

Report to Planning Applications Committee
Date 14 March 2013
Report of Head of Planning Services
Subject 12/02426/F 96 Thorpe Road Norwich NR1 1BA

Item
5(6)

SUMMARY

Description:	Conversion from HMO (Class C4) on three floors (ground, first and second floors) to 3 No. one bed flats (Class C3a) with 2 storey rear extension to house stairwell plus cycle and bin storage.	
Reason for consideration at Committee:	Objection	
Recommendation:	Approve	
Ward:	Thorpe Hamlet	
Contact Officer:	Miss Sarah Platt	Planning Officer - Development Management 01603 212500
Valid Date:	15th December 2012	
Applicant:	Mr A Wilkinson	
Agent:	Mr H Ivins BA MRTPI	

INTRODUCTION

The Site

Location and Context

1. The application site can be found on the north side of Thorpe Road but has access from and is visible from Rosary Road. The property is a three storey white painted brick building which comprises of a basement flat and three storey HMO. To the front is a stepped access and semi basement which also has access from the rear. Adjacent properties are of a similar nature and some are subdivided into flats. The adjacent property at 98 Thorpe Road has an external staircase to the rear providing access to all floors: this has the benefit of being in a visually sheltered location adjacent to a wall and within a recess to the property. This staircase was permitted in 1988 (88/1083/F) prior to the enactment of the 2004 Housing Act where assessments of risk became more prescriptive and based on potential health and safety risks, rather than looking at defects and disrepair only.
2. The wider area is residential in character with a few local amenity shops in the immediate locality fronting Rosary Road.

Planning History

4/2001/1068 - Conversion of basement to self-contained flat. (APCON - 14/01/2002)

11/00941/F - Conversion from HMO (Class C4) on 3 floors (ground, first and second floors) to 3 No. one bed flats (Class C3a) with external access stairwell, cycle and bin storage. (WITHDN - 18/07/2011)

12/01110/F - Conversion from HMO (Class C4) on three floors (ground, first and second floors) to 3 No. one bed flats (Class C3a) with external access stairwell, cycle and bin storage. (REF - 27/07/2012)

12/02426/F - Conversion from HMO (Class C4) on three floors (ground, first and second floors) to 3 No. one bed flats (Class C3a) with enclosed external stairwell plus cycle and bin storage. (PCO -)

3. In 2001 planning permission was granted for the conversion of the basement to a self-contained flat.
4. Pre-application discussion were had in 2010 with regard to the principle of the use of the site but raised concerns with regards to the amenity provision and potential impact of traffic noise from Thorpe Road on future occupiers.
5. Planning permission was applied for 2011 under application reference 11/00941/F for the conversion of the HMO (Class C4) on the three upper floors to 3no one bed flats. The application was withdrawn when concerns about access, refuse and cycle storage, design, loss of light to the existing dwellings and lack of privacy were raised by Consultees. Most importantly, Private Sector Housing had significant concerns with regards to the then metal external staircase being proposed as this would represent a category 1 hazard and be unacceptable when considered under the Housing Act 2004.
6. Further pre-application discussions were had to try to address these issues and the concerns of Private Sector Housing with regard to the hazard category and external staircase would present. Design options were put forward which addressed the concerns of Private Sector Housing but which had serious design implications.
7. A subsequent application was submitted under application reference 12/01110/F for the conversion from HMO (Class C4) on three floors (ground, first and second floors) to 3 No. one bed flats (Class C3a) with external access stairwell, cycle and bin storage. This application proposed enclosing the external stair with clear plexi-glass. This application was refused as representing poor design with a negative visual impact resulting from the cladding of the external staircase, not just in the short term but also in the long term with the longevity of the proposed material being questionable.
8. There has been yet further pre-application discussions and the result is the application as submitted.

Equality and Diversity Issues

There are no significant equality or diversity issues.

The Proposal

9. The application seeks the conversion from HMO (Class C4) on three floors (ground, first and second) to 3no one bedroom flats (Class C3a) with a new 2 storey rear

extension to house a stairwell plus cycle and refuse storage.

Representations Received

10. Advertised on site and in the press. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. 5 letters of representation have been received citing the issues as summarised in the table below.

11.

Issues Raised	Response
Loss of light to adjacent properties	Paragraphs 19 and 23
Detrimental impact on the wider area as a result of the design	Paragraphs 21-27
There are already parking issues in this area – presumably parking permits will not be allowed for new residents?	Paragraph 31
The vehicular access left is insufficient.	Paragraph 30

Consultation Responses

12. Local Highway Authority – No objections. The new properties will not be eligible for parking permits.

13. Environmental Health – No objections. The proposed whole house ventilation system in combination with the glazing will be adequate for purpose. Rear glazing should be non-opening. Conditions required to ensure these 2 elements are installed.

14. Private Sector Housing – No objections. Overall the property is improved by removing the shared element, making individual tenants more responsible for their own areas. The staircase is as safe as the existing staircase and would not be considered to pose an unacceptable risk.

ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework:

Statement 4 – Promoting sustainable transport

Statement 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Statement 7 – Requiring good design

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

Policy 2 – Promoting good design

Policy 4 – Housing delivery

Policy 6 – Access and transportation

Policy 20 - Implementation

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
EP10 – Noise protection between different uses
EP22 - High standard of amenity for residential occupiers
HOU18 – Conversion of properties to houses of multiple occupation and building flats
TRA7 - Cycle parking standards
TRA9 – Car free housing - criteria
TRA8 - Servicing provision

Other Material Considerations

The Localism Act 2011 – s143 Local Finance Considerations

Principle of Development

Policy Considerations

15. The NPPF promotes housing developments in the context of the presumption in favour of development.
16. Saved local plan policy HOU18 assesses the creation of new flats against criteria concerning: the effect on the character of the area; the suitability of the site in terms of access for multiple households; the provision of satisfactory defensible amenity space, bin storage and cycle storage, and; the density of bedspaces and the impact of this on the wider area.
17. Each of these areas will be discussed in turn but the broad proposals are considered to be in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and local saved policy HOU18.

Housing Proposals

Housing Numbers and Density

18. The current HMO offers accommodation for 7 people (not including the basement self-contained flat). The proposals would provide accommodation for 6 people (not including the basement self-contained flat). This is a reduction from the current density but is comparable to the wider area and similar to the flats in adjacent buildings. Given there is a reduction in numbers of potential residents there is not considered to be any detrimental impact on the wider area as a result of these proposals and the scheme is in accordance with criteria iv) of saved local plan policy HOU18.

Impact on Living Conditions

Overshadowing

19. Concerns have been expressed with regard to the impact on loss of light to adjacent properties. The rear extension projects 3.95m and is 2.25m wide at ground floor level, reducing to 1.85m wide at first floor level. A total height of 5.9m to the eaves is achieved at the outermost projecting elevation. It is not considered that the rear extension is of a sufficient scale to significantly impact on light levels to the habitable rooms of adjacent properties. The most significant impact will be on the existing self-contained basement flat but alterations are being proposed to reduce this impact as much as possible. This is discussed further in paragraph 22. The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable and to be in accordance with saved local plan policy EP22.

Noise

20. It is proposed to alleviate the noise from passing traffic on Thorpe Road with the use of a whole house ventilation system to be installed in accordance with building regulations. A condition requiring details of the ventilation system is required.

Design

21. The proposals see several external changes proposed: the new rear extension,

alterations to the basement flat lightwell and access door, and bricking up an existing rear access to the ground floor.

22. Previous applications saw the rear staircase proposed as external which was not considered acceptable by Private Sector Housing. Re-submissions saw this clad in clear plexi-glass which was not considered acceptable in design terms. Following substantial pre-application discussions the new staircase is to be clad with Rockpanel which has a similar visual appearance to timber cladding but with a long life expectancy and reduced maintenance. A condition is recommended to determine the final colour, finish and patternation of the cladding. Subject to compliance with recommended conditions the appearance of the new rear extension is considered to be appropriate in the wider area and street views and ensure that the extensions sits comfortably visually with the existing and adjacent buildings.
23. The alterations proposed to the basement flat access and lightwell are acceptable and will increase light levels into the habitable rooms of this dwelling. A condition is required for details of the new balustrade around the extended lightwell in order that an appropriate design and material can be secured.
24. A condition is recommended to ensure that bricks used in the bricking up of the existing ground floor rear access match the existing bricks or are finished in the same paint colour.
25. The proposals are considered to represent a form of development which will not appear incongruous in the wider street scene and that will sit comfortably with the existing and adjacent buildings.
26. The scale, height and form of the proposed rear extension is considered to be acceptable and to be subservient to the main building. The height has been lessened from previous application submissions to reduce the visual bulk and reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.
27. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the objectives of saved local plan policies HBE12 and criteria i) of HOU18.

Transport and Access

Access

28. Access to the dwellings on the upper floors is proposed within a rear extension. Whilst this is not ideal it is acknowledged as necessary in order to facilitate the conversion and achieve a workable internal floor plan.
29. The new rear extension will house a staircase providing access to the flats on the first and second floors. Access to the ground floor flat is via the front entrance on Thorpe Road as existing and access to the basement flat remains unchanged and is from the rear. The access is considered appropriate for multiple occupations and has indeed been operating as such within its current use as an HMO. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with criteria ii) of saved local plan policy HOU18.
30. Concerns have been raised with regards to the width of the vehicular access to the rear of the site once the proposed new boundary treatment to the amenity area for the 3no dwellings is erected. The access width will be 2.5m at its narrowest point which is tight but the local highway authority has confirmed is an acceptable width, especially taking into consideration the very low car movements in this area. The land to the rear provides access to the rear of 4 other properties, each divided into flats or in use as an HMO. This area of land is where bins for each of these properties are stored and is approximately 56sqm in total area. The properties at 88, 90 and 92 Thorpe Road are eligible for parking permits if required and several have applications for visitor permits pending currently.

Car Parking

31. The HMO was first registered in 2005 and is considered as a new conversion by the Local Highway Authority. As such, the flats will not be eligible for parking permits.

Cycling Parking and Servicing

32. A purpose built covered and secure cycle store for 3 cycles is proposed underneath the stairs housed in the rear extension. This is an efficient use of space which provides adequate provision to meet local plan policy requirements as set out in saved local plan policy TRA7 and Appendix 4.

33. Refuse bins are to be stored within the amenity area. Given the constraints of the site a covered and secure area is unable to be provided. However, the proposed approach is considered acceptable given the wider improvements to the site and the refuse storage receptacles will be somewhat protected by virtue of being within private land.

Landscaping

34. An area of defensible private amenity area sufficient to provide drying facilities and/or an area for sitting out is shown on the proposed plans. Whilst this is limited in scope, given the constraints of the site and the provision of public open space in the immediate locality at Rosary cemetery this is considered to be acceptable. A condition is recommended to determine the details of the landscaping to include details of planting, boundary treatments and surfacing treatments but the proposals are broadly considered to be in accordance with saved local plan policy NE9 and criteria iii) of HOU18.

Local Finance Considerations

35. The Localism Act 2011 amended S70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to require local planning authorities to have regard to local finance considerations in the determination of planning applications, alongside the development plan and other material considerations.

36. The net increase of 2 new dwellings will attract New Homes Bonus and Council Tax revenues.

Conclusions

37. The proposals for new housing on this site are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF to promote housing and consider applications positively. The proposals are not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the environment of the wider area and the proposed external alterations and extension are considered to represent good design. Sufficient private amenity space, cycle storage and refuse storage is provided on site and issues of noise for future occupiers from traffic on Thorpe Road can be adequately addressed through the use of mechanical ventilation throughout the whole building. Subject to compliance with conditions the proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF, policies 2, 4, 6 and 20 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk and saved policies NE9, HBE12, EP10, EP22, HOU18, TRA7, TRA8 and TRA9 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (Adopted Version November 2004).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended to approve application 12/02426/F (96 Thorpe Road) and grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Standard time limit;
- 2) In accordance with details submitted;
- 3) Details of protection against noise of dwellings fronting a road and the whole house ventilation systems to be installed;
- 4) Details of materials, including;
 - a. Cladding, to include product name, manufacturers specification, and full details of colour, finish , patternation and a sample (in the correct colour);
 - b. Balustrade to extended lightwell
 - c. All new doors and windows;
 - d. New boundary treatments
- 5) Bricks to match existing or match existing finish (painted) and colour;
- 6) Landscaping details to include surface treatments and planting details.
- 7) Provision of cycle storage and refuse storage prior to first occupation;

Informatives;

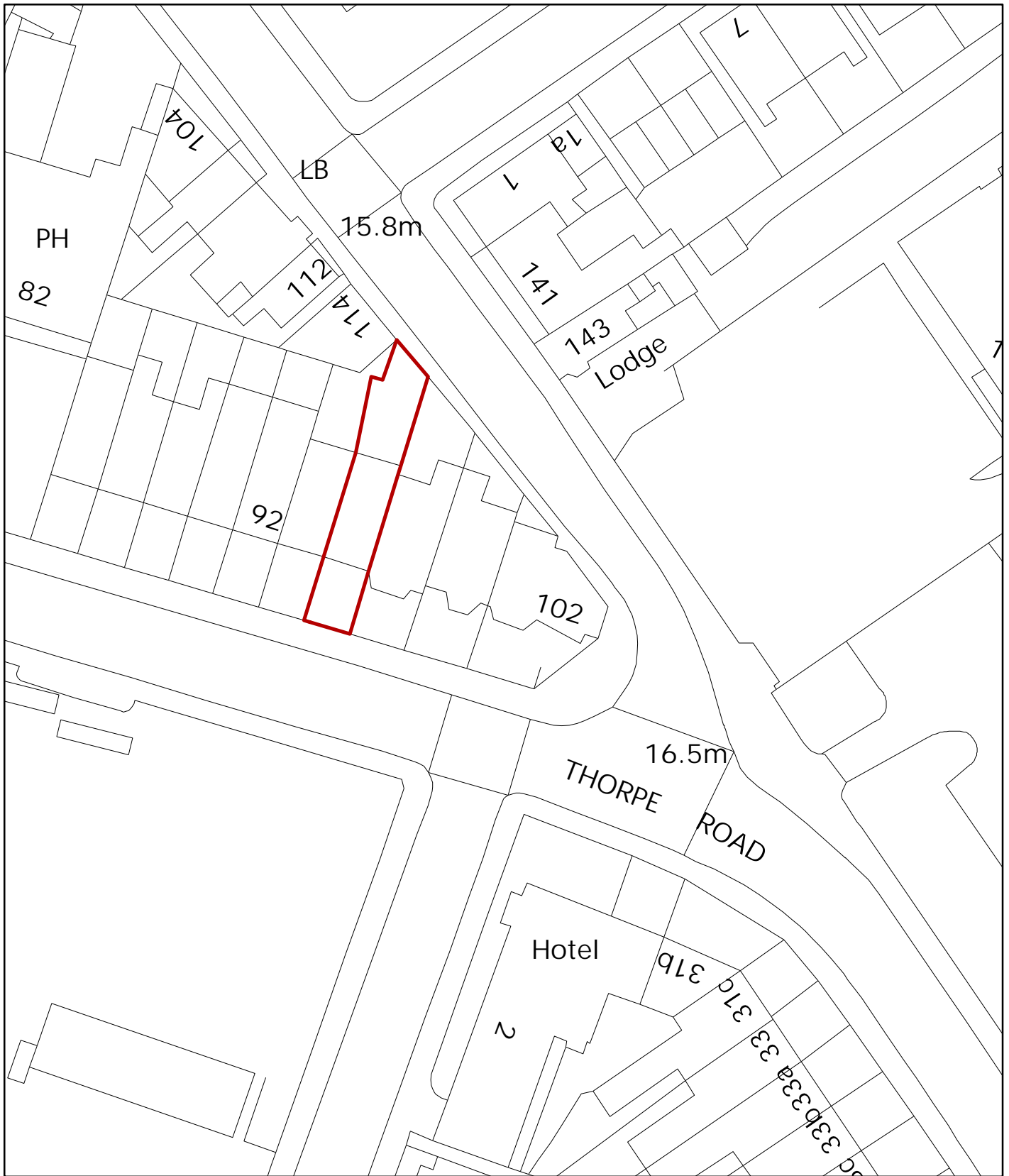
- 1) Properties not eligible for parking permits

Reasons for Approval:

The proposals for new housing on this site are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF to promote housing and consider applications positively. The proposals are not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the environment of the wider area and the proposed external alterations and extension are considered to represent good design. Sufficient private amenity space, cycle storage and refuse storage is provided on site and issues of noise for future occupiers from traffic on Thorpe Road can be adequately addressed through the use of mechanical ventilation throughout the whole building. Subject to compliance with conditions the proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF, policies 2, 4, 6 and 20 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk and saved policies NE9, HBE12, EP10, EP22, HOU18, TRA7, TRA8 and TRA9 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (Adopted Version November 2004).

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 subsequent amendments at the pre-application stage the application has been approved subject to appropriate conditions and for the reasons outlined above.



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Planning Application No 12/02426/F
Site Address 96 Thorpe Road
Scale 1:500

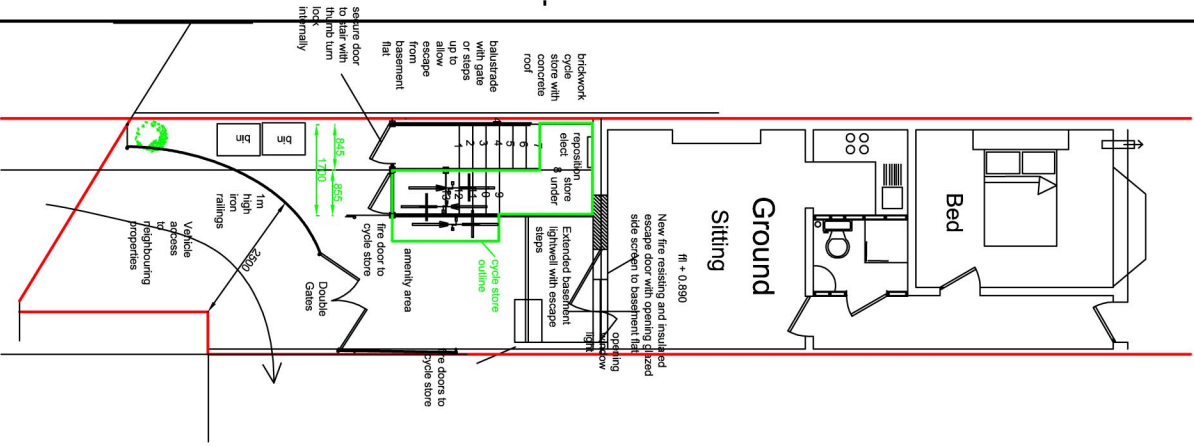
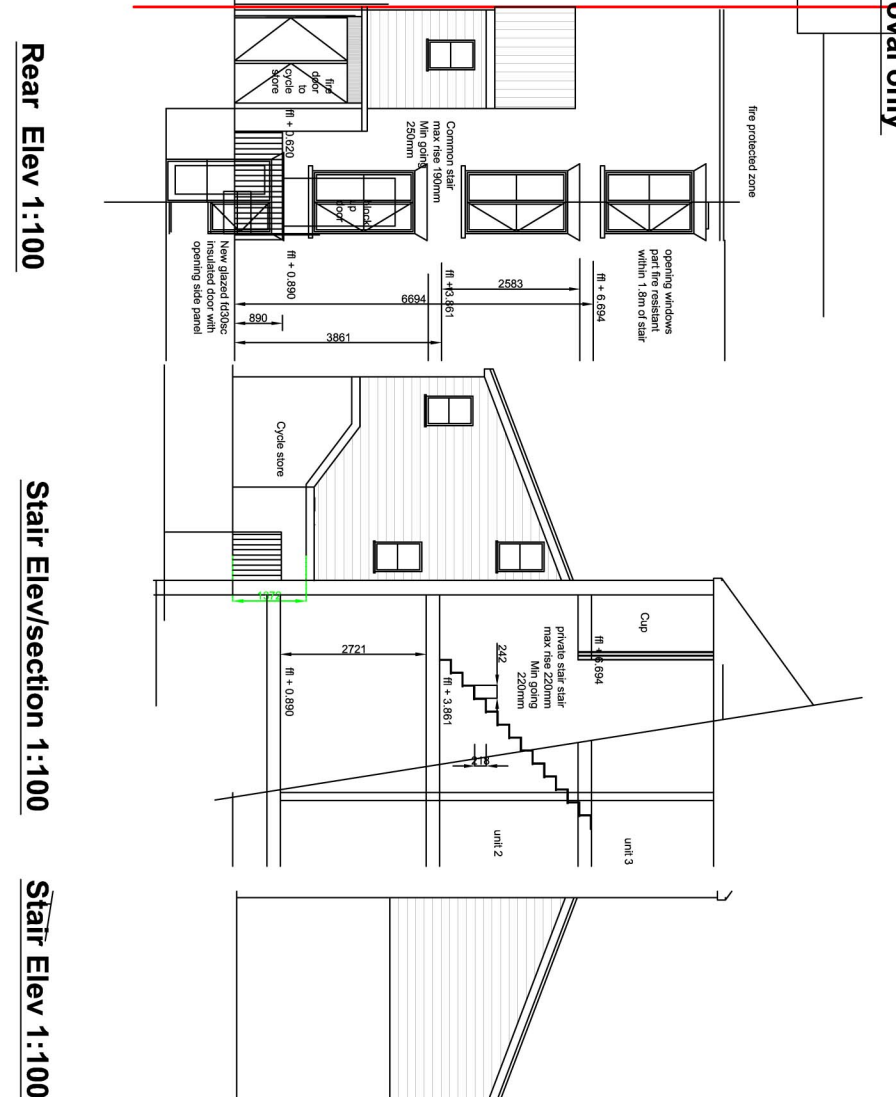
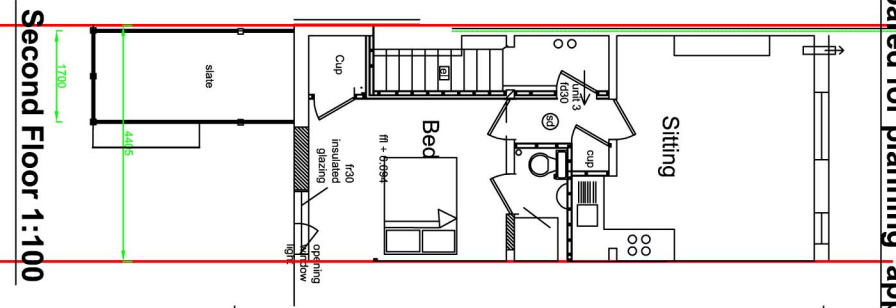


NORWICH
City Council

PLANNING SERVICES



First Floor 1:100



Stair Elev/section 1:100

Stair Elev 1:100

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Client:	W. B. Properties	Drawing No:	106/539/4K
Site Address:	96 Thorpe Road Norwich NR1 1BA		
Title:	Proposed Elevations and site (Alternate perpendicular stair)		
Scale:	1:100 @ A3 UNO	Date:	July 11
		Drawn By:	SMM