

Planning Applications Committee

8th January 2009

Section C

Agenda Number:	C2
Section/Area: I	Inner
Ward:	Mancroft
Officer:	Gary Howe
Valid Date:	6th August 2008
Application Number:	08/00830/F
Site Address :	Land Adjacent To And South East Of Silkfields Mandela Close Norwich
Proposal:	Erection of 6 No. one bedroom / two person flats and associated external works.
Applicant:	Iceni Homes Ltd
Agent:	Mr Michael Reynolds

THE SITE

The site is located to the south of Silkfields between the river Wensum and Mandela Close. Immediately to the south is the new private housing built by Hopkins Homes. Silkfields itself is a Council managed sheltered housing scheme for the over 60's. The site is within the City Centre Conservation Area and within the Northern Riverside character area of the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

PLANNING HISTORY

Silkfields was constructed in the early 1980's and accommodates up to 40 residents. It has a landscaped garden which directly fronts the river Wensum. There is a riverside walk immediately adjacent to the river which starts to the north at Station Bridge and continues in a southerly direction down to New Mills pumping station and beyond to Coslany Bridge.

Recent History

On 27th March 2008, planning permission was refused (App. No. 07/01276/F) for 'Erection of six flats and associated external works' for the following reason:-

'The site is located within Flood Risk Zone 2 as defined by the Partnership of Norfolk District Councils Strategic Flood Risk Assessment November 2007. The proposed residential use 'more vulnerable' is an appropriate form of development within flood zone 2, however as there are other reasonably available sites for this form of development within the Local Planning Authorities boundaries located within a lower risk flood zone (flood zone 1) the proposals fail the sequential test as required by Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25). In this case, it is not considered by the Local Planning Authority that there are any other policy or material considerations which would outweigh the advice of PPS25 and merit approval of the application'.

THE PROPOSAL

It is proposed to erect six one bedroom (two-person) flats in a one, two and three storey block with associated refuse storage and landscaping.

CONSULTATIONS

Advertised in press on site and adjacent occupiers notified: Sixteen letters of representation from residents in Silkfields on the following grounds:

- No turning area for emergency vehicles;
- Buildings will cause a potential loss of light to Silkfields
- Design is not appropriate with Silkfields and represents over-development;
- Third storey will cause over-looking into Silkfields;
- There is already a lack of parking in the area and lack of visitor parking;
- Loss of green amenity area from Silkfields;
 - Inconvenience, noise, traffic, danger during construction period;
 - Should not be building within a flood zone;
 - Loss of view;
 - Concern about loss of water pressure and strain on sewerage system;

- Consider form of proposed residential accommodation for people with learning disabilities is inappropriate next to sheltered housing;
- Existing water drainage problems on the land.

One letter from Councillors Dylan and Ramsay concerning the following:

- Loss of few remaining green spaces inside Inner Ring Road;
- Views of the Cathedral and City Hall will be obscured by the development;
- Residents in Silkfields would be over-looked and overshadowed;
- There would be a loss of natural habitat for otters and birds;
- The land is poorly drained and is often waterlogged;
- Remain concerned that this site has failed the sequential test (PPS25) and therefore the application should be refused.

One Petition signed by 29 signatories from Silkfields with various added comments.

Broads Authority: Raise no objections.

Norwich Society: This is an opportunity to commend a design for dwellings which has been done in a contemporary manner with decent materials.

Central Norwich Citizens Forum: Good scheme which resolves problem of contrast between terrace massing of Hopkins Homes and outstanding but self-effacing Silkfields scheme; would wish to see some changes to the roof plan; would prefer a buff brick rather than the red brick proposed.

Environment Agency: Are satisfied that the proposal passes the sequential test and consider the revised Flood Risk Assessment is acceptable subject to conditions relating to minimum finished floor levels (4.70m AOD) and a flood plan.

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology: Would require conditions to ensure an archaeological evaluation prior to any work on site, which may lead to further mitigation work.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant National Planning Policies:

PPS1: Sustainable development and locations
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk

Relevant East of England Plan policies:

SS1 Achieving sustainable development

ENV7 Quality in the Built Environment

Relevant Replacement Local Plan Policies (saved):

HOU5 – Accessible Housing

HOU12 A25 – Allocation of site for housing development

HBE3 – Area of Main Archaeological Interest

HBE8 – City Centre Conservation Area

EP13 – Flood risk

TRA9 – Car free housing

EP22 – High standard of amenity for residential occupiers

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance (SPD and SPG):

Northern City Centre Area Action Plan Submission Report (NCCAAP) – November 2008

City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal – September 2007

Introduction

The applicants, Iceni Homes Ltd, propose this site for six flats specifically designed for Norwich residents who experience learning difficulties. The scheme would be entirely separate from Silkfields with separate access and egress and no shared facilities or areas. (Iceni homes are a joint venture development company brought into being as a direct response to the Housing Corporation's Partnering proposals, with the clear aim of becoming one of the main players in the East of England market. Iceni Homes is a trading company limited by shares, wholly owned by its sponsoring associations. It is one of the UK's first development companies set up to increase the supply of affordable homes in the East of England).

Land Use/Policy

The site is part of a larger housing allocation on brownfield land (HOU12 A25 – Unicorn Yard/New Mills Car Parks). Most of the allocation has already been redeveloped. The principle of development on this site is therefore considered to be acceptable. The site is highly sustainable given that it is a brownfield site within the City Centre area with good access to pedestrian/cycle links and bus services.

Flooding

The site falls within Flood Zone 2 (between 1 in 100 and 1 in 100 year risk) which means that the scheme must be considered by the Environment Agency in terms

of a Sequential test and Flood Risk Assessment. The Environment Agency objected to the earlier (refused) planning application (07/01276/F) as they considered that the earlier scheme failed the sequential test. However a revised Practice Guide on PPS25 was published in June 2008 (para. 14.16 Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk Practice Guide) by DCLG which changed the way the sequential test is carried out in that it identifies that a smaller search area than the Local Planning Authorities whole boundary can be defined for regeneration areas (in this case the Northern City Centre Action Area Plan). In addition further work has been carried out by officers to identify the status of all potentially available sites in the LPA area which has significantly reduced the list of sites which might reasonably be available as alternatives. Essentially what has been found is that there are no available alternative sites either within the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan boundary nor indeed within the wider City Centre which are located in a lower flood zone. As such the sequential test has been satisfied. (It should be born in mind that the site is not located in a high probability area of flooding nor is it in the functional floodplain where residential development would either be unacceptable or need to be subject to the exceptions test).

There have been no objections from the Environment Agency to the Flood Risk Assessment subject to the inclusion of suitable management conditions.

Layout, Conservation and Design

The design of this scheme represents a considerable change from that previously submitted in the earlier refused application. It is considered that the new design successfully negotiates the change in scale and height from the neighbouring Hopkins Homes to the existing Silkfields building. It is felt that the extended roof pitch (north and east elevations) also successfully addresses the concerns of the Silkfields residents regarding over-looking without having to resort to a large and unrelieved elevation. By picking up the industrial theme the design will be an interesting addition to the Northern Riverside Character Area of the City Centre Conservation Area. There will need to be conditions relating to materials and external joinery.

Landscape and Trees

The Northern City Centre Action Area Plan and policy NE1 of the Local Plan emphasise this area as an important part of the 'green' river valley and the riverside walk as a key route. The riverside walk already exists between New Mills Yard and St Crispin's Bridge although it is hoped that it will be upgraded. The building has been kept sufficiently away from the river bank to avoid emphasising a visual pinch point at this point on the river with the existing Hopkins Homes dwellings. This will also have the dual effect of ensuring that the roots of the existing river bank trees (Willows) will not be compromised (although

they will also need to be protected with a suitable condition) and that there is sufficient width of river corridor to enable Otters and birds to migrate along its length.

Representations

Most of the concerns expressed about this development centre on three issues, overlooking and potential loss of privacy; loss of daylight and loss of green space associated with Silkfields. The proposal has been specifically located in the south-west corner so that these concerns could be kept to a minimum. The closest element of the proposal (which is 2 storeys high) is 7 metres to the south-west of the nearest part of Silkfields with habitable room windows facing east. The single storey element of the proposed building is 9.5 metres to the west of the nearest part of Silkfields with no habitable room windows facing Silkfields. Given this scenario it is not considered that there will be any significant overlooking or loss of privacy for the residents in Silkfields. Similarly given the above location of the blocks; their modest height and their orientation, it is not felt that there will be a significant loss of light to any of the habitable rooms in Silkfields. Whilst it cannot be denied that the proposal would result in the loss of a small part of the green space that currently surrounds Silkfields, it is considered that there is ample green space between the existing sheltered housing and the river and this extends to the north of the building.

Conclusion

The site is a brownfield site located in a central location which has good links to the City centre and to local services. The proposal is a car free development which would not be acceptable outside the City centre. It is specifically for local people with learning difficulties and will be run by a registered social landlord. It is considered that it would not be appropriate to locate this facility outside the City centre as it is essential that such a facility has good links to City centre services. Given this scenario and the above assessment it is considered that the proposal should be accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

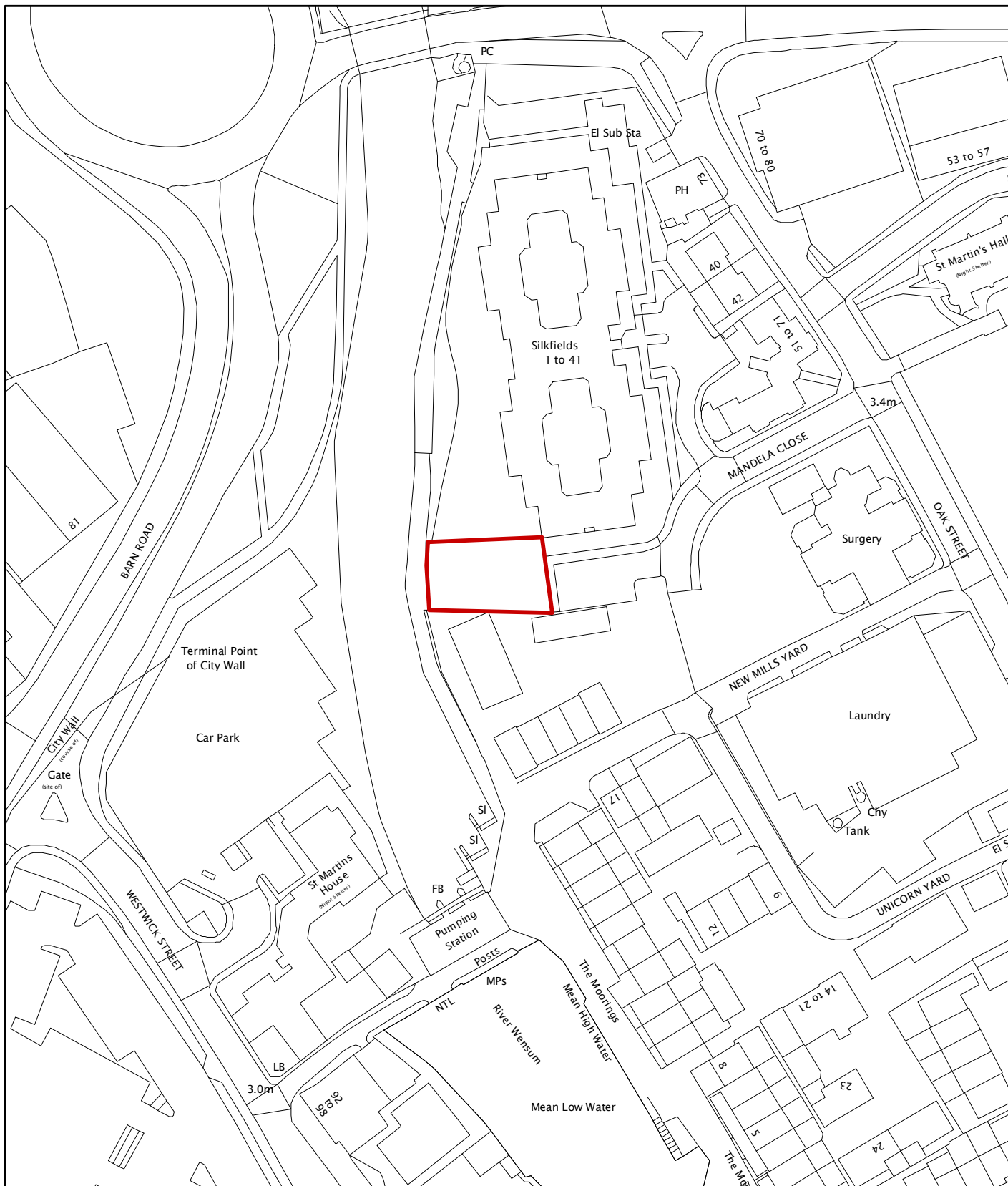
APPROVE PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement within 3 years;
2. Samples of materials;
3. Boundary walls and fences;
4. Prior details to include
 - a) Windows, roof windows, doors, eaves;
 - b) Water drainage goods; dormers;

- c) Cupola,
- d) Rainwater harvesting apparatus.
- 5. Archaeology
- 6. Minimum finished floor levels;
- 7. Flood plan
- 8. Landscaping
- 9. Tree root protection;
- 10. Cycle and refuse storage.

Reasons for Approval:

The proposals are consistent with policies SS1 and ENV7 of the adopted East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy, 'saved' policies HOU5, HOU12 A25, HBE3, HBE8, EP13, TRA9 and EP22 of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (adopted November 2004), PPS1 and 25 and all material considerations.



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Site Address - Land adjacent to and South East of Silkfields, Mandela Close

Scale - 1:1250



NORWICH
City Council

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT

