

PLANNING COMMITTEE:	21st January 2020
DEPARTMENT:	Planning Service
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING:	Peter Baguley
APPLICATION REF:	N/2019/1470
LOCATION:	County Hall, 24 Guildhall Road
DESCRIPTION:	Change of Use of part ground floor from Offices (Use Class B1a) to Artist Studios (Use Class D1)
WARD:	Castle Ward
APPLICANT:	Northampton Borough Council
AGENT:	GSS Architecture
REFERRED BY:	Director of Planning and Sustainability
REASON:	Council owned land and is the applicant
DEPARTURE:	No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The development as proposed is acceptable and would contribute to the aims of regenerating the town centre and providing a cultural focus within Derngate Conservation Area and a viable long-term use for the existing buildings. The proposal would not lead to any undue impacts in respect of flood risk, highways or impact on surrounding amenity in accordance with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies S10, E7, BN5 and BN9 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policies 1, 5, 10 and 21 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application relates to the change of use of part of the ground floor of the building from Offices (Use Class B1a) to Artist Studios (Use Class D1).
- 2.2 The section of the building that this relates to fronts Guildhall Road (from the museum entrance) to the element fronting Angel Street.
- 2.3 The change of use is related to the relocation of NN Contemporary Art, which offers art space for artists in all stages of their careers. They are currently located in No.9 Guildhall Road but have now outgrown these premises.

- 2.4 The application relates to Phase 1 of the works, which involves the formation of a reception and seating area, project space, 9 artist studios (offering work and research space for artists), an education room for 10 people with audio-visual technology for presentations, staff room, office for the CEO, kitchen and WCs.
- 2.5 There are further plans for a phase 2, which could offer a new gallery, but that is not part of this current application.
- 2.6 The proposal does not involve alterations to the external appearance of the building, only internal works.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site is part of the former County Council buildings constructed in 1935, but now forms part of the wider Central Museum development.
- 3.2 The building is located on Guildhall Road opposite the Royal and Derngate. Access to the site is from Guildhall Road.
- 3.2 To the north and adjoining the application site is the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, which is currently under refurbishment. To the south of the site is the Vulcan Works, which is also the subject of major redevelopment and combined these two will form important elements of the cultural quarter of Northampton.
- 3.3 The application buildings were constructed as the County Council Offices in 1934 in a neo-Georgian style with a stone frontage and brick on the rear elevation. The ownership was subsequently transferred to Northampton Borough Council around 2017.
- 3.4 The buildings are not listed but included in the Derngate Conservation Area.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 In 2012 a two-storey side extension was added to the existing building providing additional display areas for the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. Since that time the only other planning applications related to additional signage on the building.
- 4.2 In 2017 consent was granted for the remodelling and extension of museum, new courtyard extension to provide a new shoe gallery, cafe and multi-functional space and to link the buildings, new substation and demolition to facilitate the extension, and the change of use from Offices (Class B1) to museum (Class D1). This permission does not cover the site of the current application.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014), and the Northampton Central Area Action Plan (2013).

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

5.2 National Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraph 8 – There are three dimensions to sustainable development. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles: an economic role, a social role, an environmental role.

Paragraph 11 – Central to the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

Section 7 relates to good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute to making places better for people. In Paragraph 85 reference is made to ensuring the vitality of town centres considers the need to allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of uses within town centres including leisure, tourism and cultural uses.

Section 9 and in particular Paragraph 110 considers sustainable transport – developments should be located and designed where practicable to create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists and pedestrians.

Section 12 relates achieving well designed places noting that proposals should be sympathetic to local character and history, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change and create places that are safe, inclusive and which promote health and well-being.

Section 16 relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment - In considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

Paragraph 195 adds where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy SA: presumption in favour of sustainable development
Policy S10: sustainable development principles
Policy E7: Tourism, Visitor and Cultural Industries
Policy BN5: The Historic Environment and Landscape
Policy BN9: Planning for pollution control

5.4 Northampton Central Area Action Plan 2013

The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) provides specific planning policy and guidance for the town centre and adjoining areas where significant regeneration and investment is proposed in the period up to 2026 and is in conformity with the objectives of the NPPF. Relevant policies include:

Policy 1: Promoting Design Excellence
Policy 5: Flood risk and drainage
Policy 10: Parking

5.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Northamptonshire Parking Standards (September 2016)
Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004
Parking Standards (November 2019)

5.6 **Other Material Considerations**

Derngate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

6. **CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

6.1 **NBC Conservation** – No objection. No external alterations are proposed and the change of use will not affect the character of Derngate Conservation Area.

6.2 **NBC Public Protection** – no comments to make on the proposal.

7. **APPRAISAL**

7.1 The key issues for consideration are the appropriateness of the use and impact on the setting of heritage assets.

Principle

7.2 The works only relate to the change of use of part of the building. No external alterations are proposed.

7.3 The part of the building in question is next to the existing museum. It is considered that the principle of the use is acceptable in the town centre. In any event, the use has been occupying another building in close vicinity and the proposal is merely a relocation of the same from the existing premises.

Impact on Heritage

7.4 As no external alteration is proposed, it is not considered that the proposed use would impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

7.5 Section 16 of the NPPF states that account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. This approach is continued in Paragraph 195 which states “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use”.

7.6 In this instance, the proposal is to enable the relocation of an existing use, which will in turn seek to offer a viable and public use for these prominent Town Centre buildings, that lie within the Northampton Cultural Quarter.

7.7 Given that the drawings indicate that some internal walls are to be removed, further discussions have taken place with the Conservation Officer, who considers it would be appropriate to require a building recording condition, to ensure that a record is kept of the building in its original state.

Highways

- 7.8 The application does not propose any parking on site, but deliveries have already been addressed through the wider Museum project. Given that this is a Town Centre location and there are car parks and public transport links nearby, this is not considered to be a significant issue and is compliant with Policy 10 of the Central Area Action Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.9 The National Planning Policy Framework, Policy BN7 of the Joint Core Strategy and Policy 5 of the Central Area Action Plan require that development proposals do not increase the risk of flood and, where possible, offer betterment.
- 7.10 The application site is located in an area designated as Flood Zone 1 which is identified as an area of low probability of flooding, land having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. However, that this application relates to a change of use only and that no additional hard standing or floor space is being created, there is no requirement for the application to include a flood risk assessment.

Impact on neighbouring uses

- 7.11 The proposed use will not introduce a new use into this Town Centre location, but seek to compliment the other cultural uses in this area.
- 7.12 The activities will all be carried out within the building and no extraction systems are proposed. The use has already been operating on a smaller scale within the same locality and it is considered that the move to this location would not result in a significant impact on any nearby properties or uses, in terms of noise, dust or odour.
- 7.13 Bloomsbury House, located to the south of the Royal and Derngate Theatres, is occupied as residential flats. It is considered that these properties are sufficiently distance away from the application site to not be significantly adversely affected by activities in this section of the building.
- 7.14 The use is considered to bring new vitality into this area of the town and bring part of the building back into a viable use and is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on the area.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The development as proposed is acceptable and would contribute to the aims of regenerating the town centre and providing a cultural focus within Derngate Conservation Area and a viable long term use for the existing buildings. The proposal would not lead to any undue impacts in respect of flood risk, highways or impact on surrounding amenity in accordance with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies S10, E7, BN5 and BN9 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policies 1, 5, 10 and 21 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan.
- 8.2 The proposal is acceptable and recommended for approval.

9. CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: SK400 (site location plan) and SK410 (plans, section and elevations)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

3. No alteration or demolition shall take place until a programme of buildings recording has been compiled and submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in accordance with the recording brief issued by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of archaeological research in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

4. Details of the provision for the storage of refuse and materials for recycling shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented prior to the first occupation or bringing into use of the building hereby permitted and thereafter retained.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

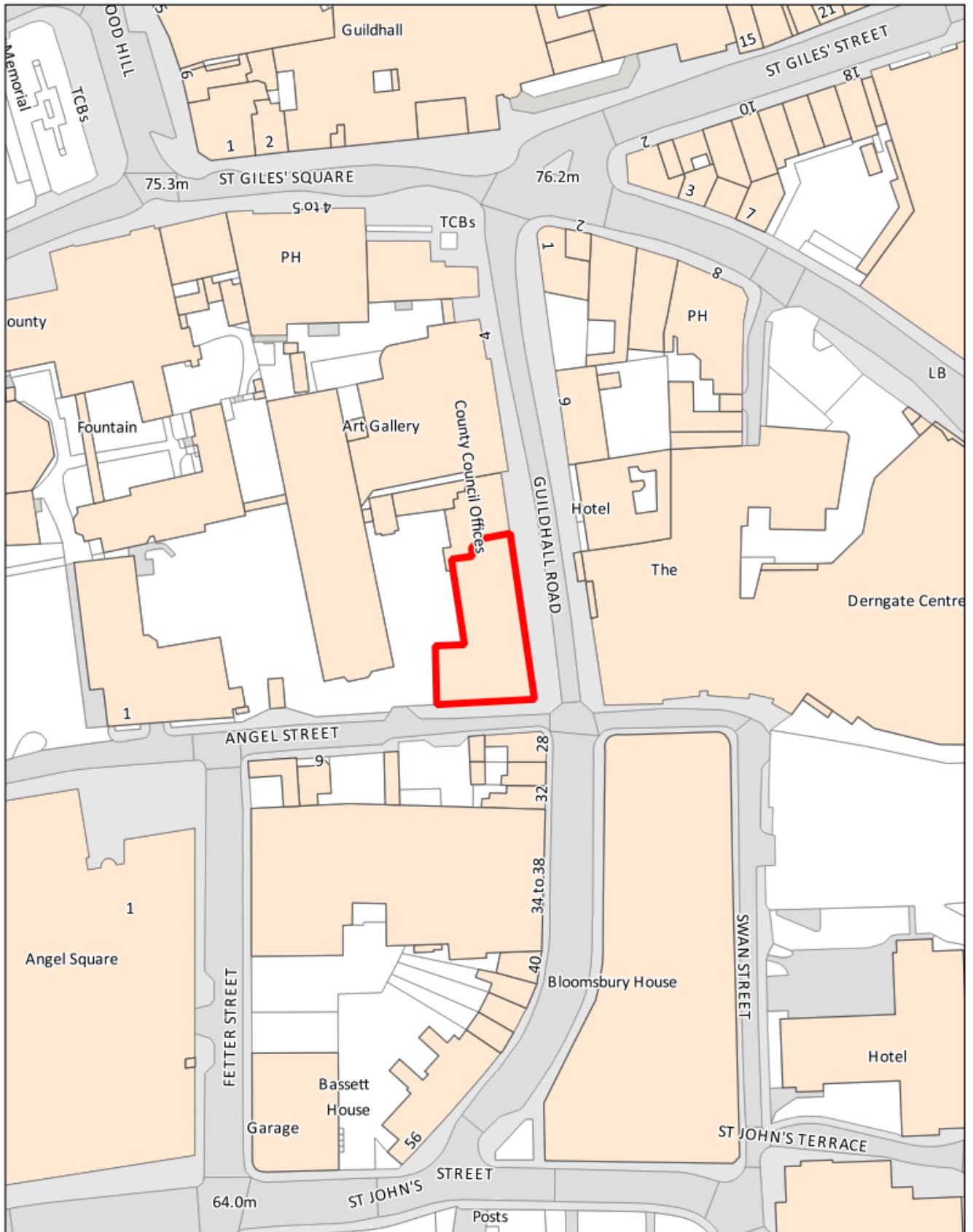
- 10.1 Application number N/2019/1470.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The development is not CIL liable.

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Title: **County Hall, 24 Guildhall Road**

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Date: 07-01-2020

Scale: 1:1,000

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