#### **Report for Resolution**

Report to<br/>DatePlanning Applications Committee<br/>31 May 2012Item<br/>6(1)Report of<br/>SubjectHead of Planning Services6(1)

# SUMMARY

Description:	Internal alterations and refurbishments comprising of the removal of some internal walls to facilitate larger office areas; installation of new power and data points in the floor together with revised dado power and data system; updating lighting to office areas; and associated works.		
Reason for	City Council Application		
consideration at			
Committee:			
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions and the agreement of the National Planning Casework Unit		
Ward:	Mancroft		
Contact Officer:	Kate Knights	Conservation and Design Officer	
	_	01603 212200	
Valid Date:	20th March 2012		
Applicant:	Norwich City Council		
Agent:	Mr Alan Wright, NPS		

# INTRODUCTION

# The Site

### **Location and Context**

1. City Hall is situated in a prominent location overlooking the market within the City Centre Conservation Area. It is a grade II\* listed building, which means that it is of particular architectural and historic significance (only 5.5% of the country's listed buildings are grade II\* listed).

2. City Hall was designed by the architects C.H. James and S. Rowland Pierce in 1932 and was opened by King George VI in 1938. The architects were appointed following an architectural competition and their design reflected the detailed guidelines set out by the architect Robert Atkinson who was appointed by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to supervise and assess the competition. Atkinson's ideas influenced the whole of the immediate area and resulted in the erection of the War Memorial Gardens, improvements to the market and improvements to traffic circulation within the civic centre. Many important sculptors, artists and textile designers contributed to the building which contains significant sculpture in stone and bronze, painted ceilings, important textiles, as well as furniture designed by the architects especially for the building.

3. Norwich City Hall is widely acknowledged to be one of Britain's finest municipal buildings of

the interwar period. The building is erected in an austere Classical style but with Art Deco detailing that can be found inside the building as well as externally.

4. This application relates primarily to internal alterations and at present City Hall retains much of its original internal layout. Apart from the public areas and the high status spaces such as those found on the first floor, the building is characterised by small cellular offices accessed off corridors running around the lightwells that are situated to the north and south of the central stair core. This plan form reflects the civic functions of the building when it was built and there is a clear hierarchy of spaces that can be seen in the architecture. The plan form is therefore considered a significant aspect of the building's importance.

#### Constraints

5. The building is grade II\* listed and within the City Centre Conservation Area. City Hall is situated within the 'Civic' character area of the Conservation Area Appraisal.

#### **Planning History**

6. The most recent application was for listed building consent for a wind speed anemometer on the roof of City Hall (application no: 11/02079/L; granted February 2012) and application no: 11/01615/L for solar panels on the roof of City Hall (application no: 11/01615/L; granted October 2011).

#### **Equality and Diversity Issues**

7. The proposals include a number of new disabled WC facilities.

# **The Proposal**

8. The applicant seeks consent for the following alterations:

Lower Ground Floor

- The removal of original and non-original walls between offices and within the former canteen area in order to provide larger open plan offices.
- Creation of a new disabled WC in room 16A.
- The former Marriage Room (Earlham Room) will be left intact.

#### Ground floor

- The removal of original and non-original walls between offices in order to provide larger open plan offices.
- The removal of an area of corridor wall within the north-west corridor to provide a larger open plan office area and the installation of a new kitchenette in this area.
- The installation of a new disabled WC and new Female WC at the northern end

of this floor.

- The application does not cover the southern part of the ground floor (existing customer contact area) or the area under the Council Chamber as alterations here are expected in a separate application.
- The former Accountant's Office (room 113) will be left intact.

#### First Floor

- The removal of original and non-original walls between offices in order to provide larger open plan offices.
- The high status areas such as the committee rooms (including those currently used as offices), Lord Mayor's Parlour, Council Chamber, North Room and Civic Regalia room will be left intact.

#### Second Floor

- The removal of original and non-original walls between offices in order to provide larger open plan offices.
- The removal of the existing planning reception desk and glazed screens in the reception area.
- Installation of two new kitchenettes and two new disabled WCs.
- A new partition in front of room 300
- The former Town Clerk's Office (room 313) will be retained unaltered.

#### Third Floor

- The removal of original and non-original walls between offices in order to provide larger open plan offices.
- The removal of corridor walls to create larger open plan office areas.
- Improvements to the third floor lobby including a new partition between the lobby and room 400.
- The installation of two new kitchenettes and two new disabled WCs.
- The installation of new glazed screens and doors within the west corridors.

#### General works

- Where original walls are due to be removed it is in most instances intended that nibs and downstands will be retained so that the original plan form of the building can still be understood.
- Replacement of the lightwell windows
- New secondary glazing for the lightwell windows and northlight windows and laylights

on the third floor

- Repair of the decorative stairwell windows
- Replacement of windows to the rooftop tank room.
- Installation of two heat recovery units on the roof
- Installation of new IT cabling and ducting
- New floor covering and lighting in areas affected by the works

# **Representations Received**

9. Advertised on site and in the press. 1 letter of representation has been received citing the issues as summarised in the table below.

Issues Raised	Response
The submitted written plan did not explain the proposals sufficiently or in a lucid manner	The information provided was sufficient to validate the application. The application has been assessed on the basis of the information provided and some additional information has been requested and provided, including a revised copy of the Design and Access Statement.
Original architects' plans should have been provided.	Copies of the original architects' plans were provided as Appendix E of the Design and Access Statement.
Considered that the proposed demolitions would not affect the strength and integrity of the building and that the changes were being carried out in as sensitive a manner as possible.	Noted.

# **Consultation Responses**

10. Chief Fire Officer

No objection in principle. The proposal must meet the current Building A fire risk assessment must be carried out during the alterations phase and on completion of the scheme. This cannot be controlled within the Planning system but an informative will be included in any consent to inform the applicant of these requirements.

#### 11. Planning Department, Norfolk County Council

No comment.

#### 12. The Twentieth Century Society

No objection in principle but concerns raised on the following matters: loss of some of the external walls; lack of justification; proposed installation of a glazed screen between the third floor lobby and room 400; need to retain original doors, door furniture, signage and terrazzo finishes and need to ensure window replacement is on a like-for-like basis. See paras 29-40 below.

#### 13. English Heritage

No objection in principle but concerns raised on the following matters: removal of some of the internal walls; the proposal to move some of the corridor doors; the installation of glazed screens in the second and third floor lobbies and the need to ensure historic floor coverings are retained beneath any new flooring. See paras 29-40 below.

# ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### **Relevant Planning Policies**

#### 14. National Planning Policy Framework:

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

ENV6 - The Historic Environment ENV7 - Quality in the Built Environment

# 16. Relevant policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2011

Policy 2 – Promoting Good Design Policy 5 – The Economy Policy 11 – Norwich City Centre

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

HBE 8 – Development affecting a conservation area

HBE 9 – Development affecting a listed building

HBE 12 – High quality of design

#### 18. Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (September 2007)

Norwich City Hall Conservation Plan, May 2005

### **Principle of Development**

#### Assessment of Significance of the Listed Building

19. In assessing this application the local authority must 'identify and assess the particular significance' of the heritage asset, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 129. It is then necessary to determine what impact the proposals will have on that significance and where it is considered that there will be a degree of harm, 'this

harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use' (NPPF, para 134).

20. City Hall has several areas of particular significance. These are outlined in the Statement of Significance provided on page 11 of the Design and Access Statement. Key to the building's significance are factors relating to its external appearance, its siting on a raised piece of land overlooking the city and its relationship to other key landmarks in the city. However these will not be affected by this application.

21. Of more relevance are its significance in terms of the high quality of the architecture and decoration internally, the retention of most of the internal plan form and the way in which this reflects the contemporary aesthetics as well as needs and ideals of the City Council at the time of the building's erection. It is also significant as a focal point for the local community and in terms of its continued function as a centre of local government. It is the balance between these two areas of significance that will be considered here.

22. The areas of highest significance within the building are the high status rooms on the first floor and rooms throughout the building such as the former Marriage Room (Earlham Room); former Accountants' Office (room 113) and former Town Clerk's office (room 313). These rooms will not be affected by this proposal. Also of significance are the lobbies and central circulation core that connects them and it is considered that the proposals affecting these spaces will be beneficial. The staircases contain important panels of decorative glazing and it is proposed that much needed repair to these windows will be carried out as part of the scheme. Details of these works would be controlled through a condition on any consent granted and there would also be a condition to ensure that they (along with other architectural features) are protected during building works.

#### **Removal of modern additions**

23. It is proposed that the existing late 20<sup>th</sup> century screens and reception desk in the second floor lobby be removed, along with the protruding extension into the lobby at third floor level and these are considered to be enhancements, as is the proposal to reintroduce a wall between these lobbies and room 300 and 400, thereby retaining the sense of enclosure that is important in this space.

#### Window replacement

24. It is also proposed to replace on a like-for-like basis windows from the corridors into both lightwells and provide secondary glazing (to match that found elsewhere in the building – although double glazed). Many of these windows are in very poor condition and again it is considered that this proposal will enhance the appearance of the building.

#### **Removal of office walls**

25. It is proposed to remove internal walls throughout the building. In some instances these are modern partitions that are not part of the original construction and their removal would consequently be advantageous and in line with the objectives of the City Hall Conservation Plan. However in other instances these walls are part of the original fabric of the building and demarcate the original plan form. On lower ground, ground, first and second floors it is primarily proposed that the corridors be retained, with the removal of walls between offices creating larger more open plan offices accessed from the existing corridors. In the north-west corridor of the ground floor and throughout the third floor, the loss of the corridors is proposed.

26. Given the significance of the plan form set out above, it is considered that this proposal will result in some harm to the significance of the heritage asset. The character of these parts of the building will be affected in a manner that may not always be positive. However, the

harm caused is considered to be less than substantial harm. This is primarily due to the proposed mitigating measures (such as the retention of most corridors and the retention of nibs and downstands where most original walls are removed to ensure that the historic plan form of the building can still be 'read') but also the lower status of the third floor in terms of its original function and architectural detailing. Substantial alterations have also already taken place on the third floor and its original layout contained two large open-plan spaces (the architects' office and the engineers' office). The more extensive changes proposed on the third floor are therefore considered to be acceptable in the light of these factors and the reasons for the proposal outlined below.

#### **Rationale for Change**

27. The argument for further changes here and in other areas of the building where open plan offices are proposed is that due to the huge financial savings that the Council has to continue to make, staff should be centralised within City Hall and the building should be shared with partner organisation in order to generate some income to offset the costs associated with the upkeep of the building. The proposals are intended to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century office accommodation, in order that the council can continue to deliver services effectively for the citizens of Norwich from this building. Alternative options have been considered and would mean that the council either continued as existing, thereby restricting opportunities for new ways of flexible working and with maintenance on City Hall dwindling due to restrictions on maintenance budgets. Alternatively moving out of City Hall has been considered with a move to modern open-plan offices. This would be the most financially advantageous option but the disadvantage would be the council moving out of City Hall, which is centrally located within the city centre and in a strategic position to fulfil its administrative and civic purposes. Future uses of the building would then need to be carefully considered.

#### **Conclusion on Impact on Listed Building**

28. In principle, it is considered that although the proposed loss of the original plan form will cause some harm to the significance of the building, this will be less than substantial harm. The retention of the building as the City Council offices will bring many public benefits and ensure that the building continues in its optimum use, in line with the objectives of paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 131 of this document also makes clear the importance of 'sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation' and 'the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality'. It is considered that this application will promote those objectives. The significance of the building as an expression of civic pride, as a focal point for the local community and as the centre of local government administration will also be retained, as will the most architecturally and historically significant parts of the building, with the updated building enabling modern working practices and continued use and maintenance of this nationally important building.

#### **Comments of External Consultees**

29. Both English Heritage and the Twentieth Century Society provided comments on the application. Both were supportive of the Council's overall objective to retain City Hall in its original use as the centre of local government administration. However there were some areas of concern which are outlined below:

30. Both parties were concerned with the removal of some of the internal walls. Both considered that the loss of the lobby between room 301 and the Council Chamber public gallery resulted in a loss of the hierarchy of the spaces. This lobby is now due to be retained.

31. The Twentieth Century Society considered that at second floor level the extent of loss of partition walls will create 'long, oddly proportioned spaces, particularly on the east and west sides of the building'. It is stated that 'the significant historic interest of these spaces' should not be overlooked and that they 'are not convinced that adequate justification, aside from the desire for flexible open plan office space has been provided to justify this layout'. In particular it has been requested that the wall between 326 and 324 be retained to 'help rationalize the proportions of the new spaces' and because 'the proportions of the room...relate to the slight projection of the pavilion in the external façade'. English Heritage also considered the dividing wall between rooms 324 and 326 to be 'of particular interest because it is one of the few internal divisions that reflects the external appearance' and they stated that its removal would be considered harmful. A compromise has now been reached whereby the wall will be retained but an opening will be made in it to allow an adequate degree of flexibility. A mistake had been made on the proposed drawing initially provided and the wall between rooms 320 and 321 will be retained. It is considered that these amendments go some way towards overcoming concerns raised on this issue.

32. It was suggested by English Heritage that walls between rooms 321 / 322; 302 / 303 and 337 / 338 could be retained in the light of the plan provided with the application that shows the proposed layout of work spaces. These alterations still form part of the proposals. In response English Heritage have stated that 'it is disappointing that the Council are not taking a more creative approach to using these spaces or, again, presenting a more detailed justification'. However, the retention of other original walls, such as that between rooms 17 and 21, has been negotiated (again an opening will be made in it).

33. On the ground floor the Twentieth Century Society is concerned regarding the loss of the wall between the corridor and rooms 121 and 122 as they do not consider the loss of the historic plan to be fully justified or the argument put forward to be convincing. The removal of this corridor wall is still included within the proposals.

34. Although at third floor level the Twentieth Century Society have stated that 'given the level of previous alteration on this floor and its status in the hierarchy of the building, we do not object to the open plan proposals here' they have suggested that the Council should ensure that downstands and nibs are retained where original corridors and partition walls are lost so that the original plan can be read. I have ensured that this approach is being taken throughout most of the rest of the building but on the third floor it is considered that given the extent of the alterations proposed this approach would result in an unsatisfactory appearance in this area, which could potentially be detrimental to its appearance. Instead a condition will be attached to ensure that a recording of the area will take place prior to works commencing and this will be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER). This is in line with Local Plan Policy HBE9 and paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

35. On the ground floor the Society is concerned regarding the loss of the wall between the corridor and rooms 121 and 122 as they do not consider the loss of the historic plan to be fully justified or the argument put forward to be convincing. The Council have stated that it is required 'to generate the quality of working space required by the City and the delivery of their services' and 'it is believed to be an acceptable evil'. The removal of this corridor wall is still included within the proposals.

36. Both English Heritage and the Twentieth Century (and the case officer) raised concerns regarding the glazed screens that were originally proposed between the second floor lobby and room 300 and the third floor lobby and room 400. The proposals have now

been amended and a solid wall with a centrally placed door is now proposed which is considered to be an improvement.

37. Where it was proposed to move the double doors within the corridors in a number of points at second and third floor levels, English Heritage stated that 'they would have no objection to the introduction of a new pair of doors at this point, but the original doors should stay in their present position so as to help define the original circulation route.' Following negotiation it is now proposed to retain the existing arrangement at second floor level and introduce a glazed screen with glazed doors where necessary on the third floor.

38. The Twentieth Century Society stressed that terrazzo finishes and original timber WC cubicles within the WCs should be retained, along with the original doors, door furniture and signage. Conditions will be applied to ensure that this is the case and in the case of the doors a condition will be attached to ensure that a selection of doors are retained and that all door furniture is retained for re-use. This is in line with Local Plan Policy HBE9.

39. The Twentieth Century Society requested that windows be replaced on a like-for-like basis where replacement is necessary. This will be the case. English Heritage requested that original flooring be retained under any new floor coverings. Again this will be the case.

#### **Summary of External Consultee Comments**

40. English Heritage have stated that although 'the proposed changes will result in some harm to the historic significance of City Hall, on balance, accept the proposals in principle'. Likewise, the Twentieth Century Society stated that they support the overall objective of the Council. It is considered that many of the specific comments that have been raised have been addressed through subsequent amendments to the proposals.

#### Phasing

41. It is intended that the works to the third floor and the replacement of the lightwell windows and works of repair to the stairwell windows form the first phase of works. More detail has therefore been received within this application for works to the third floor. Conditions will be applied to ensure that similar details are submitted and approved prior to works commencing in other areas of the building.

#### **Conservation Area – Impact on Setting**

42. There will not be any impact on the setting of the conservation area as the alterations are primarily internal, apart from the installation of heat recovery units on the roof and the replacement of the rooftop tank room windows. These windows will be replaced on a like-for-like basis and the heat recovery units will not be visible from the wider area as they will be screened by the parapet.

### **Equality and Diversity Issues**

#### 43. Disability

More disabled WCs will be provided throughout the building. These facilities have been in short supply and the new WCs will bring the standard of the building up to an acceptable level.

### **Overall Conclusions**

44. It is considered that the public benefits of ensuring that the building can continue to be used in an effective manner by the City Council outweigh the harm caused to this grade II\* heritage asset. Measures have been taken to mitigate the harm caused and conditions will

also be attached to ensure that the detailing of the scheme is to a high quality.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to the agreement of the National Planning Casework Unit, to approve application no. 12/00509/L and grant listed building consent, subject to the following conditions:-

- 1) Standard three year time limit;
- 2) In accordance with the drawings;
- Prior to any works commencing a full photographic record of the areas affected by the works and plans of the existing building layout shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Norfolk Historic Environment Record;
- Prior to any works commencing on the ground and first floors, further structural investigation is required on the ground and first floors. The results of these investigations and any subsequent works required are to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA prior to works commencing;
- 5) Existing but redundant doors should be re-used where new doors are required. Three examples of each door type shall also be retained along with all redundant door furniture so that they are available for re-use in the future;
- 6) All historic signage (for example on doors) shall be retained in situ or re-used in an appropriate location to be agreed by the LPA in writing;
- 7) A schedule of repairs for both central stairwell windows is to be approved in writing by the LPA prior to the commencement of works to the stairwell windows;
- 8) A method statement for the protection of architectural features throughout the building is to be approved in writing by the LPA prior to the commencement of works and implemented during all phases of alteration and repair;
- Details of all new sanitary fittings and all works of repair or alteration to existing WC rooms on the lower ground, ground, first and second floor are to be submitted and approved in writing prior to the commencement of works on each of these floors;
- 10)A lighting plan and details of new light fittings on the lower ground, ground, first and second floors are to be submitted and approved in writing prior to work commencing on each of the lower ground; ground; first and second floors;
- 11)Plans for the power and data arrangement, cable containment and mechanical services for the lower ground, ground, first and second floors should be submitted and approved in writing by the LPA prior to work commencing on the lower ground, ground, first and second floors;
- 12)Plans for the proposed floor finishes for the lower ground, ground, first and second floors should be submitted and approved in writing prior to work commencing on each of the lower ground, ground, first and second floors;

- 13) The design of the manifestation on the new glazed corridor doors should be submitted and agreed in writing by the LPA prior to the doors being installed;
- 14) Details of how the retained cornice to room 412 will be treated in relation to the proposed works are to be provided and approved by the LPA prior to works commencing;
- 15) All architectural fixtures and fittings are to be retained unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA. Original clocks are to be relocated where necessary and brought back into working order where practicable;
- 16) Any damage incurred as a result of the implementation of this consent shall be made good within three months of the completion of the works.

#### Informatives:

1) The Fire Risk Assessment should be reviewed during the alterations and on completion of the scheme to comply with the requirements of the Chief Fire Officer.

#### Reasons for approval:

It is considered that the public benefits of retaining City Hall as the local administrative centre, thereby keeping this grade II\* listed building in its original use and the benefits brought about by the proposed enhancements will outweigh the less than substantial harm caused by the removal of some original internal walls throughout the building and some corridors on the ground and third floors. Mitigating measures have been taken to ensure that the original plan form can still be read wherever possible, that original flooring is retained beneath new floor surfaces where necessary, that original doors and other architectural features are retained and re-used wherever possible and that a thorough record of the building is made. Although the character and appearance of the building will be affected in certain parts of the building, in the most significant areas the appearance will not be harmed. The decision has been made with particular regard to the National Planning Policy Framework; policies ENV6 and EN7 of the East of England Plan 2008; policies 2, 5 and 11 of the Joint Core Strategy (March 2011) and saved policies HBE8, HBE9 and HBE12 of the City of Norwich Local Plan (Adopted Version 2004) and to all material planning considerations.



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Planning Application No 12/00509/L

Site Address Scale Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peters Street 1:750







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Notes Replace to match existing Crittall windows to tank and

lift room.

Repair Crittall North lights provide internally new secondary double glazing in painted softwood frame.

Drawing issue status: PRELIMINARY □ CLIENT APPROVAL □ PLANNING ■ BUILDING REGS □ TENDER□ CONSTRUCTION □ AS-BUILT □



#### THIRD FLOOR PLAN







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Well to be removed up to ceiling frame out and form new downstand in 50 x width required soft wood framing plugged and cravet to ceiling, with 12.5mm plasterboard to vertical faces and soffit and finish with skim coat all new and existing plaster faces to be left true and even. a Carefully demolish walls as indicates on plan leaving 400mm nibs. Make good plaster and all wall, floor and ceiling finishes. ELEVATION WHERE WALL Re use previously skirtings from demolished wall as skirtings make. Make good floors where walls removed to allow floors to run through flush and level. DEMOLISH AND NIBS LEFT

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8	15.05.2012	Clarification of rooflight repairs.	58	AW		
A	09.05.2012	Minor amendments to Lower Ground and Ground floor p	58	AW		
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**GROUND FLOOR PLAN** 

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HOUSING BENEFITS ROOM 107

#### SECOND FLOOR PLAN





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#### Notes Replace to match existing Crittall windows to tank and Repair Crittall North lights provide internally new secondary double glazing in painted softwood frame.

Decorate throughout. Renew lighting to office areas as electrical consultants proposals,. Review power and IT and install floor boxes and service dado trunking Review Fire and intruder alarms. Repair metal framed stair windows looking into light wells. Replace all windows in both lightwells in Crittall or similar to match previous replacements. Enlarge new disabled WC doors to 926mm and hinge to open either in or out. Architraves and linings to match existing.



Wall to be removed up to ceiling frame out and form new downstand in 50 x width required soft wood framing plugged and craved to ceiling, with 2.5mm plasterboard to vertical faces and softi and finish with skim cost all new and existing plaster faces to be left frue and existing

Repair existing glazed metal rooflights, provide new secondary double glazing in

new painted softwood frame

Take up and renew carpets.

Review existing heating system and upgrade controls etc.

lift room.

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