

Report to Planning applications committee

Item

10 August 2017

Report of Head of planning services

Subject Application no 16/01052/F - 4 - 6 Mason Road, Norwich,
NR6 6RF

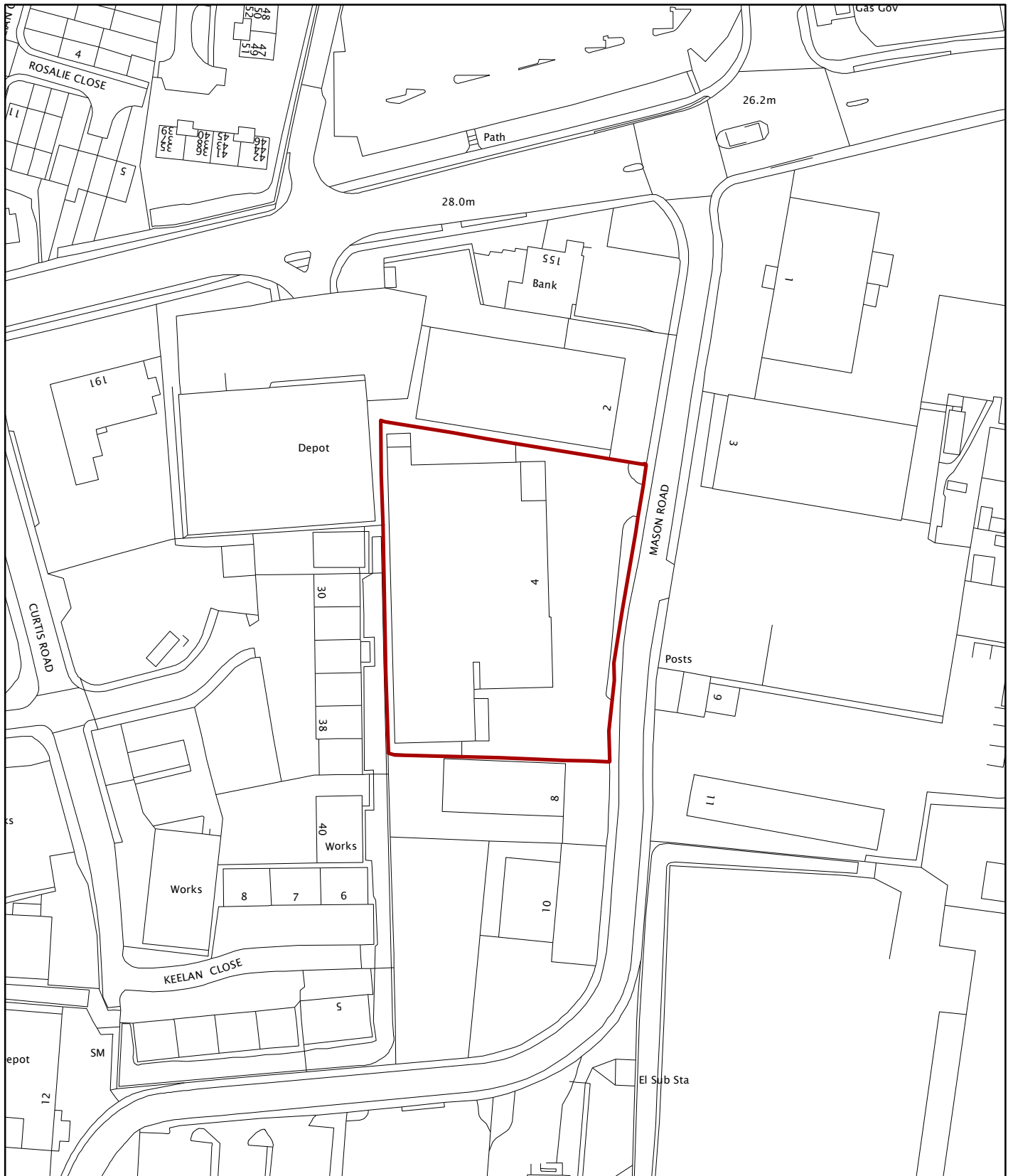
**Reason
for referral** Objection

4(a)

Ward:	Catton Grove
Case officer	Robert Webb - robertwebb@norwich.gov.uk

Development proposal		
Continued use as a place of worship (Class D1) with education and training and associated office and cafe.		
Representations		
Object	Comment	Support
3	0	0

Main issues	Key considerations
1 Principle	Employment area, transport links, location
2 Design	Layout, appearance
3 Transport	Parking provision, sustainable transport options
4 Amenity	Noise impacts, external lighting
5 Flood risk	Critical drainage area
Expiry date	8 September 2016
Recommendation	Approval



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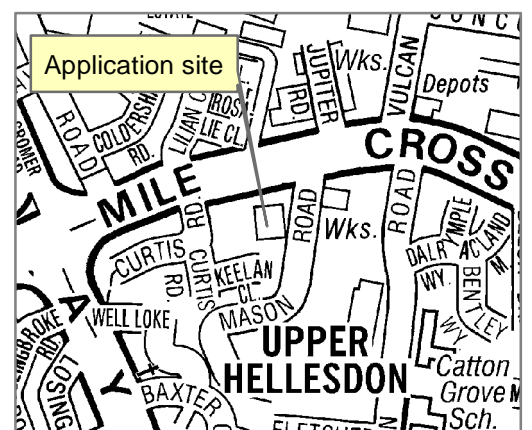
Planning Application No 16/01052/F
Site Address 4-6 Mason Road

Scale 1:1,250



NORWICH
City Council

PLANNING SERVICES



The site and surroundings

1. The site is within an industrial estate close and is served by Mason Road which is off Mile Cross Road on the outer ring road. The site is surrounded by industrial/commercial development on all sides, with a Hughes retail store to the north and premises operated by Jewson's and Page Bros to the east. There are further industrial units immediately to the west of the site. The nearest residential properties are to the west in Curtis Road and to the east in Weston Road.
2. There is a large warehouse style building with a floorspace of approximately 2200 square metres which accommodates Soul Church and ancillary facilities including a café and offices and the site also includes a surface level car park. There are 55 parking spaces at the front of the premises.

Constraints

3. The site is a designated employment area and within a critical drainage area as designated by the Norwich Development Management Policies document.

Relevant planning history

4.

Ref	Proposal	Decision	Date
10/01081/U	Change of use from general industrial (Class B2) to place of worship (Class D1), non-residential education centre (Class D1) and associated office space (Class B1).	Approved	07/09/2010

The proposal

5. The Soul Church was formed in 2014 following the re-naming of the Norwich Family Life Church which was founded some 40 years ago. The church offers a number of programmes catering for the needs of people of all ages. The church used to operate from the Heartsease area until its original building was destroyed in a fire in 2006. Alternative premises were identified in the former MFI unit on Barker Street and a temporary 3 year planning permission was granted, however the landlord decided to sell the property so the church were not able to proceed with that option. Following this, permission was obtained in 2010 for the change of use of the current building in Mason Road with permission being granted for a temporary period up until the 28 February 2012. Following this the church purchased the Mason Road building, with the idea being to relocate to Heartsease once sufficient funds had been raised.
6. In November 2012 an application for a replacement church building on the Heartsease Lane site was submitted and this was approved in September 2013 under application reference 12/01444/F. The applicant states that the acquisition,

conversion and maintenance of the Mason Road premises has been a considerable drain on funds making the earlier planned relocation impossible. However the church remains committed to relocating back to the Heartsease Lane site or to a suitable alternative location once sufficient funds are available.

7. Permission is sought for the continued use of the building as a place of worship, education and training with an ancillary café and offices. The church has a congregation of approximately 1000 people, employs 4 full time and 13 part time members of staff. In addition it has approximately 150 volunteers which organise a number of activities and groups for children, young people, homeless, elderly people, prisoners, and other members of the community.
8. The church is open between 9am and 4pm Tuesday to Friday. The auditorium is open on Sundays with services held at 9.30am, 11am and 4pm, serving the congregation of approximately 1000 people. The youth facilities are open on Friday evenings between 7pm – 9pm. There are usually around 20 staff and 90 young people in attendance at these sessions.

Representations

9. Adjacent and neighbouring properties have been notified in writing. Three letters of representation have been received citing the issues as summarised in the table below. All representations are available to view in full at <http://planning.norwich.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the application number.

Issues raised	Response
Concerns regarding noise coming from the building including amplified music and from gatherings of people outside the premises.	See main issue 3
Concern regarding the brightness of illuminated signage on the front of the building.	See main issue 3

Consultation responses

10. Consultation responses are summarised below the full responses are available to view at <http://planning.norwich.gov.uk/online-applications/> by entering the application number.

Environmental protection

11. No objection following the receipt of a noise assessment and management plan providing the measures within it are implemented. A condition is recommended to restrict the use of the external areas to minimise impacts on surrounding occupiers.

Highways (local)

12. No objection in principle on highway/transportation grounds. In my view a large faith centre should be located in the city centre or near a large district centre to benefit from proximity to bus services and car parks. In the interim I would not object to further temporary use of this site.

Assessment of planning considerations

Relevant development plan policies

13. **Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk adopted March 2011 amendments adopted Jan. 2014 (JCS)**
- JCS1 Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets
 - JCS2 Promoting good design
 - JCS6 Access and transportation
 - JCS7 Supporting communities
 - JCS9 Strategy for growth in the Norwich policy area
 - JCS12 The remainder of the Norwich urban area including the fringe parishes
 - JCS20 Implementation
14. **Norwich Development Management Policies Local Plan adopted Dec. 2014 (DM Plan)**
- DM1 Achieving and delivering sustainable development
 - DM2 Ensuring satisfactory living and working conditions
 - DM3 Delivering high quality design
 - DM22 Planning for and safeguarding community facilities
 - DM28 Encouraging sustainable travel
 - DM30 Access and highway safety
 - DM31 Car parking and servicing

Other material considerations

15. **Relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 (NPPF):**
- NPPF0 Achieving sustainable development
 - NPPF2 Ensuring the vitality of town centres
 - NPPF4 Promoting sustainable transport
 - NPPF7 Requiring good design

Case Assessment

16. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Relevant development plan policies are detailed above. Material considerations include policies in the National Planning Framework (NPPF), the Councils standing duties, other policy documents and guidance detailed above and any other matters referred to specifically in the assessment below. The following paragraphs provide an assessment of the main planning issues in this case against relevant policies and material considerations.

Main issue 1: Principle of development

17. Key policies and NPPF paragraphs –DM22, JCS7, NPPF paragraph 70.
18. Policy 7 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk supports access to new and improved facilities for faith groups and promotes the wellbeing of communities. Policy DM22 of the Norwich Development Management Policies Local Plan supports the development of new and enhanced community facilities where they would contribute to the wellbeing and social cohesion of local communities. The policy states a preference for city centre or district centre locations and proposals for development outside these areas must be fully justified. Paragraph 70 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states planning authorities should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities, including places of worship, to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
19. In this instance the particular circumstances of the applicant, as set out in paragraph 5 above are considered to represent a significant material consideration in the determination of the application. The church requires a temporary home whilst it raises funds to relocate either back to Heartsease Lane or to a more suitable site. Financial information has been provided which demonstrates a five-year plan to generate sufficient funding to allow relocation.
20. It is recognised that the site is not located in the most accessible part of the city, being outside of the city or a district centre. It is close to the outer ring road and this may lead to a greater number of car-borne journeys. This matter is further considered under main issue 3: Transport.
21. In addition the site is located within a designated employment area. Concerns were raised with the original application about the loss of a business premises, and this was one of the reasons why a temporary permission was granted. It should be noted that the church does employ a number of people and therefore the use does not wholly conflict with the aims of the designation. However there is also a need to safeguard business premises in the longer term. As a result a condition is recommended which would ensure the use of the building reverts to B1 use upon the expiry of the temporary permission.
22. Due to the out-of-centre location of the application, the employment designation of the site and the aspirations of the applicant to relocate in the future, a temporary permission rather than a permanent permission is considered to be appropriate, subject to full consideration of the impacts of the proposal as set out in the following paragraphs.

Main issue 2: Design

23. Key policies and NPPF paragraphs – JCS2, DM3, NPPF paragraphs 9, 17, 56 and 60-66.
24. Apart from the sealing up of large door to improve sound insulation, no external changes are proposed to the building. The design is one of an industrial unit with signage relating to the Soul Church and is considered to be acceptable.

Main issue 3: Transport

25. Key policies and NPPF paragraphs – JCS6, DM28, DM30, DM31, NPPF paragraphs 17 and 39.
26. The application states that the site can accommodate 55 vehicles and 80 bicycles. A pick up and drop off service is provided by two 17 seater minibuses from the old site on Mousehold Lane, and it is understood free bus services are also provided from further afield. The peak times in terms of visitors are Friday evenings and Sundays, when the youth group and services are held. This coincides with the majority of the surrounding business premises being closed, which helps to manage traffic and parking impacts.
27. In considering the first application back in 2010, officers were concerned that the location was not a sustainable one and did not offer easy access to sustainable modes of transport. However members had regard to the circumstances of the applicant and a temporary permission was granted. The site is still not ideally located in terms of accessibility, however the Church does promote the use of public transport, runs a number of bus pick-up services, and is committed to improving cycle parking at the site. In addition regard is had to the circumstances of the church which is seeking alternative premises in the longer term.
28. Conditions are recommended seeking the provision of improved cycle storage outside the building and the implementation of a travel information plan to encourage people to use sustainable methods of transport to access the premises. No objection is raised by the Transportation Officer to further temporary occupation of the site.

Main issue 4: Amenities

29. Key policies and NPPF paragraphs – DM2, DM11, NPPF paragraphs 9 and 17.
30. Concerns have been raised regarding noise from the premises from residents within Weston Road to the east and also from the occupiers of a business premise immediately to the west on Curtis Road. Further investigation has established that the main cause of this noise appears to have been from external speakers that were on the front of the building and being used for 'welcoming' music and from amplified music during church services, as well as noise from outdoor activities associated with the youth group.
31. Following negotiations with the applicant, the outside speakers have now been removed and a full acoustic report has been carried out by a qualified consultant to assess the noise impacts and recommend improvements to the sound insulation and noise management.
32. The report recommended the following measures:
 - (a) Boxing in the folding door to the Youth Space externally with a dry-lined partition set within the brickwork opening (this has already been done);
 - (b) Keeping within maximum recommended noise levels as set out in the acoustic report for both the Sanctuary (main auditorium) and the Youth Space;

- (c) It is proposed to implement a noise management strategy, assisted by a permanently-installed noise monitoring device. This will include a responsible person who is trained in noise monitoring to ensure noise levels are kept within acceptable levels. They will have the following responsibilities:
 - (i) Making in-house and visiting performers aware of music noise limits;
 - (ii) Liaising with the sound technician and other production staff during events to control noise levels if necessary;
 - (iii) Ensuring that external doors are closed when events are in progress;
 - (iv) Receiving and logging any complaints regarding noise levels in accordance with the noise complaint investigation procedure, and taking appropriate action.
 - (v) The report further recommends no external sound system or speakers are used.
- 33. It is recognised that outside activities can also cause noise and disturbance however it is considered beneficial that some provision is made for outside play, particularly for the youth group who meet on a Friday night. A condition is therefore recommended restricting outside activities to take place between the hours of 18.00-21.00 on Fridays only.
- 34. The council's environmental protection officer has reviewed the measures proposed and raises no objection on the basis they are fully implemented. It is considered the measures will improve the situation for surrounding occupiers significantly. Conditions are recommended to ensure compliance with the recommendations of the noise report, that no external speakers are used at any time, and the restriction of outside play to between the hours 18.00-21.00. Subject to the imposition of these conditions, the noise impacts are considered to be acceptable.
- 35. Concern has also been raised about the brightness of the lighting associated with the external signage. Discussions have taken place with the Church and it has been agreed a separate application will be made for the signage, and the Church has agreed to lower the brightness of the signage if required. This matter will therefore be dealt with separately from this application for the use of the premises.

Main issue 5: Flood risk

- 36. Key policies and NPPF paragraphs – JCS1, DM5, NPPF paragraphs 100 and 103.
- 37. The site is located within a critical drainage area however there has been no change to the footprint of the building or surfacing of external areas that would increase the risk of surface water flooding.

Equalities and diversity issues

- 38. There are no significant equality or diversity issues.

Local finance considerations

39. Under Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the council is required when determining planning applications to have regard to any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application. Local finance considerations are defined as a government grant or the Community Infrastructure Levy.
40. Whether or not a local finance consideration is material to a particular decision will depend on whether it could help to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It would not be appropriate to make a decision on the potential for the development to raise money for a local authority.
41. In this case local finance considerations are not considered to be material to the case.

Conclusion

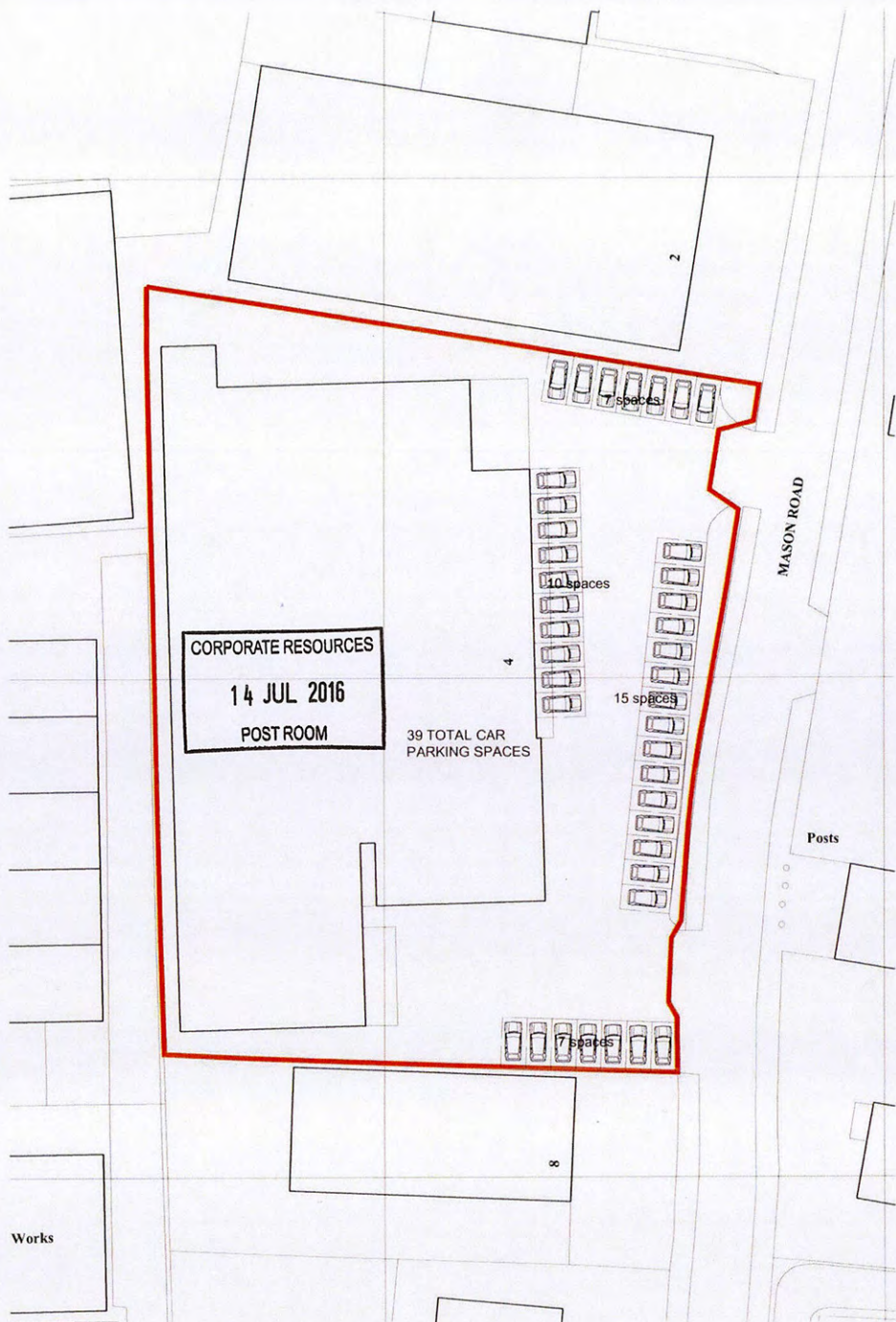
42. Whilst the site is not considered ideal in terms of transport sustainability and is located within an area designated for employment purposes, regard is had to the circumstances of the church which requires temporary accommodation for a further period of time whilst funds are raised for permanent relocation to more suitable premises in the future. Although a small number of objections have been received on the grounds of noise disturbance the church has committed to fully implementing recommendations within the noise report and carrying out ongoing noise management to ensure impacts on neighbouring occupiers are minimised. On this basis, and when weighed against the community benefits provided by the church, the impacts are considered acceptable. A number of conditions are recommended to ensure the impacts of the development are minimised.
43. Given that the location would not be supported on a permanent basis without strong justification in terms of a sequential site test, it is recommended that a temporary permission of five years is granted to allow the church further time to continue its services and community activities whilst securing funding either to enable a relocation back to the Heartsease site or to an alternative suitable location.

Recommendation

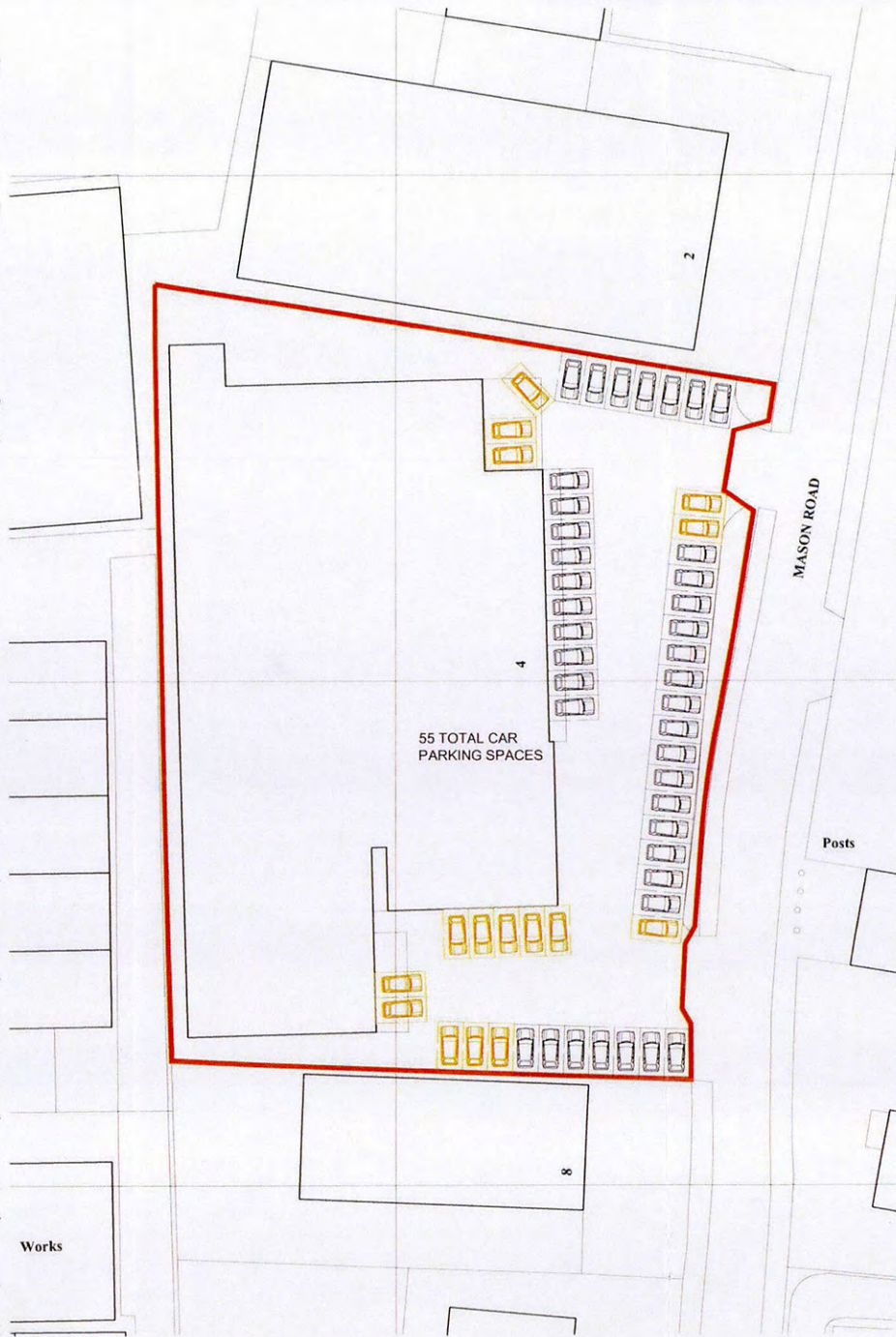
To approve application no. 16/01052/F - 4 - 6 Mason Road Norwich NR6 6RF and grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Temporary permission for 5 years and use to revert to B1 at this time or upon cessation of use.
2. Development to take place in accordance with plans;
3. No use of the premises outside of the hours of 08.00-22.00 Monday to Saturday or outside of the hours 08.00-20.00 on Sundays
4. Within one month of the date of this permission details of covered and secure cycle parking to be submitted for approval and installed within one month of date of approval and retained for the duration of the use.
5. Travel information plan to be submitted for approval and made available and updated for the duration of the use
6. No loudspeaker, amplifier, relay or other audio equipment shall be installed or used outside the building

7. Amplified music and sound within the premises to be managed in accordance with the approved Music Break-out assessment and Management Plan.
8. No activities or events to take place outside the building except between the hours of 18.00-21.00 on Fridays



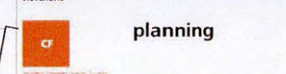
SITE PLAN - EXISTING 1:500



SITE PLAN - PROPOSED 1:500

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Scale 1:500

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED BY
Revisions				



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planning

St Mary's Church
4 Mason Road
Norwich

Site Plan
Existing and Proposed

4038

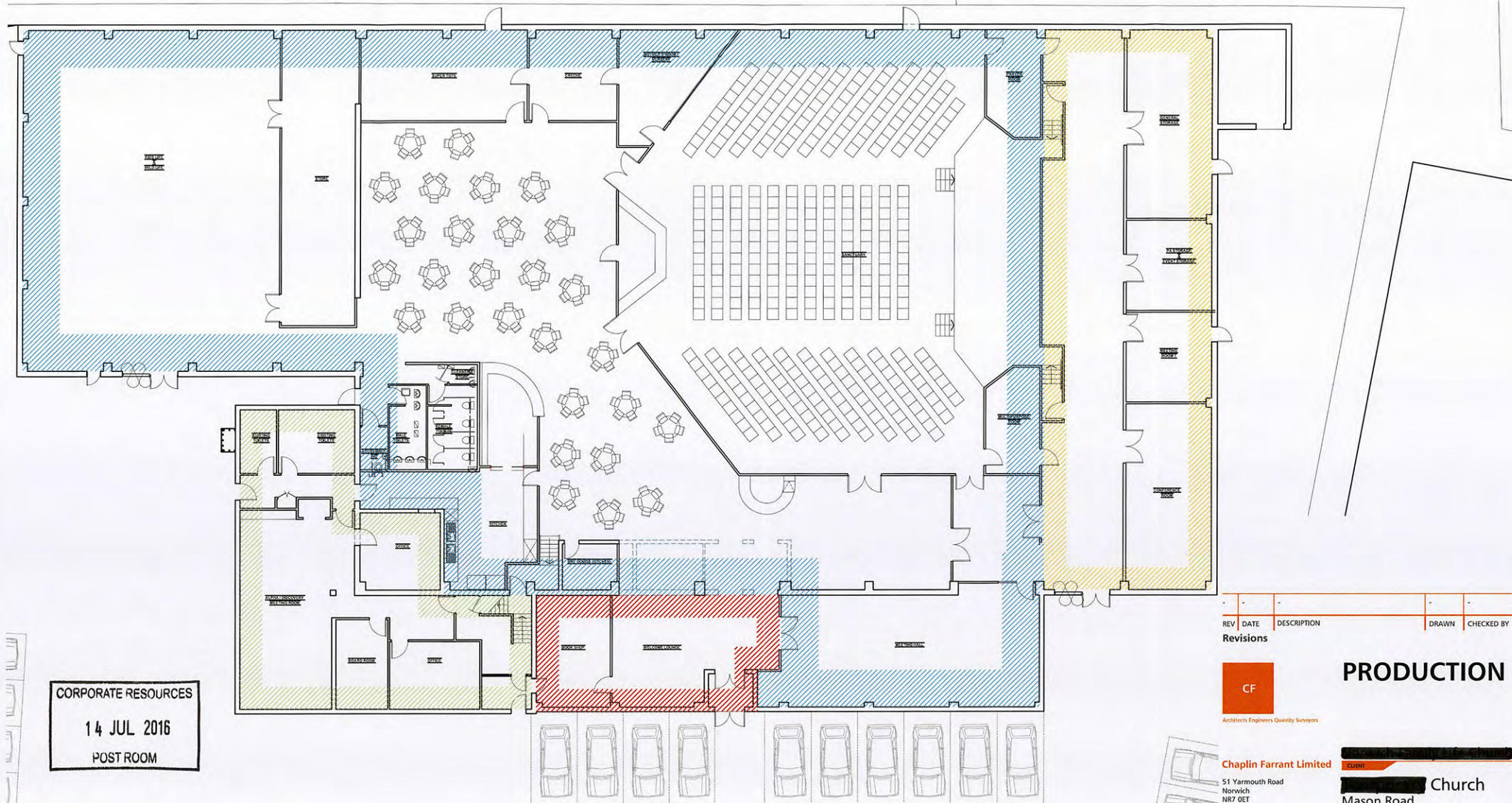
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CORPORATE RESOURCES
14 JUL 2016
POST ROOM

- INFREQUENT USE**
These spaces generally used for services on Sunday only. Possible infrequent non Sunday occupation, allowing for say one evening per week to accommodate rehearsals and or other services etc.
- Admin, General Office and Meeting use**
Existing office spaces re-used. No change to existing functions or occupancy rates.
- Book Shop and Welcome area**
Spaces open to members of the congregation during and following services.
- Storage area (area use subject to confirmation)**
Storage area requires minimal heating and lighting. Other uses within this space to be considered for upgrading when final use is determined.

FLOOR PLAN - ZONES 1:200

0 5m
Scale 1:100

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED BY
Revisions				



Architects Engineers Quantity Surveyors

PRODUCTION

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Client
Church
Mason Road
Norwich
Project

Occupancy/ Frequency Plan

4038
Project Ref.

100
Drawing No.

18-10-10 **1:200 @ A3**
Date **Scale**

bw
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