

Report for Resolution

Report to Planning Applications Committee
Date 29 September 2011
Report of Head of Planning Services
Subject 11/01329/F Wensum Clothing Co Former 179
Northumberland Street Norwich NR2 4EE

Item
5(1)

SUMMARY

Description:	Conversion of existing vacant office space to 6 No. residential apartments (3 No. one bedroom and 3 No. two bedroom apartments).
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Objections
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions and the completion of a S106 agreement.
Ward:	Mancroft
Contact Officer:	Mark Brown Senior Planning Officer 01603 212505
Valid Date:	26th July 2011
Applicant:	Ingram PTP
Agent:	A Squared Architects

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The site is located to the east side of Northumberland Street and is part of the former Wensum clothing factory site which has been redeveloped for predominately residential development under planning consent 07/00837/F with the part of the site in question being retained as offices.
2. The site forms part of an employment allocation under the adopted Local Plan. Various other employment uses are located adjacent to the site to the south and west. To the north is a surface parking area associated with the existing residential conversions beyond which is a terrace of residential dwellings. The building to which the application relates fronts onto Northumberland Street, and is attached to other sections of the former factory which extend to the rear (east) and have been converted to residential use. There is a communal external amenity space to the southeast of the site.
3. The site is located within the main area of archaeological interest.

Planning History

- Consent was given under permission 07/00837/F for the conversion of the factory to 48 no. residential units, with 418sqm of office space and 6 no. residential units off Church Close.

Equality and Diversity Issues

- There are no significant equality or diversity issues.

The Proposal

- The application seeks consent for the conversion of the offices to 6 residential flats comprising 3xone bed and 3xtwo bed units including provision for further refuse and cycle storage. No parking is proposed.

Representations Received

- Advertised on site and in the press. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. 8 letters of representation have been received citing the issues as summarised in the table below.

Issues Raised	Response
Concern over increased use of communal stairways and corridors. The entrance to the flats should be via the stairway at the front of the building.	See paragraph 28
Concern over loss of amenity from having new neighbouring flats which would likely lead to increase noise, pedestrian traffic in corridors and implications for security.	See paragraph 28
No parking has been provided for the six new flats which will create further congestion on Northumberland Street and lead to unauthorised parking in other residents allocated parking spaces.	See paragraphs 19-24
Concern that no form of enforcement is in place to prevent occupiers of new flats parking in other residents allocated parking spaces.	See paragraph 25
Membership of a car club will not resolve the parking problems.	See paragraphs 21-22
Concern that the development contradicts clauses in lease agreements.	This is not a material planning consideration in itself.
A number of objections raise concerns with snagging issues relating to the existing development.	Snagging issues are not considered to be material to the determination of this application.

Consultation Responses

- Norfolk Constabulary – makes non specific comments encouraging the applicant to

seek a secure by design award.

9. Environmental Health – No comments

10. Transportation - In transport terms this is not an ideal location for an office development, so I have no issue in principle with its conversion to residential. This can't really be considered a 'car free' development, as there are no parking restrictions in force in the surrounding area, so residents could park on the street. However, there is realistically no room for any additional car parking on the site, and given the nature of the area, a few more residents' cars on the street is unlikely to be a problem. I welcome the idea that the new occupiers will be introduced to the car club. Hopefully that will minimise any impact. The conversion does not seem unreasonable, and there is on-site provision already for refuse and cycle storage and little opportunity to add to it. There should have been some provision in any case for the office element of this development as the scheme was developed. Strictly, as this is effectively part of a larger development, the scheme should attract a transport contribution of £1692.90.

ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Planning Policies

Relevant National Planning Policies

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable development

PPS3 Housing

PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Development

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment

Relevant policies of the adopted East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy 2008

H1 – Housing Provision

E2 – Employment Land

E3 – Employment Growth

ENV7 – Quality in the Built 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 – Design

Policy 3 – Energy and Water

Policy 4 – Housing Delivery

Policy 5 – The Economy

Policy 6 – Access and Transportation

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

HBE3 – Main Area of Archaeological Interest

EP18 – Energy Efficiency

EP22 – Amenity

EMP3 – Protection of Small Businesses

EMP5 – General Employment Areas

HOU15 – Conversion of Vacant or Underused Parts of Buildings

TRA6 – Car Parking
TRA7 – Cycle Parking
TRA8 – Servicing
TRA9 – Car Free Housing
TRA11 – Contribution for Transport Improvements

Other Material Considerations

Draft National Planning Policy Framework July 2011
Written Ministerial Statement - Planning for Growth March 2011

Principle of Development

11. With regard to principle the main issues to consider are the loss of the employment use and acceptability of housing in this location.
12. The proposal would result in the loss of 418 sq.m of managed B1 workspace forming part of the mixed use conversion scheme originally approved under 07/00837/F. Advice at the time of the original application stressed the importance of maintaining an element of employment use within the scheme to reflect the site's inclusion in a designated employment area and to compensate to some extent for the loss of local employment following the closure of the clothing factory in 2006.
13. Since the submission of the application in 2007 there has been a significant downturn in the economy and demand for office space and a considerable surplus of office and business space within Norwich. Bidwells were the marketing agents for the development. Their latest published property market research suggests a figure of 57,700 sqm of available office space in and around Norwich for the last quarter of 2010. Although evidence also shows that office take-up rates in the city have been increasing and office rental levels are forecast to rise. It is acknowledged that the location of the Northumberland Street office space is not especially attractive for commercial occupiers, being some distance from the City centre but it is nevertheless close to an established concentration of small business/industrial uses in the Northumberland Street area and (as purpose built workspace) would be able to lend itself to a variety of business uses given the right market conditions.
14. Although the former factory falls within a general employment area allocated in the adopted local plan the development of much of the eastern half of the allocation for housing has effectively superseded policy EMP5 insofar as it relates to the application site. The emerging development management policies development plan document proposes to retain only the western half of the original Northumberland Street allocation as an employment area and the car breakers yard to the south is also proposed to be allocated for housing in the draft site allocations development plan document.
15. Irrespective of the intended policy status of the site, the Joint Core Strategy makes clear in Policy 5 that it will be crucial to safeguard a good range and choice of sites and premises for small and medium scale businesses to support employment growth and protect local jobs and services in the longer term. Protection of sites and premises for small businesses is also covered by local plan saved policy EMP3, which would apply to this proposal. EMP3 seeks to retain business premises unless it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for such premises which would justify their retention. The applicant has submitted marketing

information with the application which details that there has been very little interest in the business premises with only one viewing taking place.

16. It is considered that the site is not in a recognised office location and the property is likely to have limited scope for use in more industrial forms of B1 use, given its form and location adjoining residential dwellings. There is a significant surplus of similar sized office accommodation which is located in more central locations. On balance therefore the loss of the B1 floorspace is considered to be acceptable in this case.
17. It is not considered that this decision should prejudice the continued allocation of the western side of Northumberland Street for employment uses. The site on the western side of Northumberland Street is much larger, has scope for a broader range of employment uses, is slightly more detached from residential and is in current active use for light industrial uses.
18. Turning to the acceptability of housing, local plan policy HOU15 applies, this allows for conversion to housing in principle subject to a number of criteria including there being an adequate supply of office premises in the City (this is discussed above), meeting amenity and environmental requirements of policy, the site being accessible to local facilities, the provision of open space, bin and cycle storage. Matters of amenity, environmental requirements, bin and refuse storage are discussed below. In terms of its location the site is in a mixed area although to the south towards Dereham Road the area is predominately residential. The site is within easy walking distance of local services and facilities at Dereham Road District Centre and is within walking distance of the City Centre.

Parking

19. The proposals do not provide for any parking provision and as such there would be no off street parking for the flats. Local plan policy TRA9 applies, this allows for car free housing in highly accessible locations covered by 24 hour parking controls and subject to a number of criteria.
20. In practice there have been a number of cases where car free housing has been permitted since the adoption of the local plan in areas where controlled parking zones are not in operation 24 hours a day. However in this case there is no controlled parking zone and therefore on-street parking is unrestricted. In this respect therefore the proposals are not in accordance with policy and clearly have the potential to increase demand for on-street parking which is already limited.
21. However, the site is considered to be highly accessible, local services and public transport routes are available along Dereham Road. The scheme also makes adequate provision for cycle parking, providing for two spaces per dwelling along with a visitor cycle stand. It is proposed by the applicant to offer car club membership to occupiers of the premises. A S106 agreement could require the basic costs of car club membership to be met by the applicant for a period and for this to be advertised to potential purchasers as well as advising purchasers that there is no off road parking.
22. The above will go some way to assisting the promotion of modes of transport other than the car, although clearly the proposals fail to meet all the requirements of policy TRA9. Having said that it is not considered that it is feasible to provide any

further off site parking. Given the identified lack of demand for this form of office accommodation in this part of the City, the parking situation needs to be weighed against the potential for the building to sit unoccupied if retained as office accommodation and the desirability of providing further housing in line with the objectives of regional policy H1 and Joint Core Strategy policy 4.

23. Although this is a finely balanced decision it is considered that the benefits of providing some form of development on the site and bringing the building into residential use outweigh the parking situation.
24. Consideration has been given to other mitigation measures relating to parking such as provision of an on site car club parking space and car. However it is not considered that such a requirement could be reasonably imposed for a development of this size. Some neighbours have requested that the area form part of a controlled parking zone prior to approval of the proposals, however such an undertaking would not be reasonable or justified given the scale of the proposals.
25. Concern has been raised that the proposals would increase the risk of unauthorised parking in private designated spaces. The nature of the site is such that there are no access restrictions to the parking areas. Enforcement of this would be a private matter. Indeed if there are issues, there are various solutions which could be explored by the owners such as the erection of collapsible parking posts. However, it is not considered necessary to require such facilities should this application be approved and it is not considered that the council needs to act as an intermediary between the leasehold and freeholders in these matters.

Amenity

26. Given the relationship of the building to other properties and the fact that no external alterations or extensions are proposed, the proposals would not result in any overlooking or overshadowing issues.
27. The flats are of a reasonable size and an existing communal amenity space is available to the southeast of the site. It is recommended that any approval be subject to a condition requiring this space to be made available for use of future residents of the flats.
28. Concern has been raised by some residents that the addition of further flats would result in noise from greater use of the corridor and via party walls. Although it is recognised that residents may experience some increase in noise level by having neighbours, given that residential use is not a significant noise generator it is not considered that there would be any significant detrimental affect. In addition approved document E of building regulations sets certain requirements for the passage of sound between party walls.

Design and Energy Efficiency

29. There are no external alterations to the building as part of the proposals. An additional timber cycle and bin store is proposed to the north of the site adjacent to an existing store. The design of this is considered to be acceptable.
30. The proposals are below the threshold of 10 dwellings for decentralised renewable

or low carbon sources of energy to be incorporated into the scheme. The water efficiency requirements of joint core strategy policy 3 apply and a condition is recommended on any approval for the proposals to meet code for sustainable homes level 4 for water efficiency.

Archaeology

31. The site is located within the main area of archaeological interest. However there are no extensive ground works proposed. A small area of foundations is required for the bin and cycle store. Norfolk Archaeological Service has not requested any archaeological conditions and indeed no such condition was requested for the wider redevelopment permitted under 07/00837/F.

Planning Obligations

32. The proposals are for 6 dwellings and therefore one affordable social rented unit is required under Joint Core Strategy Policy 3. The applicants have indicated a two bed unit on the ground floor as an affordable unit. A S106 agreement will be required to secure the affordable housing as well as the provisions for car club membership detailed above.

33. The transport officer has suggested that as the site is part of a wider scheme that a transport contribution could be required. Transport contributions are normally required for developments of 10 or more dwellings. In this case given the existing lawful use of the site as offices, it is considered that the net impact of the proposal would result in a reduction in peak hour traffic movements and therefore a transport contribution could not be justified against the tests for planning obligations set out in the community infrastructure regulations or circular 05/2005.

Conclusions

34. Current policy seeks the retention of business premises unless it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for such premises which would justify their retention. It is considered that the site is not in a recognised office location and the property is likely to have limited scope for use in more industrial forms of B1 use, given its form and location adjoining residential dwellings. There is a significant surplus of similar sized office accommodation which is located in more central locations and on balance the loss of the B1 floorspace is considered to be acceptable in this case.

35. The proposals do not provide for any car parking on the site and do not comply with the requirements of car free parking policy. The lack of parking needs to be weighed against the potential for the building to sit unoccupied if retained as office accommodation and the desirability of providing further housing in line with the objectives of regional policy H1 and Joint Core Strategy policy 4. Although this is a finely balanced decision it is considered that the benefits of providing some form of development on the site and bringing the building into residential use outweigh the lack of parking provision. Note has been taken of recent government advice on promoting growth.

36. It is not considered that there are any significant amenity implications of the

development and subject to the conditions recommended and the completion of a S106 agreement the proposals are considered to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve Application No (11/01329/F Wensum Clothing Co Former 179 Northumberland Street Norwich NR2 4EE) and grant planning permission, subject to the completion of a satisfactory S106 agreement to include the provision of affordable housing and provision for the costs of car club membership to be met for future occupants of the dwellings and subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard time limit of three years;
2. Development to take place in accordance with the approved plans;
3. Refuse and cycle storage and the visitor cycle stand shall be provided prior to first occupation;
4. The existing communal amenity space to the southeast of the site shall be made available to future occupiers of the dwellings;
5. Development to achieve a water consumption rate of no more than 105 litres/person/day, equivalent to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes for water usage.

(Reasons for approval: The decision has been made with particular regard to policies H1, E2, E3 and ENV7 of the adopted East of England Plan, policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the adopted Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk, saved policies HBE3, EP18, EP22, EMP3, EMP5, HOU15, TRA6, TRA7, TRA8, TRA9 and TRA11 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, PPS1, PPS3, PPS4, PPS5 and other material considerations.

Current policy seeks the retention of business premises unless it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for such premises which would justify their retention. It is considered that the site is not in a recognised office location and the property is likely to have limited scope for use in more industrial forms of B1 use, given its form and location adjoining residential dwellings. There is a significant surplus of similar sized office accommodation which is located in more central locations and on balance the loss of the B1 floorspace is considered to be acceptable in this case.

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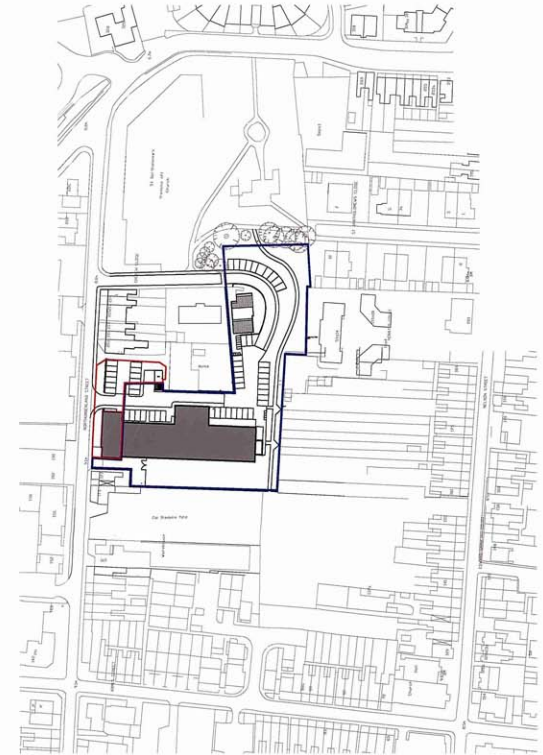
It is not considered that there are any significant amenity implications of the development and subject to the conditions imposed and the S106 agreement the proposals are considered to be acceptable.)



SITE PLAN - Existing- 1:200



SITE PLAN - Proposed- 1:200



LOCATION PLAN - 1:1250

Organisational Development
25 JUL 2011
Planning Reception

CORPORATE RESOURCES
26 JUL 2011
POST ROOM



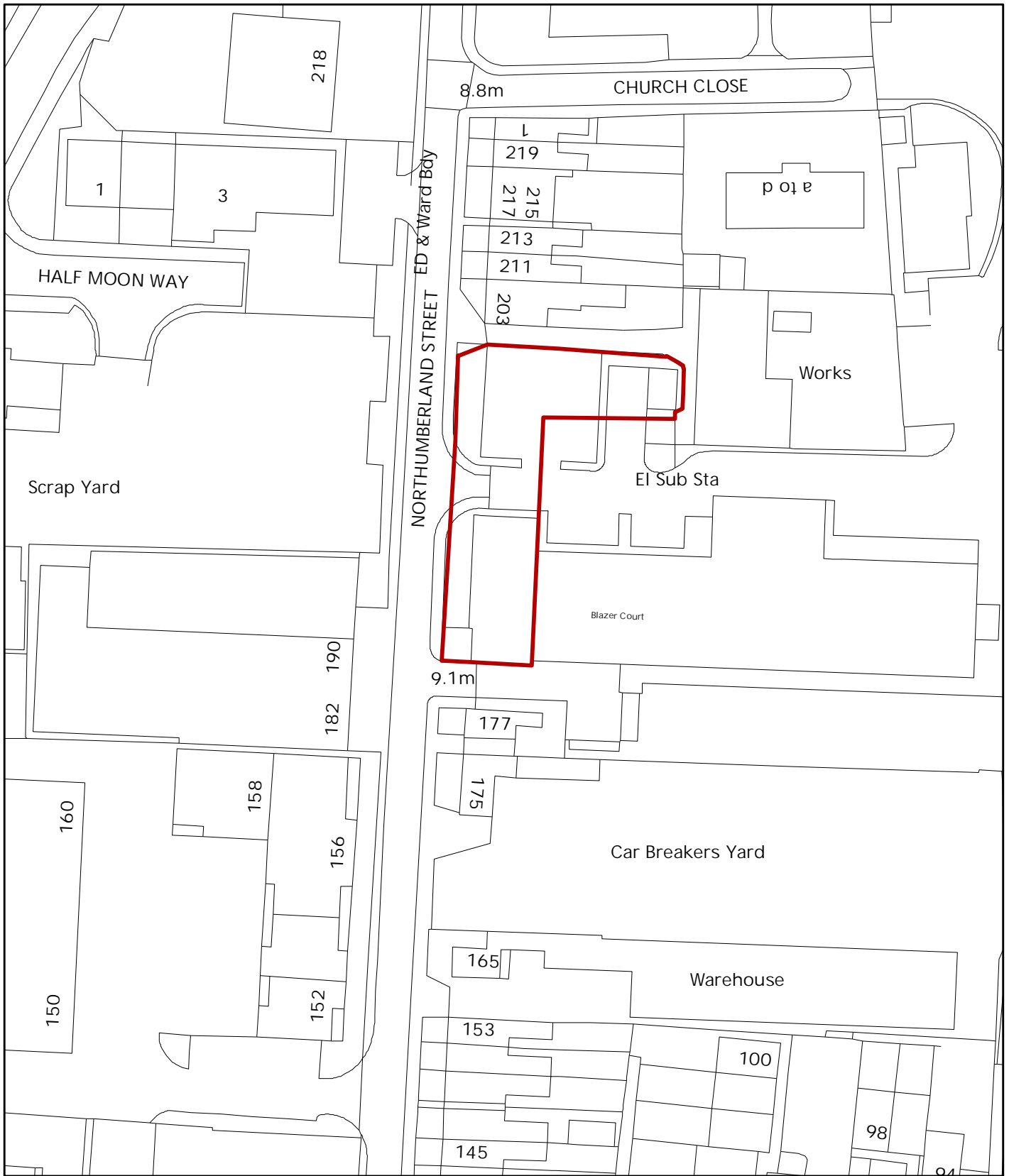
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Client
Ingram PTP
Job
Residential Development
Wensum Yard, Northumberland St
Norwich

Drawing Title
Conversion of offices to apartments
Site Plans & Location Plan

Scale 1:200/1:1250@A1	Date Feb 2011
Drawn By mja	Checked By

- No Dimensions are to be scaled from this drawing.
 - Contractors must verify all figured dimensions at site before commencing any work or making any Shop drawings.
 - This drawing is the sole copyright of A Squared Architects Ltd and no part may be reproduced without the written consent of the above.
 - Site Location Plans are prepared from the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office. Crown Copyright Reserved.
- | No. | Revisions | By | Date |
|-----|--|-----|----------|
| A | Cycle & refuse provision indicated | mja | 24.03.11 |
| B | Cycle & refuse provision amended and clarified | mja | 29.06.11 |
| C | Red & blue lines adjusted. North point added. | mja | 22.07.11 |



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Planning Application No 11/01329/F
 Site Address Wensum Clothing Co, former 179 Northumberland Street Norwich NR2 4EE
 Scale 1:750



No.	Revisions	By	Date
A	Unit 1 indicated as affordable	mja	24.03.11



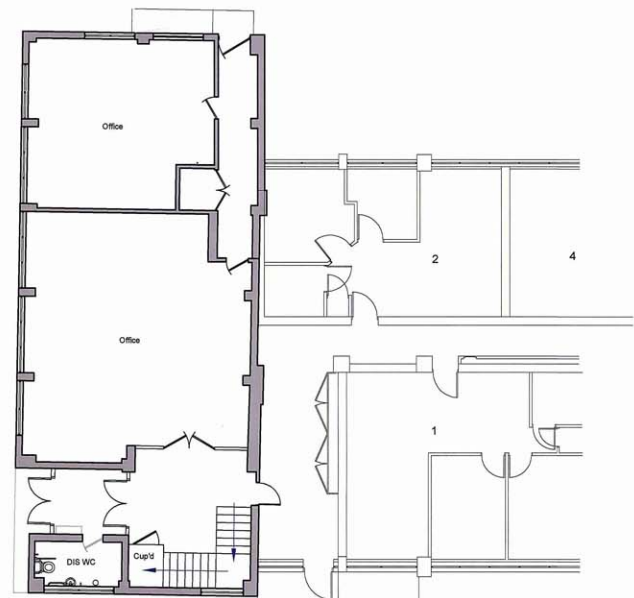
GROUND FLOOR PLAN - Proposed



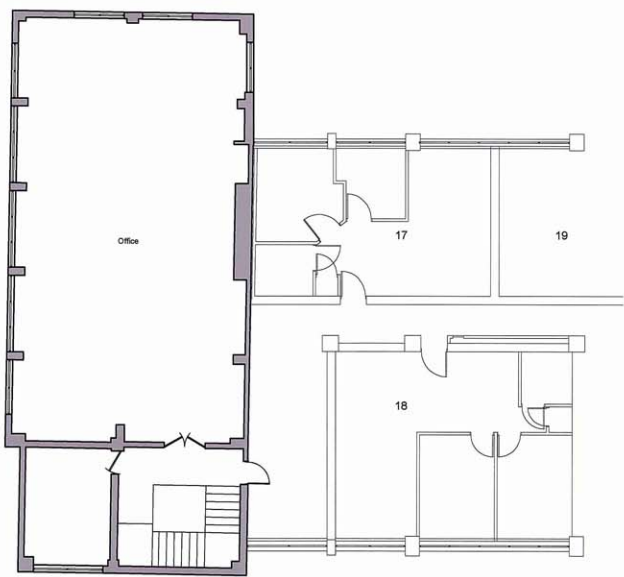
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - Proposed



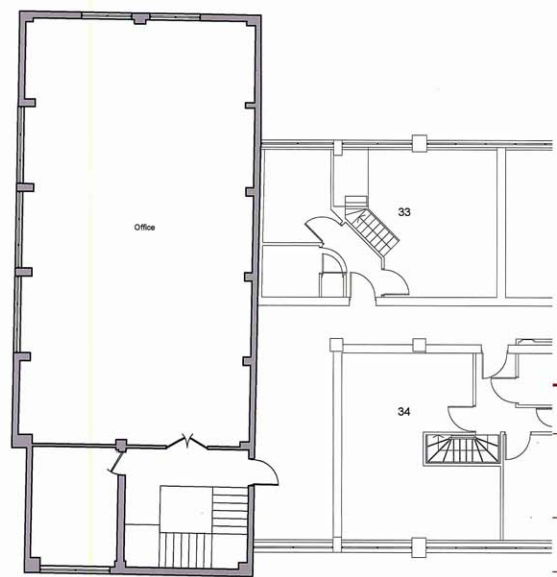
SECOND FLOOR PLAN - Proposed



GROUND FLOOR PLAN - Existing



FIRST FLOOR PLAN - Existing



SECOND FLOOR PLAN - Existing

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POST ROOM

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Job
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Drawing Title
**Conversion of offices to apartments
Existing & Proposed floorplans**

Scale 1:100@ A1	Date Feb 2011
Drawn By mja	Checked By
Drawing No.	Rev. Job No.