these are not considered to outweigh the negative aspects of the scale of the development, the elevational details and the corner block as discussed above.

Neighbour Amenity

There have been a number of concerns raised by residents in the vicinity over the impact of the proposals on residential amenity. On Chatham Street the concerns have been eased by the reduction in height of the terrace. The main considerations in relation to amenity are considered to be overlooking to the south and overshadowing to the north.

In terms of overshadowing the properties to the north on Sussex Street are between 18-22m away and whilst there would be some loss of direct sunlight particularly in the winter, it is not considered that loss of light would be significant enough to merit refusal of the application on these grounds.

To the south of the development are residential properties along Chatham Street, concern has been raised in relation to overlooking to the south. Any overlooking is proposed to be mitigated by screens on the terrace and significant planting within the ground floor communal area, it is considered that subject to these that the proposals would be acceptable in terms of amenity.

Environmental Considerations

The proposals being located within the City Centre are within a sustainable accessible location. In terms of the particular details the proposals have been designed to take full advantage of solar gains from the southern orientation of the site. The design and access statement also details measures for significantly increased insulation levels and provision of rainwater harvesting with storage for up to 15,000L of water. Solar panels have also been included on the southern elevation. Were the recommendation to approve, conditions requiring exact details of how the provision of 10% of the sites energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources would be required.

Planning Obligations

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 £1,104.00 per child bed space.
- A transportation contribution of £5,360.85

The above contributions would be triggered on the occupation of each phase. The applicant has not indicated acceptance or not to the above contributions and as no S106 has been entered into the application should also be refused on the basis of a lack of such an agreement or undertaking.

Conclusion

The proposals provide for the redevelopment of a brownfield site within the City Centre. However it is considered that the design would fail to respect the form and character of the area or to successfully integrate with the surrounding historic environment. In addition no S106 has been entered into to secure the obligations detailed above. The recommendation is therefore to refuse.

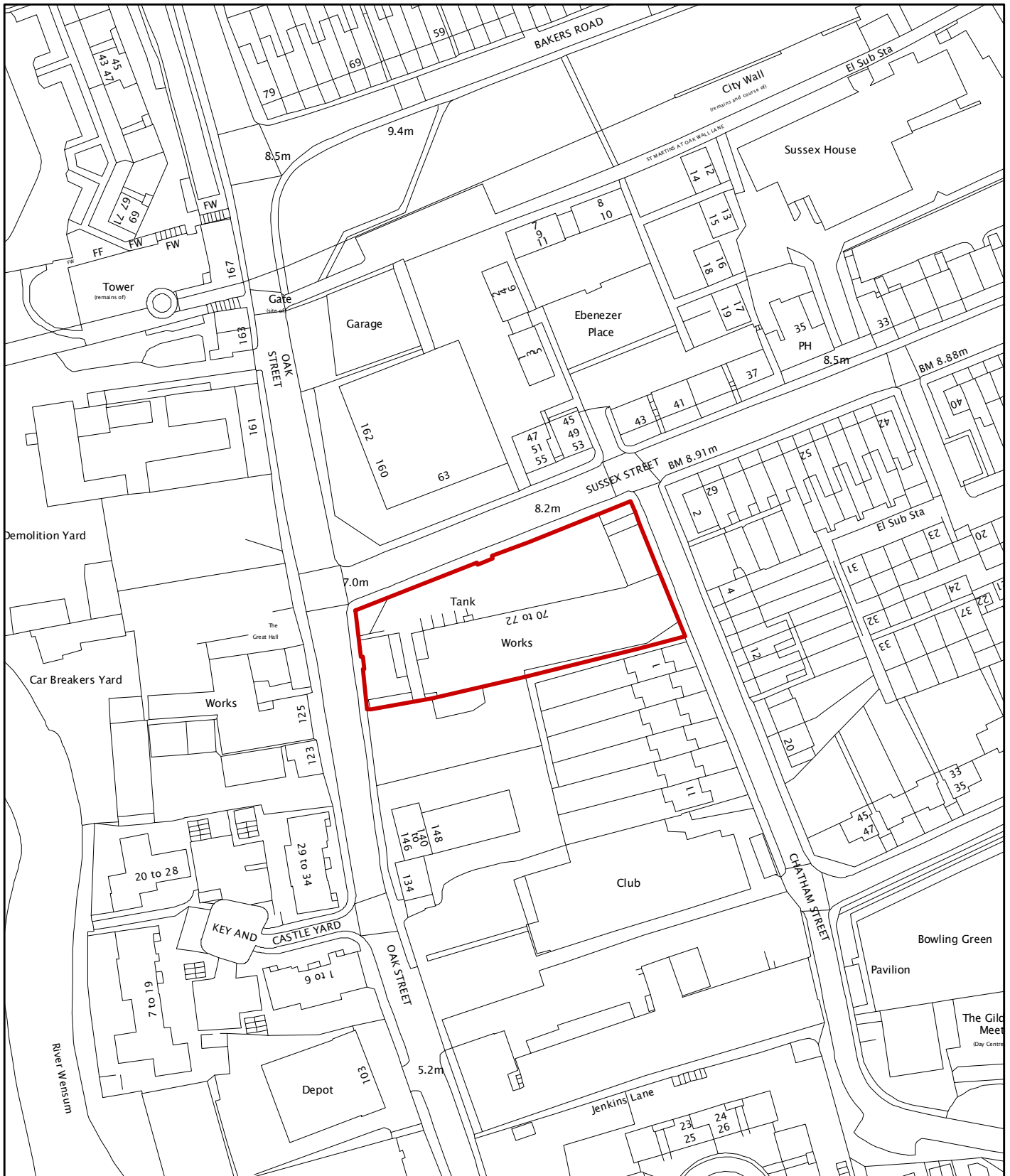
RECOMMENDATIONS

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the following reasons:

1. It is considered that by virtue of the varied form and elevational treatment of the proposals the design would fail to respect the form and character of the area. As such the proposals are considered to be contrary to the objectives of saved policies HBE8 and HBE12 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, policy ENV7 of the adopted East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy and the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan.
2. It is considered that by virtue of its commercial appearance, scale and relationship with surrounding buildings that the corner block on Oak Street would be overtly dominant and would fail to successfully integrate with the surrounding historic environment, detracting from the character and townscape of the surrounding area. As such the proposals are considered to be contrary to the objectives of saved policies HBE8 and HBE12 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, policy ENV7 of the adopted East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy and the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan.
3. 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 HOU6, SR7 and TRA11 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan.

REFUSE CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT for the following reason:

1. In the absence of acceptable and detailed plans for the redevelopment of the site, the demolition of all those buildings identified to be demolished would have a negative impact on the character of the surrounding Conservation Area and as such the proposal is considered to be contrary to the objectives of saved policy HBE8 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan and PPG15.



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Planning Application No - 08/01085/C and 08/01086/F
 Site Address - 70 - 72 Sussex Street
 Scale - 1:1250



NORWICH
 City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
 AND DEVELOPMENT

