

Planning Applications Committee  
13th November 2008

<b>Agenda Number:</b>	<b>C8</b>
<b>Section/Area:</b>	OUTER
<b>Ward:</b>	UNIVERSITY
<b>Officer:</b>	Rob Parkinson
<b>Valid Date:</b>	26th September 2008
<b>Application Number:</b>	08/01036/U
<b>Site Address :</b>	276 Earlham Road Norwich NR2 3RH
<b>Proposal:</b>	Change of use from residential dwelling to Police rest room and storage facility. (Additional information submitted).
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Norfolk Police Authority</b>
<b>Agent:</b>	<b>Mr Andy Scales</b>

## THE SITE

The application relates to 276 Earlham Road, a large detached 5-bedroom dwelling with adjoining garage, adjacent to the existing Norfolk Constabulary Police Station (its western neighbour). The site is set back from the Earlham Road highway by a 10m verge and tree line. The surrounding area is predominantly residential; the properties immediately to the east and opposite, to the north, are similarly large detached dwellings. The land at the rear of the site, to the south, appears to be linked to the gardens of properties on Colman Road or Lubbock Close.

The property is set within 0.6 ha, comprising 170 sq m gross internal floorspace over two storeys, a 8m x 11m front driveway and a rear garden measuring 25m x 11m. In an amendment to the original application form, the applicant has noted that there are some fruit trees in the rear garden.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

**07/00654/F** - Erection of a pre-fabricated metal garage. (APPR - 03/08/2007)

## **THE PROPOSAL**

The application has been supported by a 'Supporting Planning Statement' detailing the context of the application and the site, the use, layout and access proposals. A supplementary letter from the applicant has also been received, which sets out to clarify some matters of interest, specifically regarding the nature of the use, storage, staffing, hours of use, traffic, parking and access, and trees on site.

The change of use is proposed to offer rest room facilities for the police operating from the adjacent station, providing kitchen, dining and quiet rooms, showers and bathrooms and storage areas. No internal alterations have been shown, and neither are there any external works proposed.

There are no changes to vehicular accesses proposed, so access to the site will continue to be via a shared tarmac dropped kerb crossing the highway verge.

Although some information has been submitted regarding some possible long-term plans for the site and adjacent police station, this application is solely for the change of use of the existing dwelling from residential dwelling to a rest room and storage facility.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

Letters to immediate neighbours, site notices and press notices have all advertised the application. Given the submission of supplementary information, the Council extended the standard 21-day consultation period by a further 21 days, until 11<sup>th</sup> November (inc.). Any further public representations will be brought to the Committee's attention at the time of the Committee.

To date, two letters of objection have been received from local residents, raising the following concerns:

- The intensity of the use at the existing police station being increased;
- The proposed use is inconsistent with the surrounding residential area;
- Increases in traffic, roadside parking and its impacts on local highway safety;
- Increased disturbance to amenity from noise and late night activity;
- The impacts from possible redevelopment of the wider police station site; and
- The police's and LPA's consultation processes were insufficient.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Relevant National Planning Policy:**

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development;

### **Relevant Saved Local Plan Policies:**

EP22 – Amenity considerations

HOU16 – Loss of residential accommodation

### **Principle of Development**

The proposal would result in the loss of a dwelling, and the subsequent provision of expanded community facilities in the form of the police station rest room and storage facilities. The site also benefits from good public transport links as required by PPS1. Although the loss of housing to other uses will generally be resisted, Local Plan policy HOU16 allows for circumstances where redevelopment would be beneficial to enhance community facilities or other benefits to the area.

In order for this loss to be justified, however, the proposal must demonstrate that it either provides a community benefit that can not be achieved in any other way, or a regeneration purpose to benefit the character or economy of the area.

Although not proposed for direct community use, as the building would not be used by general members of the public visiting the police station, the applicant has stated that the facility would greatly enhance the operations of the adjacent existing police station and the service its officers can provide, as the facilities currently there are considered inadequate. The current police station does not have rest rooms, and storage space is limited.

Alternatives to this proposal are to (i) not provide enhanced facilities, or (ii) to rebuild the existing police station, or (iii) to provide new facilities on site by constructing extensions. As a need has been identified by the service, not providing the facilities is not considered to be acceptable to the Police Authority, rebuilding would be unviable, and adding extensions would likely reduce the levels of on-site parking, leading to adverse impacts in other regards.

Within their submission, the applicant states that the property is to be purchased by the police service as a means to enable the eventual redevelopment of the wider police station site under the Norfolk Constabulary Long Term Estates Plan. The suitability of such a larger scheme would have to be tested by way of a separate planning application, but this proposal is to make use of the facility in the meantime.

### **Transport and access**

In addition to there being no changes proposed to the vehicular access, the applicant has stated that no parking of operational police vehicles is proposed within the current front curtilage of 276 Earlham Road.

Traffic regulation orders are also in place to prevent parking on the highways verge, running from the junction with Bluebell Road to 208/210 Earlham Road. If the applicant wished to alter the access arrangement onto Earlham Road, perhaps to increase parking availability, this would require a specific separate planning application.

It is proposed to provide a pedestrian link from the police station through to the rear garden of the property. This will enable pedestrian movements to avoid the use of the frontage of the site in this residential area, so minimising the change to the character of the area.

### **Intensity of use**

The existing police station has 36 staff using the site at any one time and the number of staff is not envisaged to increase as a result of this proposal.

Transport movements are also unlikely to increase as the facility will only cater for the existing staff and will not lead to an increase in operations. The applicant has said that emergency movements will not increase, and could even possibly decrease in the future.

In response to concerns that the use as a rest room is inconsistent with the surrounding residential area, the applicant states that there would be no operational activity on site.

### **Amenity**

By not using the dwelling for operational activity, and by avoiding its use by members of the public, the amenity of the area will be preserved in large part. Although there are concerns that the building could be used throughout the day and night, and that traffic movements could occur at any time, it must be remembered that this is also possible, although less likely, should it remain in residential use. Planning conditions can, however, restrict the use of the facility to those solely for rest room and storage activities and prevent the parking of operational vehicles on the site.

It is also noted that it is not intended to store items at the property that are inconsistent with the residential area such as hazardous materials, firearms or police evidence. This can also be restricted by condition.

Overall, given that there is not proposed to be changes to the building, its surrounds, the trees or the landscaping, it is considered that the proposal would not unduly affect the amenity of the neighbouring residential area and will be in accordance with Local Plan policy EP22, and it will be able to provide suitable amenity space for staff.

**Summary**

Despite causing the loss of residential accommodation, this proposal will provide for improved facilities for a public service, and subject to conditions, will have a minimal impact on the surrounding area.

By granting a personal planning permission in this instance, with conditions specifying the nature of the uses permitted, the Council can ensure that the property would remain residential in appearance and character, should the police service be unable to provide a suitable solution for the wider site. Also, it would revert back to a residential use should the police authority withdraw their interest in the site or it becomes surplus to demand.

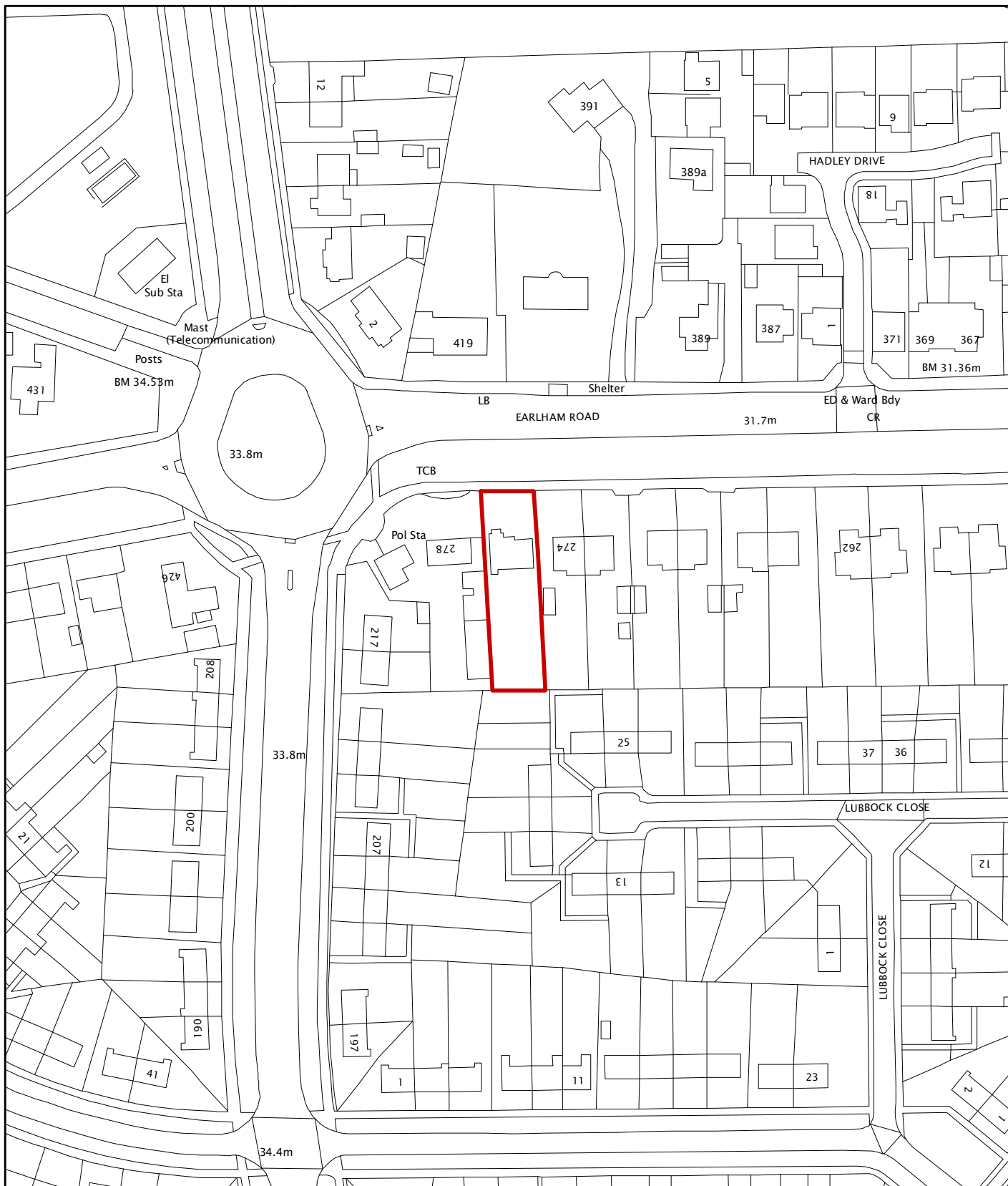
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

APPROVE PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. A personal planning permission restricted to the Norfolk Police Authority;
2. Standard time limit for implementation;
3. Restriction of facility use to rest rooms, kitchen & dining, and storage of personal effects;
4. Restriction of storage to avoid housing hazardous materials, firearms, police evidence and any other unreasonable items that might present a security concern or would necessitate changes to the building to accommodate them;
5. No parking of operational vehicles on the site.

**Reasons for recommendation:**

The proposal will contribute to the continued viability and improved performance of a community facility sufficient to justify the loss of residential accommodation, and, subject to the conditions above, will not compromise the amenity of the local residential area.



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Planning Application No - 08/01036/U

Site Address - 276 Earham Road

Scale - 1:1250



**NORWICH**  
City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT

