

Planning Applications Committee
30th July 2009
Section B

Agenda Number:	B1
Section/Area:	Outer
Ward:	University
Officer:	Lee Cook
Valid Date:	24th March 2009
Application No.:	09/00250/F
Site Address :	School Of Music, Suffolk Road, University Of East Anglia, Norwich. NR4 7TJ
Proposal:	Erection of a phased extension to School of Music building at the South West End.
Applicant:	The Registrar, University of East Anglia
Agent:	Mr Glen Soanes, Estates And Buildings Division, University of East Anglia

THE SITE

This application relates to the site of the University School of Music building on the southern edge of the built area of the Campus located adjacent to the river valley and University Broad. The area can be seen as part of views of the listed library building and Suffolk Terrace. The school building itself is noted in the UEA Conservation Design Strategy as a significant building which adds to the architectural merit of the Campus.

PLANNING HISTORY

The Music School building was built in the early 1970's and the former squash court behind the proposed Music School extension was built in 1965-67 and had a blank southern elevation of blockwork. Although this presented a rather bland and bulky appearance, it was suited to the existing 'brutalist' architecture of the campus at that time, and could be considered to provide an appropriate contrast and foil to the sloping pitches and horizontal emphasis of the fenestration of both the adjacent terrace of Suffolk Walk and the later Music School, creating a suitable division/bookend between the two buildings.

The conversion of the Squash Courts into the careers office resulted in the creation of a new fenestration with the insertion of numerous windows breaking up the blank façade. This quite dramatically altered the appearance of the building and significantly changed the relationship with the neighbouring buildings – to the detriment of their setting. The painting of the windows orange and poor blockwork repairs have made the elevation appear incongruous in this location. As the CDS describes “...the orange colour is unfortunate. Alterations to blockwork highly visible due to differences in weathering and/or block colour”

THE PROPOSAL

Erection of a 2 part phased extension to the Music School building at its South West End within the designated area of river valley. The extension would be on a footprint area beyond the line of existing buildings of approximately 12 m. x 9.5 m.. One existing tree will be removed and replaced with two new trees slightly further from the building.

CONSULTATIONS

Advertised on site and in the press: No comments received from local residents / neighbours.

Twentieth Century Society: Comment that it is clear to the Society's Committee that the proposals do affect the setting of the listed Suffolk Terrace (Grade II*). However; there is also concern about the impact on both the unlisted Suffolk Walk (Lasdun 1964-67) and the Music Centre (Arup Associates 1972-73). The Society thought the architectural quality of the above buildings warranted a new building on the site of the former squash court. This building, now much altered, was intended to be a full stop to the adjacent terrace that marked the change in direction of the walkway to the teaching blocks. The application suggests that the façade will be constructed from the same materials as the Music Centre. The Society does not consider this to be a conservation led approach and would argue that a bolder building, which minimised its impact on adjacent buildings, would be preferable. This approach would provide a bold end point to the terrace and minimise the impact on the Music Centre, which although not listed is a significant piece of work by a noted architect. The Music Centre has its own distinct character; one the Society feels should be preserved and feels that a new piece of architecture, which was sympathetic to other buildings and landscape of the site would keep the integrity of the Lasdun and Dowson buildings.

In light of these concerns the Society representative attended a site visit at the UEA to further assess the site. Further objections to the proposal were made by letter of 1st July 2009; attached as appendix 1 to the report.

Yare Valley Society: Consider it to be a noticeable encroachment into the green area adjacent to the University broad. It was felt; however, that on balance that they should not object subject to a condition that the “temporary” car park is restored to its original grassy state within 3 months of the extension being completed. At present this “car park” is very ugly and does not reflect well on the

University. Also felt that some strong tree planting in this area would be a valuable addition.

Norwich Society: A dramatic alteration to one of the first buildings constructed at the UEA. It was designed by Arup and it is a shame that there is no architect involved.

Urban Design and Conservation Comments: No objection. The proposal to remodel the elevation into the careers office (former squash courts) is welcomed – both phase I and II appear appropriate. There is some debate as to whether the building should be designed to contrast with the Music School which is a building regarded as significant in its own right. However, it is considered that in order to fit in with the neighbouring buildings and not to detract from the wider setting, the extension of the Music School elevation is an appropriate response. All of the buildings (including the Ziggurats) facing the broad have a very strong horizontal emphasis which is only really broken by vertical projections at higher levels within the Teaching Wall towards the rear.

It is important that the same mistakes are not made with detailing i.e. ill matching blockwork and the use of inappropriate colours. Materials and fenestration details should be conditioned to ensure they closely match those of the Music School in quality and appearance.

Arboricultural Comments: No significant arboricultural implications; agreed with the proposal to remove and replace 2 no. poor trees and to protect the nearest retained tree with an appropriately robust fence; barriers should consist of a scaffold framework comprising a vertical and horizontal framework, well braced to resist impacts, with vertical tubes spaced at a maximum interval of 3 m. Onto this, weldmesh panels should be securely fixed with wire or scaffold clamps.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Policies:

National Planning Policy

PPS1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS9	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

East of England Plan Policies:

ENV7	Quality in the Built Environment
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City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan saved policies

HBE12	High quality of design, with special attention to height, scale, massing and form of development
HBE19	site design – access and safety
HBE 9	listed buildings
NE1	River Valley – protection of Environmental Assets
NE9	Landscaping of new development

Impact on the River Valley

The site lies within the edge of the area designated as river valley within the Local Plan Proposals Map. The boundary here follows the edge of buildings and from the corner of the Music School building then cuts a line across the valley towards the east. An appropriate form of development on this corner should not significantly affect the visual amenity, setting, character or amenity value of this part of the valley. Given the proximity of other buildings and authorised footways the small extension of buildings in this area will have limited impact on the ecological value and contribution of this small area to the valley. Given the sensitivity of the site and location near the broad a more prominent building in this location is unlikely to be an appropriate design solution.

The haul road/parking area close to the site was provided to assist with the development of new student residences to the north. This has a significant impact and is inappropriate to the setting of this area. This use is not directly related to the proposed extension and its removal through condition on this application would not be appropriate; however, given that the majority of works have been completed this should now be removed and the University have confirmed that they are taking steps this summer to reinstate this part of the valley. Recommendation 2 refers to this matter.

Trees and landscaping

The extent of works proposed for the removal and replanting of trees is an acceptable approach in this instance which will support the landscape setting of buildings within this part of the valley and long term provision and viability of trees in this location.

Design

It is appreciated that the existing corner building to some extent acted as a bookend and marker between Suffolk Walk and the Music School. This had helped to further enhance the status of the Music School as a building of architectural merit. However, the use of the corner building went through a significant change in appearance with the change of use from the squash court to offices, the most significant alteration being the insertion of south facing windows. The punching of holes through the existing blank wall neither respected the original appearance of the building nor did it respect the general form and architectural treatment of the neighbouring buildings. This has had a detrimental impact on the setting of the adjacent buildings, and the overall range of buildings as viewed from the south, in particular from the broad and has reduced the original gravitas given by the brutal blank wall. The role of the corner building in acting as bookmark has been diminished and it is accepted that the elevation should be subject to redesign.

The issue that needs to be addressed is how the treatment of a new south elevation should be tackled. As with the previous alterations, it would be honest if

the treatment of the elevation responds to what is occurring internally so that the building reflects its use and allows natural light and ventilation to teaching spaces. The proposals seek to incorporate part of the use of the corner building into the School of Music. The building does not now have any particular importance in its own right and it would be wrong to give it an emphasised appearance as suggested by the C20th Society in the context of the neighbouring listed and other buildings. To expect the reintroduction of a prominent or blank façade with such a brutal appearance as with the squash court, both on the quality of design and in accommodation for future users and the need for natural lighting is not considered to be a reasonable approach.

An appropriate approach would be to ensure that externally the corner building appears to be, to some extent, integrated with the existing School, and it is therefore reasonable, in the context of the valley and adjacent buildings, for the proposed extension to screen the corner building and in design to take its cue in terms of architectural treatment from that of the south elevation of the Music School. The School has a similar architectural language to the ziggurats and both are repetitive forms which, to some extent, were designed in such a way that they could be easily extended or repeated. The role of the corner building being a visual marker is of relative little importance in terms of the campus as a whole – and it could be argued that it would detract from the verticality of the library behind – a far more important landmark building within the Campus. The east end of the Music School also has a tower which will perform the role of a ‘bookmark’ to the joined up pitched roof terrace. Therefore there is no particular requirement here to have a bookend treatment as requested by the C20th Society in their comments.

Conclusion

The size, location and extent of the extension will not have a significant impact on this part of the river valley or nearby listed buildings. The proposal will also provide an improvement to the landscape setting of this area. On balance there is no particular reason why this site requires a significantly different treatment to the adjacent buildings. The corner building does not have a specifically different or important use that requires it to be a landmark building within the campus. Although it could be considered that the original treatment of the squash court previously acted as a bookmark between two different buildings of architectural merit, the building was never considered a particularly important element within the campus as a whole, and to some extent it detracted from the far more important emphasis which should be given to the library.

As the corner building will be partly in use as an annex of the existing school of music it would be justified for the extension to continue with a similar architectural language to the music school so that it appears to screen this building and accords it a subservient use, particularly as the architecture of the Music School was designed in such a way that the form of the building could be easily repeated in any extension without upsetting the architectural balance of the front elevation or its contribution to the elevation to the valley.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. APPROVE PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement
2. Details of external materials; joinery; footway.
3. Details of landscaping
4. Landscape maintenance
5. Tree protection
6. Retention of tree protection

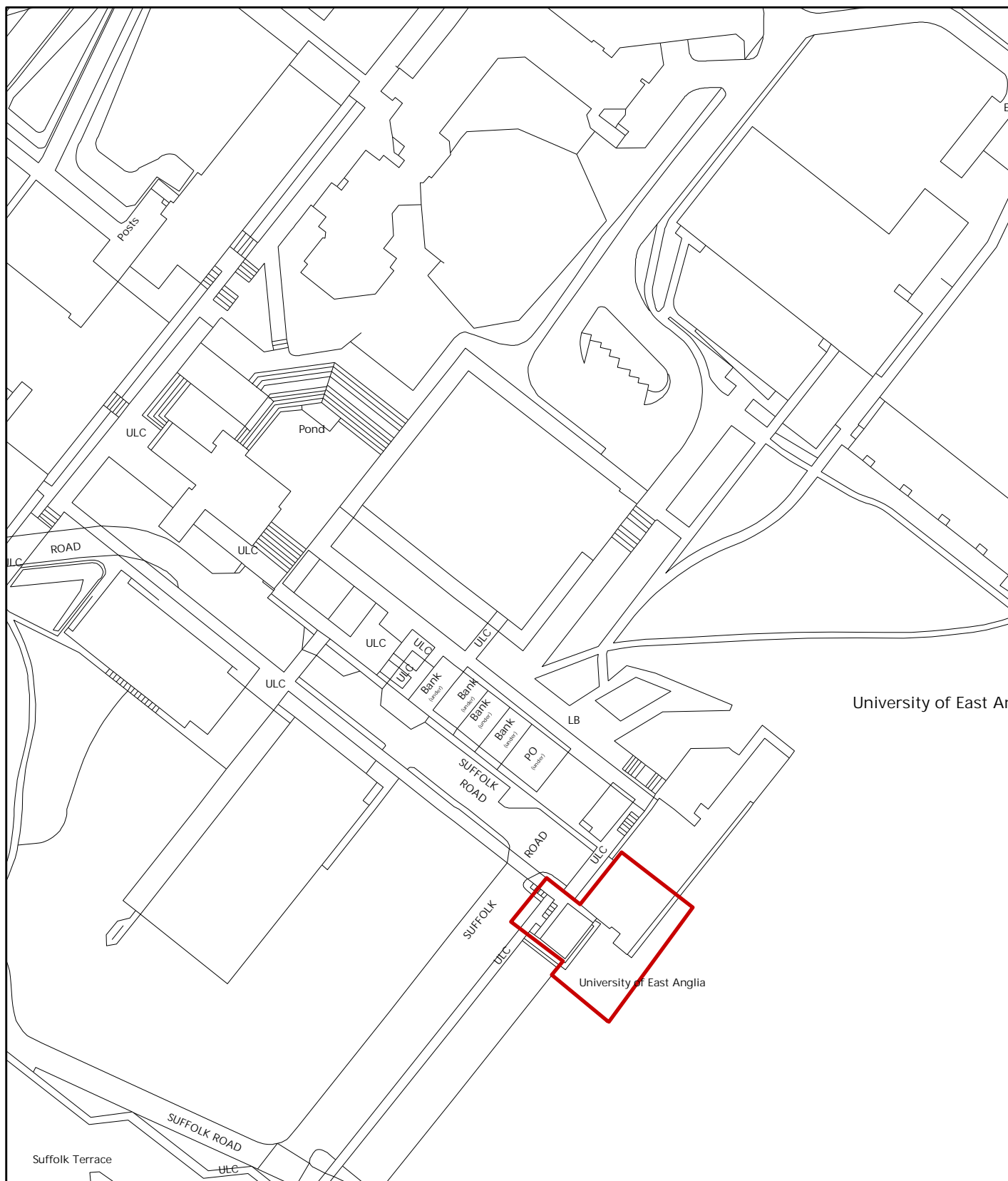
Reason for Approval

The proposal would result in an appropriate and satisfactory form of development that would further enhance educational facilities at the University of East Anglia. The size, location and extent of the extension will not have a significant impact on this part of the river valley or nearby listed buildings. The proposal will also provide an improvement to the landscape setting of this area. Subject to the imposition of conditions the proposal would comply with PPS1, Supplement to PPS1 and PPS9, policy ENV7 of the adopted East of England Plan, saved policies HBE12, HBE19, HBE 9, NE1, NE9 and EMP20 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan Adopted Version, November 2004.

2. That enforcement action, including prosecution if necessary, under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), to secure by 31st December, 2009;

(1) The cessation of the use of the adjacent land to the east as a car park and haul road

(2) The restoration of the land to grassed open space.



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Site Address - School of Music Suffolk Road University of East Anglia

Scale - 1:1250



NORWICH
City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT

