

Report for Resolution

Report to Planning Applications Committee
Date 4 February 2009
Report of Head of Planning Services
Subject 09/01367/F & 09/01368/L
YMCA 46 - 48 St Giles Street Norwich NR2 1LP

Item
5(1)

SUMMARY

Description	Erection of 40 new bedsit flats with associated training rooms, office, interview rooms and communal lounge; the demolition of existing gymnasium, and 4 storey accommodation block; alterations to existing building including blocking up openings and forming two new window openings; associated external works.
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Objection
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions
Ward:	Mancroft
Contact Officer:	Mark Brown Senior Planner 01603 212505
Valid date:	10 December 2009
Applicant:	Norwich YMCA Ltd
Agent:	The Design Partnership

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The site is located between St Giles Street and Bethel Street. The site consists of two grade II* listed buildings which front onto St Giles Street. To the rear are a number of later additions comprising of a gymnasium, single storey link building and four storey accommodation block which can be viewed from Bethel Street. These elements are all identified as negative additions within the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.
2. Rigby's Court, a pedestrian passage linking St Giles and Bethel Street is located to the west of the site and borders the site at its junction with Bethel Street. To the east of the site is St Giles Terrace an early C19 row of houses tucked away off Bethel Street. The eastern boundary is marked by a raised planting area occupied by a number of trees of moderate quality and value. The south east corner of the site does not adjoin Bethel Street due a small car park which serves number 60 Bethel Street. An existing concrete hard standing exists between the gym and Bethel Street and is used for car parking and servicing.
3. The site is located within the City Centre Conservation Area and within the Main Area of

Archaeological Interest.

Planning History

4. No relevant recent planning history;

The Proposal

5. Two applications have been submitted, one seeking Listed Building Consent for the demolition of the gym, four storey accommodation block and single storey link to the rear of the site and for repair of the historic rear elevation of the listed buildings and the second seeking Planning Permission for the redevelopment of the site for self-contained bed-sit flats. The accommodation is proposed for the YMCA and would provide 40 units of supported 'move on' accommodation in a four-storey building. In addition to the flats, ancillary training rooms, an office and interview room, communal lounge and training kitchen are proposed at ground floor level facing onto an internal courtyard. The proposals will result in an overall reduction in the intensity of the sites use. The existing site consists of a 90 bed hostel, this will be reduced to accommodation for 40 bedsits.
6. The project is intended to provide accommodation for young people who have previously lived at YMCA's intensive assessment centre adjacent to the Bus Station and who have shown a readiness to move towards greater independency. These proposals along with the assessment centre will ultimately replace the accommodation currently provided at the site.
7. The proposed accommodation rises from 2½ storeys at the junction of Rigby's Court with Bethel Street to four storeys at the eastern side of the site. At this point the block runs north roughly along the line of the existing four storey block although set back slightly in parts. A courtyard and seating area is provided within the centre of the site, following pre-application discussions this has been relocated from the eastern side of the site adjacent to the boundary with St Giles Terrace in order to avoid any noise or amenity impact which the use of this space may have had on adjacent dwellings.
8. The proposals include a new boundary/retaining wall between the proposed flats on Bethel Street and the listed buildings on St Giles Street. Works to the listed buildings to be retained consist of making good and the blocking of openings on the ground floor. The listed buildings are currently being marketed by the YMCA and it is thought that their future use will be the subject of a further application at the site.
9. Access is proposed via Bethel Street under an archway to the courtyard behind. This will provide for the servicing of the site and parking of a single mini bus. This also allows for access to the rear of the listed buildings. A 32 space cycle store is proposed within the site accessed off the courtyard, further cycle parking is also provided for staff and visitors. Bin storage is provided adjacent to the access archway.

Representations Received

10. Advertised on site and in the press. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. One letter of objection has been received from a nearby resident raising concerns over existing levels of disturbance specifically relating to noise from residents congregating along Rigby Court, damage to property, threatening behaviour, physical abuse between residents of the YMCA and narcotics abuse, suggesting that increasing density on the site will only add to these problems. A response to these issues is provided

at paragraph 31.

11. One e-mail in support of the application and more specifically supporting the incorporation of the solar thermal panels proposed at roof level.

Consultation Responses

12. Norwich Society – No improvement to original application which was seen by the Quality Panel. The footprint is being rigidly retained for the block, over-powering St Giles' Terrace. The high new block fronting Bethel Street is not in keeping with the street-scale or the design of Georgian and older, lower buildings – HBE9 – Any new development near to such buildings should respect their setting, style, character and materials; where the development would have a visual impact on the listed building.
13. Design Quality Panel (comments provided related to pre-application proposals which have since had some amendments) – 'The panel would like to have seen a more honest contemporary approach to the design to provide a contrast to existing buildings within the street. It was felt that the scheme appeared to be designed too much around the number of units required by the client rather than providing a scheme that was most suited/made best use of the site, with attractive accommodation for residents. There was concern expressed at the proposed use of space adjacent to St Giles Terrace, and it was considered that better use could be made of the internal courtyard space with facilities in the main residential block orientated towards this space rather than east. The panel were also disappointed to see that sustainable measures had been thought about at a relatively late stage rather than being integral to the design approach.'

Since receiving the comments of the design quality panel the proposals have been amended to relocate the main external space from the area adjacent to St Giles Terrace to the centre of the site. Communal facilities have been orientated towards the central courtyard to make better use of this space. The proposals have also been amended to provide for a renewable energy solution to meet the 10% requirement of policy ENG1 of the East of England Plan.

14. Norfolk Constabulary – The new entrance on Bethel Street will provide reception staff with good natural surveillance and an awareness of callers' identity. The 32 space cycle store in the corner of the courtyard is not well situated, due to a lack of surveillance from routinely occupied rooms. Practice has shown that this type of cycle store allows crime to take place unseen, with the result that cycles will not be stored in that location by residents, who find other unofficial places to fix them to.
15. Tree Officer – There are no significant arboricultural implications that can't be overcome by conditioning full compliance with the AIA and all the tree protection recommendations therein.
16. Design and Conservation – From both a listed building and an urban design/conservation area point of view this is a welcomed proposal. The rear of 48 St Giles will be opened up with the removal of later additions, and the creation of more rear space should provide more attractive views of the rear elevation. Although relatively 'quiet' in their architectural treatment, the new buildings at the rear have taken into account the surrounding context without becoming too pastiche. Through the use of good quality materials and crisp detailing the buildings will achieve a contemporary feel. Although the overall form and massing is broken up, the added emphasis given to the entrance adds legibility to the development. Also the provision of internal courtyard space with seating area creates an

enclosed and semi private space that will allow tenants to have 'their own space' within the development enclosed both visually and in terms of sound nuisance from surrounding residences.

17. Environmental Health – In general terms it appears that the amount of accommodation is being reduced and therefore less likely to provide a loss of amenity to the surrounding properties. I am grateful for the common room being moved away from the residents in St Giles Terrace and also that the exit through to St Giles Terrace will be for emergencies only.

There is however a likelihood of nuisance arising from the demolition and construction in the form of dust and noise. Also there is no mention in the planning documentation as to whether there is any asbestos within the structures to be demolished. With this in mind I would ask that the following points are included as informatives on any permission granted:-

- An asbestos survey of the site should be carried out prior to any site clearance. Any asbestos encountered on the site, either as part of the existing buildings or as fill material, should be handled and disposed of as per current Government guidelines and regulations.
- All practical methods should be taken to prevent dust emission from the site during the demolition/construction phases. Such methods may include water suppression or damping down as necessary. Where materials are stored in the open then suitable precautions should be taken to prevent wind whipping.
- Demolition/construction site noise should be mitigated by appropriate times of operation, direct noise minimisation practices and through liaison with NCC officers. These issues can be agreed once a main contractor has been appointed.

18. Norfolk Landscape Archaeology – Any consent should be subject to a condition for full archaeological evaluation.

19. Community Safety Officer – No response

20. English Heritage – No response

21. Amenity Societies – No response

Relevant Planning Policies

Relevant National Planning Policies

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS3 – Housing

PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPG13 – Transport

PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

PPG16 – Archaeology and Planning

PPG24 – Planning and Noise

Relevant Strategic Regional Planning Policies

East of England Plan 2008

ENG1 – Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance

ENV6 – The Historic Environment

ENV7 – Quality in the Built Environment

WM6 – Waste Management in Development

Relevant Local Plan Policies

City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan 2004

HOU4 – Affordable housing
HOU5 – Accessible housing
HOU6 – Requirements of housing developments
HOU18 – Development of new flats and bedsits
HOU19 – Residential Institutions
HBE3 – Area of Main Archaeological interest
HBE8 – Development in Conservation Areas
HBE9 – Development affecting listed buildings
HBE12 – High standard of design
HBE19 – Site design for safety and security
NE9 – Comprehensive landscaping scheme and tree planting
EP18 – High standard of energy efficiency for new development
EP22 – High standard of amenity for residential development
SR4 – Open space provision in development sites
TRA3 – Modal shift measures
TRA5 – Design for vehicular movement
TRA7 – Cycle parking provision
TRA8 – Servicing provision
TRA9 – Car free housing – criteria

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

Principle of Development

Policy Considerations

22. In terms of policy HOU18 and HOU19 of the local plan are considered to be the most appropriate policies to assess the principle of the development against, although neither deal directly with the form of accommodation proposed. The site has been in use by the YMCA since the late C19 and therefore the use of the site is well established. As previously stated above the proposals will result in a reduction in accommodation at the site from 90 rooms down to 40, therefore lowering the intensity of the sites use as a YMCA hostel.
23. In terms of the sites redevelopment the main considerations are the demolition of the buildings to the rear of the site, the implications for the listed buildings, design and neighbour amenity, these are discussed further below.

Demolition and Implications for the Listed Buildings

24. The buildings proposed for demolition could be considered as independent buildings within the curtilage of the listed buildings and are of no architectural or historic importance. Their design is not considerate of the existing street scene in terms of orientation, historic grain, massing and materials and both buildings are considered to have a negative impact on the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.
25. The majority of the work to the listed building will involve making good the rear elevation following the removal of the later connecting glazed links. The details submitted indicate the areas and general method of repair required to the listed building. The full extent of

repairs required will not be known until the link building is demolished. Further details will be required as to the methodology and materials to be used in the repairs. It is suggested that these form a condition of any listed building consent. Subject to such a condition it is considered that the demolition of the buildings and repair of the listed buildings is considered acceptable.

Design

26. The layout of the proposals provides a continuous frontage to Bethel Street. This frontage is partly broken by the car park to number 60 Bethel Street, in separate ownership, which results in the four storey block being set back further from the street. The majority of accommodation is provided within the four storey block which runs north from Bethel Street. Given the scale of what exists on the site this is considered acceptable, the new block is of significantly greater design quality and will largely be hidden from view by the other proposed buildings fronting onto Bethel Street.
27. The design of the new buildings take their cue from the predominant scale and form of buildings found within this part of the conservation area, but also incorporate elements/details that give them a more contemporary feel. Given the need to provide 40 bedsit units and training rooms, the arrangement of spaces fits in the site successfully without harming the character or appearance of the conservation area. Through removing the existing negative buildings and reinstating a more contextual street frontage it is considered that the proposals will enhance this part of the conservation area.
28. Within the site the external spaces have now been designed to integrate better with the uses at ground floor level and should provide a pleasant intimate space which has a degree of enclosure and is well overlooked. It is also worth noting that it is not just the Bethel Street elevation that has been considered of the appearance of the conservation area but also the elevation looking into the courtyard, and the elevation with its aspect facing towards St Giles Street, both of which are designed as important elevations with careful use of massing and materials to effectively break up the scale and bulk.
29. With regard to the setting of the listed building, at the time of its original design the building had a large rear garden stretching back to Bethel Street. This remained the case until the building of the gymnasium. Apart from allowing for some reversibility, the developments at the rear had little regard for views of the rear elevation of 48 St Giles Street as it existed and there was little provision of external space. The new proposals will open up views of the building through removing the glazed roof extension, creating space immediately to the rear. The creation of the courtyard and seating areas should create a pleasant amenity space overlooked by adjacent buildings, as well as opening up views of the rear of the 48 St Giles. Some thought has also been given to the form and appearance of the rear elevations overlooking the courtyard and the gable ends facing the rear of the listed building. Overall, although the separation of the site is unfortunate, such development of rear gardens is not without precedent in the city centre, and the redesign of this part of the site will both provide more attractive external spaces as well as buildings that are more sympathetic to the setting of the listed building than their predecessors.
30. In relation to materials, a significant amount of information has been submitted with the application. The details that have been provided for bricks, roofing material, rainwater goods, render and window details are all considered to be acceptable and should enhance the attractiveness of the buildings. Mortar mix should be conditioned to ensure that the colour of the pointing does not detract from the quality of the brickwork, in addition, further

details in the form of large scale plans of the windows and window openings should be conditioned, to ensure that their set back, frame size and detail is appropriate.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Noise and Disturbance

31. Concerns have been raised by a local resident relating to antisocial behaviour in the area and that increasing density on the site may worsen the situation. The density/number of bedsits on the site is however being reduced, in addition the redevelopment proposals will provide enlarged rooms and enhanced communal facilities as well as improved external seating areas within the confines of the development itself. Following pre-application discussions, the communal areas and internal courtyard have been relocated from the eastern side of the site adjacent to St Giles Terrace to a position in the centre of the site which is well overlooked and enclosed by the development site. This should significantly decrease any potential noise disturbance to the terrace.

Overlooking

32. In terms of overlooking the main impact to assess is that on St Giles Terrace. Due to the topography of the site it is the upper storeys of the east facing elevation of the four storey block which could result in some impact in terms of overlooking. The windows on this elevation are all on or set back from the line of the existing building in this location, whilst there would be a degree of over looking from these windows to St Giles Terrace, it is not considered that this would in any way be worse than the existing situation. The total number of windows facing this direction is being reduced and, as detailed further below, the trees along the boundary which provide some screening are to be retained.

33.3 Rigby Court is the only other property which it is considered could potentially experience some impact in terms of overlooking, however given the juxtaposition of the new buildings with 3 Rigby Court it is not considered that any impact would be significant, or in any way at a level which could lead to the refusal of the application.

Overshadowing

34. It is not considered that the proposals would have any significant implications for overshadowing of adjacent properties.

Access and Servicing

35. A new access is proposed from Bethel Street which provides for servicing and parking for a single minibus. This also provides for access to the rear of the listed buildings on St Giles Street. Other than this the proposals are car free.

36. Cycle parking is provided for a total of 43 cycle parking spaces, this consists of a covered and enclosed store for residents providing 32 spaces, 6 staff cycle spaces and 5 visitor spaces. Norfolk Constabulary has raised concerns over the level of over looking of the cycle store. Whilst it could be better, the entrance to the store is overlooked by some upper floor bedsits, given the size of the store it is difficult to see how the store could be relocated to a more prominent position without compromising the layout and design of the site. The store is accessed from an enclosed courtyard, and is physically enclosed with double doors which can be fitted with locks.

Archaeology

37. The site is located within the Area of Main Archaeological Interest and the application has been submitted with a Historic Building Investigation which focuses on the existing cellars. The report identifies that none of the existing open cellars extend under the development site. It identifies that a further cellar was seen during the construction of the gymnasium in 1961 but this appears to be unconnected to the existing open network below the listed buildings. Any planning permission should be subject to a condition for full archaeological evaluation of the site.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

38. The site is located in a central location with excellent links to local services and non-car forms of transport. The majority of accommodation is orientated with an east, west or south facing aspect. It is proposed that the development would aim to achieve a minimum of level 3 code for sustainable homes.
39. In terms of renewable energy it is proposed to meet the 10% energy requirement of policy ENG1 of the East of England Plan via the provision of photovoltaic panels and solar thermal panels on the roof. The proposals are for provision by either 100% photovoltaic panels or 90% photovoltaic panels and 10% solar thermal panels. The majority of the panels would be located on flat roof areas of the four storey block and on a flat roof area on the 2½ storey block facing west along Bethel Street. Views of the panels from street level would be either limited or non-existent due to the pitched roofs which wrap around the flat roof areas. Any consent should be subject to exact details of the proposed split between photovoltaics and solar thermal panels, including the exact area of each required to meet the 10% requirement and details of management arrangements for their future operation and use. A section through the panels should also form part of the condition in order to demonstrate their size and to show how they are to be mounted.

Trees and Landscaping

Impact on Trees

40. An arboricultural implications assessment has been submitted with the application, this deals with the trees located along the eastern boundary of the site with St Giles Terrace. This details that the proposals will not require the removal of any trees and provides details for the protection of the trees during development and for landscaping works within the beds around the trees. It is considered that subject to conditioning full compliance with the implications assessment that the proposals are acceptable.

Landscaping

41. A landscaping plan has been provided with the application, the layout is considered to be appropriate in principle, although further details in the form of species of soft landscaping and materials for hard landscaping, including retaining walls and railings should be required via condition.

Planning Obligations

42. As the application is not for open market housing, but for YMCA hostel accommodation the proposals are not considered to trigger the need for affordable housing. It is also not considered appropriate to require any form of child playspace contribution due to the nature of the proposals. In terms of open space and transport contributions, these are not

triggered as there is an overall reduction in the numbers of units on the site in total.

Conclusions

43. The use of the site for YMCA accommodation is well established and it is considered that the proposals represent an enhancement to the character of this part of the conservation area and to the setting of the two grade II* listed buildings on the site. In terms of neighbour amenity given the decrease in the number of units on the site and improved on site facilities, it is considered that any impact would be reduced when compared to the existing situation. A number of conditions are proposed which deal with the provision of cycle and bin provision, provision of renewable energy systems, archaeology and landscaping, subject to these the proposals are considered to be acceptable and in line with development plan policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve:-

(1) Application No (09/01367/F, YMCA 46 - 48 St Giles Street Norwich NR2 1LP) and grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:-

1. Standard time limit;
2. Development to be carried out in full accordance with the approved plans;
3. Details of mortar mix to be submitted and agreed;
4. Large scale elevations and sections of the windows and window openings (minimum scale 1:20);
5. A scheme for archaeological evaluation to be submitted;
6. Cycle stores and bin stores to be provided prior to first occupation;
7. Full details of the renewable energy system/s to be submitted and to be provided and in use prior to first occupation;
8. Full compliance with the Arboricultural Implications Assessment;
9. Details of hard and soft landscaping to be submitted.

(Reasons for approval: The decision has been made with particular regard to policies ENG1, ENV6, ENV7 and WM6 of the adopted East of England Plan, saved policies HOU4, HOU5, HOU6, HOU18, HOU19, HBE3, HBE8, HBE9, HBE12, HBE19, NE9, EP18, EP22, SR4, TRA3, TRA5, TRA7, TRA8 and TRA9 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan, PPS1, PPS3, PPS9, PPG13, PPG15, PPG16, PPG24 and other material considerations.

The use of the site for YMCA accommodation is well established and it is considered that the proposals represent an enhancement to the character of this part of the conservation area and to the setting of the two grade II* listed buildings on the site. In terms of neighbour amenity given the decrease in the number of units on the site and improved on site facilities, it is considered that any impact would be reduced when compared to the existing situation. A number of conditions are proposed which deal with the provision of cycle and bin provision, provision of renewable energy systems, archaeology and landscaping, subject to these the proposals are considered to be acceptable and in line with development plan policy.)

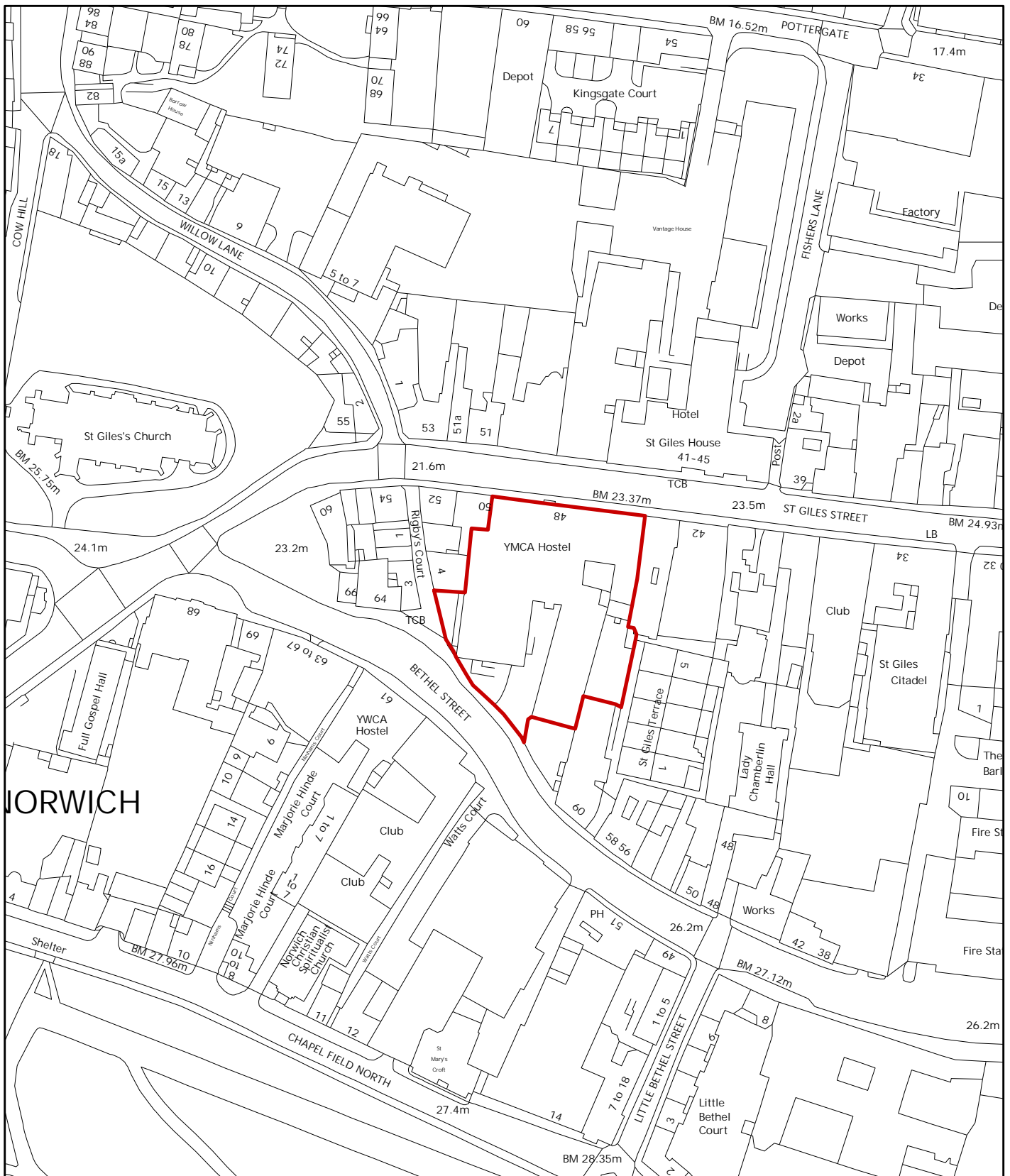
(2) Application No (09/01368/L, YMCA 46 - 48 St Giles Street Norwich NR2 1LP enter application number and address) and grant listed building consent, subject to the following

conditions:

1. Standard time limit;
2. Submission of a schedule of repairs to the listed building following the demolition of those buildings and structures to be removed. The schedule shall provide full details of all repairs and blocking of openings indicated on the approved plans and details of any further repairs which become apparent following the demolition of the buildings.

(Reasons for approval: The decision has been made with particular regard to policy ENV6 of the adopted East of England Plan, saved policies HBE8 and HBE9 of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan and PPG15.

It is considered that the demolition of the existing buildings along the Bethel Street frontage and the reinstatement of the rear of the listed buildings will have a positive impact on the character of this part of the conservation area and on the setting of the two grade II* listed buildings on the site. Conditions relating to the methodology and materials to be used for repairs are imposed to ensure that repairs are carried out in an appropriate fashion with acceptable materials in order to protect the fabric and character of the listed buildings. Subject to these conditions the proposals are considered to be acceptable and in line with development plan policy.)



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Planning Application No - 09/01367/F
 Site Address - YMCA 46-48 St Giles Street
 Scale - 1250



NORWICH
 City Council

PLANNING SERVICES

