Report to	Planning applications committee	**Item**
Date	2 October 2014	4B
Report of	Head of planning services	
Subject	Application no 14/00892/MA The Happisburgh CBE Building, Norwich City College, 5 Ipswich Road, Norwich NR2 2LJ	

SUMMARY

Description:	Retrospective minor amendments to the previous permission 11/01356/F: 'Erection of single and two storey modular buildings on derelict site adjacent to the Norfolk Building.' Changes vary original Conditions 2 (design), 4 (tree works), 5 (landscaping), 6 (renewable energy), and 8 (disabled access), to propose changes in height, outward appearance, layout, materials, fenestration, and fire stair, omission of a print room building, replacing ramp access with disabled lift, removal of roof-top solar panels, and addition of roof top safety railings.
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Objection
Recommendation:	Approve
Ward:	Town Close
Contact Officer:	Rob Parkinson Senior Planning Officer 01603 212765
Valid Date:	23 July 2014
Applicant:	City College Norwich
Agent:	Bidwells LLP

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The site is within the City College campus on Ipswich Road, at the rear of the site, accessed via the northern Breckland Drive entrance which passes the main car park on the left. The site has been developed into the Happisburgh Building, seen in photographs attached to this report. The building is almost ready for use, if not already occupied.

2. Immediate neighbouring uses are the classrooms, sports hall and drama/studio space of the two-storey modern Norfolk Building adjacent to the south, single-storey nursery building on a raised grassed area behind the building to the east, the surface level car park to the north-west and the site of the new single-storey Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) building to the west at the rear of the Norwich Building (in the place of the former single-storey saw-toothed ex-

factory AA-Block). The nearest residential dwellings are the gardens of Grove Road to the east.

3. The site used to be the vacant site of the former building (the H-Block) which was removed years ago on safety grounds, leaving only a raised foundation platform behind.

Constraints

4. This part of the campus is neither in nor adjacent to the Conservation Area. The College campus has a number of protected trees around its boundaries (TPO 298), including a TPO Woodland (mixed species, row of trees) and TPO single lime tree to the north-east behind the nursery, and TPO Area 8no. Norway Maple trees (group G2) to the south-east, behind the Norfolk Building.

Topography

5. The site slopes upwards slightly from north to south. The plinth slab is approximately 2m high from ground level at the centre, although the slope means this changes depending on where this is measured.

Planning History

6. An overarching masterplan for the comprehensive redevelopment of the campus was permitted in December 2008 (ref 08/00255/O) and was revised through permission 12/00487/VC. The redevelopment is intended to be provided in a phased manner, and as such the Reserved Matters for each phase can be submitted for approval until September 2015, with development required to commence within two years of approval of each phase. The outline permission is implemented through revised consent 12/00487/VC and subsequent construction of the Creative Arts Building 12/00621/RM.

7. The H-Block site the subject of this application is sited in an area that was intended to form the northernmost part of a surface level car park containing 345 spaces and part of the site-wide landscaping 'Green Perimeter' as seen in Parameter Plans 1 and 2 of permission 08/00255/O / 12/00487/VC. As such, the Happisburgh Building was not proposed as part of the outline scheme and the construction process was a temporary proposal in both design and intention.

8. The Happisburgh Building's original permission 11/01356/F was granted in November 2011. It was anticipated to provide two modular buildings; a smaller two-storey block on the north end of the site was approved to contain print room facilities at ground floor level and an open plan office at first floor, and a larger 1-2 storey building was approved to contain open space teaching areas, classrooms and ancillary offices, with external decking and seating areas in front of the block. The overall additional floorspace was 1,125sq.m. of non-residential D1 Use Class floorspace.

9. Opposite the Happisburgh Building, to the west, the College have recently demolished the former AA Block saw-toothed single-storey classrooms at the back of the Norwich Building. In its place, a Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

(PMLD) building and a new 'college lawn' is under construction in line with approval 13/01940/RM (Feb. 2014).

10. Application 14/00891/D (Sept. 2014) has been refused in respect of landscaping, but has approved the Happisburgh Building's water efficiency and rainwater harvesting techniques, disabled access proposals and contamination assessment.

Equality and Diversity Issues

There are no significant equality or diversity issues. Although the proposals include changes to the original permission's disabled access arrangements, an alternative means of access has been installed.

The Proposal

11. The application being considered seeks to regularise the changed nature of the development, reflecting the fact that the Happisburgh Building as built is notably different to that previously approved.

12. The original permission and delegated officer report is available using reference 11/01356/F at: http://planning.norwich.gov.uk/online-applications/

13. The changes considered in this application comprise:

- removing the former two-storey print room building;
- making the teaching building a shorter/wider building;
- making the teaching building slightly lower and removing the raised rooflights;
- changing the interior layouts and relocating the lift from the centre to the front;
- removing large multi-paned windows from both storeys on the front elevation;
- installing perimeter safety rails all around the edges of the three roofs;
- removing the required solar panels and relocating them to the Norwich Building;
- installing a new fire staircase emergency exist at the rear of the building;
- changing the means of disabled access;
- changing the materials and cladding techniques for covering the raised plinth; and,
- revising the landscaping proposals to account for the loss of the print rooms.

Representations Received

14. Advertised on site and in the press. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. 1 letter of representation has been received as summarised below.

Issues Raised	Response
Height – the drawings are unclear, but if the building height is raised this would be unacceptable.	See paragraphs 19-21 and 30-32.
Safety railings – the railings design is unattractive.	See paragraphs 19-21 and 30-32.

ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Planning Policies

The following policies relate only to the changes at hand.

National Planning Policy Framework:
Section 7 – Requiring good design
Section 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Relevant policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2014
Policy 1 – Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets
Policy 2 – Promoting good design
Policy 3 – Energy and water
Policy 7 – Supporting communities
Policy 9 – Strategy for growth in the Norwich Policy Area
Policy 12 – Remainder of Norwich area

Relevant saved policies of the adopted City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan 2004
NE9 - Comprehensive landscaping scheme and tree planting
HBE12 - High quality of design in new developments
EP16 - Water conservation and sustainable drainage systems
EP18 - High standard of energy efficiency in new developments
EP22 - High standard of amenity for residential occupiers

Other Material Considerations
Written Ministerial Statement: Planning for Schools Development, August 2011.

Principle of Development

Policy Considerations

15. The principle of the development is supported as a successful reuse of a brownfield site. The new internal arrangements and increased teaching space could increase student numbers but this is a minor addition and relocation of existing students only. The loss of the print room facilities is acceptable because the PMLD building will provide a replacement high quality facility, but will need a suitable landscaping

scheme to be provided in its place.

Impact on Living Conditions

16. The new building has been confirmed to be lower in its solid form than the original permission. At the rear elevation facing residential neighbours and the nursery, the 2011 plans showed a height measuring 7.8m from ground to the tallest flat roof and the as-built scheme is 7.3m from ground to flat roof; therefore the building itself is actually lower than the 2011 proposals. However adding the safety railings makes the building 0.7m taller, becoming 8.0m high at the back. The first floor rear façade remains without windows, so in its current form there will be no additional overlooking, overbearing design nor overshadowing to the closest non-college neighbours.

17. Adding the safety railings does cause a detrimental effect though. The railings make a sizeable building even more prominent and animated when seen from the rear, creating the effect of bringing it closer to dwellings, and neither does it look attractive or of a sufficient design standard. This causes a detriment to outlook and amenity. In addition there will be a loss of privacy if the roof is accessed for anything more than routine maintenance, but as the college has installed them to provide access to the roof to clear leaf fall, this will not occur frequently and so there will no impact on residential neighbours or the adjacent nursery from that.

18. The fire escape staircase is not visible above existing boundary treatments and will not be used other than in exceptional circumstance, so will not cause overlooking.

Design

19. Notwithstanding that the building is really only seen at close quarters when travelling into the site from Breckland Drive, so is not widely visible to the general public, when viewed from the front the reasonably high quality appearance is rather let down by the railings and the loss of symmetry caused by removing the front windows. This is to the detriment of the college's overall design.

20. Had the building been positioned anywhere else on site rather than being tucked away at the rear, and had it been more of a permanent building, the loss of symmetry and distortion created by removing the windows would be more of an issue. However, the building is built and the change arose from needing to relocate the lift to the front of the building (due to structural issues with the underlying plinth), and it is not expedient or feasible to require any retrospective changes to fenestration.

21. The use of timber cladding boards around the plinth is acceptable and relates to the upper storey. So long as seating / landscaping breaks up the long mass as intended within the courtyard, this is acceptable.

Wheelchair access

22. Wheelchair access has been provided through an external platform lift next to the Norfolk Building under the Norfolk Building canopy. This is in lieu of providing extensive ramps across the building frontage as originally expected, although does still need a ramp in front of the southern half of the building (fitted with anti-slip matting where necessary). Next to the platform lift, some of the existing stairs are

removed and the walkway built-out to ensure appropriate access and manoeuvrability. The landscape officer has reservations about this element, and it could create a pinch point on the stairs, but it is necessary to account for the outward-opening doors of the lift.

23. The revised arrangement takes up the 2.1m level difference between the forecourt (30.4m AOD existing ground level) and the finished floor level (32.5m AOD). Having a smaller footprint also allows the area in front of the building to become a larger space, with potential for imaginative landscaping.

Landscaping

24. Notwithstanding its 'temporary' nature, there are no planning restrictions on the duration of use of the Happisburgh Building, and the landscaping and function of the space outside both the PMLD Block and the H-Block was expected to be complementary, linked to the north-south Broadland Drive pedestrian concourse.

25. The absence of landscaping to animate the forecourt / plaza and Broadland Drive pedestrian concourse also contributes to a stark environment and poor thoroughfare. Landscaping conditions will need to require a strategy which is clear on the need to re-animate this space, although doing so will include working with the college to ensure it is able to use the plaza effectively such as with 'outdoor market lessons' or its fresher fair.

26. Tree planting is necessary to compensate for trees lost previously. With some careful selection, trees planted on the north and south-east boundaries will help screen from view the building and any future raised screen installed around the railings.

27. As there are no proposals in the landscaping scheme for either the courtyard / plaza area in front of the new Happisburgh Building, nor the north-south pedestrian concourse link across campus, the spaces remain an uninspiring and unattractive link between the buildings and important parts of the campus, including links between the car park to the north and south, and the various important destinations linked to this spine route, including the new creative arts building, the Norwich building, student print-room facilities within the adjacent development, and the Norfolk building and its café.

28. The lack of frontage landscaping also leaves an inappropriate setting to the new development itself. With no interesting surfacing material decorations and/or seating or sculptural pieces the area is not animated and does not have identity or a sense of place to both the courtyard and concourse, and fails to provide a much-needed external area for recreation as a terminus to the priority route through the campus. Further, the limited wall-mounted LED lighting proposed on the building itself provides no illumination to the courtyard space and/or through-route linking the car park with the rest of the campus, so fails to provide appropriate safety to students, visitors and teachers alike.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

29. The development itself no longer provides the 10% energy generation expected by policy, but the college has instead installed the necessary amount of solar panels to

the adjacent Norwich Building. Given the Happisburgh Building's temporary nature, this is a longer-term sustainable solution and is acceptable.

Conclusions – Regularising the development in an acceptable manner

30. In terms of the altered appearance of the development, with the exception of the safety railings which are not an acceptable design and create a loss of amenity, the changes are not considered detrimental nor feasible to rectify / reinstate. However, there are some shortcomings which can be relatively easily adapted without prohibitive cost or inconvenience to college activities.

31. The College have confirmed that they will be able to work with the LPA to lessen the impact of the railings. There is an appreciation that they are needed for maintenance and that alternative systems are hindered by the modular building construction, but their current effect is detrimental. The College has agreed to investigate solutions, and agreed that changes can be agreed within 3 months of the date of permission. This is a pragmatic solution and only if the applicant fails to satisfactorily resolve the matter via condition would enforcement action be appropriate.

32. The college has agreed that possible solutions could include adding a new safe maintenance system, or installing a screen barrier around the railings, as well as choosing appropriate trees for screening. It is acknowledged that adding a screen would raise the solid height of the building above the previous permission, but the 0.2-0.5m increase necessary would have no discernable impact on amenity over the distances involved, and the tree planting would help break the mass of the building. The lack of landscaping around the site can also be resolved by conditions which are outstanding anyway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve Application No 14/00892/MA at City College, 5 Ipswich Road, Norwich, and grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved plans.
2. Within 3 months of the date of the permission, a scheme for removing the rooftop railings and/or concealing the rooftop railings shall be submitted for the LPA approval, and shall be installed within 3 months thereafter.
3. Within 3 months of the date of permission a landscaping scheme shall be submitted for LPA approval. This shall include landscaping of the former print room space, the northern boundary, the frontage / forecourt, and the Broadland Drive concourse. The details shall be provided within 3 months thereafter.
4. The premises shall be used only as a classroom facility (as original permission).
5. Development shall retain the wheelchair lift for the duration of the building's use.
6. No additional plant or machinery shall be installed without prior consent.

Article 31(1)(cc) Statement

The local planning authority in making its decision has had due regard to paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the development plan, national planning policy and other material considerations. Following negotiations with the applicant and their agreement to make subsequent amendments the application has been approved subject to appropriate conditions and for the reasons outlined in the officer report.