



PLANNING COMMITTEE: 16th February 2021
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2020/1556

LOCATION: 24 Guildhall Road
Northampton

DESCRIPTION: Change of Use to secure the following Use Classes:
E(a) Display or Retail Sale of Goods, other than Hot Food
E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a Commercial, Business or Service locality
E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any Operational or Administrative Functions
E(g)(ii) Research and Development of Products or Processes
F1(b) Display of Works of Art (otherwise than for sale or hire)
F1(c) Museums
F1(d) Public Libraries or Public Reading Rooms
F1(e) Public Halls or Exhibition Halls

WARD: Castle Ward

APPLICANT: Northampton Borough Council
AGENT: PHP Architects

REFERRED BY: Director of Planning and Sustainability
REASON: The Council 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, providing a cultural focus within Derngate Conservation Area and the Northampton Cultural Quarter and a viable long-term use for the existing buildings. The proposal would not lead to any undue impacts in respect of impact on heritage assets, impact on surrounding amenity or impact on drainage and highways in accordance with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies S10, E7, BN5, BN7 and BN9 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and 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 change of Use of the building to secure the following Use Classes:
- E(a) Display or Retail Sale of Goods, other than Hot Food
 - E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a Commercial, Business or Service locality
 - E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any Operational or Administrative Functions
 - E(g)(ii) Research and Development of Products or Processes
 - F1(b) Display of Works of Art (otherwise than for sale or hire)
 - F1(c) Museums
 - F1(d) Public Libraries or Public Reading Rooms
 - F1(e) Public Halls or Exhibition Halls
- 2.2 The change of use is an extension of the uses relating 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.
- 2.3 The section of the building that the application relates to fronts onto Guildhall Road (from the museum entrance) and onto Angel Street. The proposal relates to all floors of this section of the building (the lower ground, upper ground, first floor, second floor and third floor) and seeks to permit a variety of uses that fall under the new Use Classes E and F introduced under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020.
- 2.4 The proposal does not involve alterations to the external appearance of the building, only internal works.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site comprises a 1930s building located on Guildhall Road opposite the Royal and Derngate and within Derngate Conservation Area. The building is not listed but is of a neo-Georgian style with a stone frontage and brick on the rear elevation. Pedestrian access to the building is from Guildhall Road.
- 3.2 The building was previously used as the County Council Offices. The ownership was subsequently transferred to Northampton Borough Council around 2017 and the building now forms part of the wider Central Museum development.
- 3.3 To the north and adjoining the application site is the Northampton Museum, which is currently undergoing refurbishment. To the south of the site is the Vulcan Works, which is also the subject of major redevelopment and, in combination, these developments form important elements of the cultural quarter of Northampton.

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 Shoe Museum. Since that time, the only other applications have related to additional signage on the building.
- 4.2 In 2017, consent was granted for the remodelling and extension of the museum, a new courtyard extension to provide a new shoe gallery, cafe and multi-functional space and to link the buildings, a new substation and demolition to facilitate the extension and a change of use from offices (Class B1) to museum (Class D1). The part of the building that this current application relates to, was outside the application site boundary for the museum proposal (N/2017/1362).

- 4.3 In 2020, consent was granted for the change of use of part the ground floor from offices (Use Class B1a) to artist studios (Use Class D1) (N/2019/1470), this has been implemented and partially completed.

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 advising 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 and 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 to 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 BN7: Flood Risk
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
Policy 21: Angel Street

5.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004
Northamptonshire County Parking Standards 2016
Northampton Parking Standards 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 Officer** has advised that no objection is made to the proposed range of alternative uses, which will give flexibility to help secure a viable future for an important building within Derngate Conservation Area. The character of the conservation area would be unlikely to be harmed by the possible uses. A separate application would be required for any alterations to the external appearance.
- 6.2 **Town Centre Conservation Area Advisory Committee** has advised that they have no objections.
- 6.3 **NBC Public Protection** have no comments to make on the application.
- 6.4 **Northamptonshire Police** had no objection to the proposed change of use.
- 6.5 **NCC Highways** – no response received
- 6.6 **Castle Ward Councillors** – no response received.
- 6.7 The application was also advertised by means of press and site notices. No third party comments received.

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 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 range of uses as proposed is appropriate and acceptable within this Town Centre location and will assist in further promoting the area as the Northampton Cultural Quarter. 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.
- 7.4 The purpose of this application is to allow some flexibility in the proposed use of the building, whilst still maintaining its role and relationship with the main museum building.

Impact on Heritage

- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 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”.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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

- 7.9 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

- 7.10 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.
- 7.11 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. The application relates to a change of use only and no additional hard standing or floor space is being created. As such, there are no drainage or flood risk impacts arising from the proposed use.

Impact on neighbouring uses and amenity

- 7.12 The proposed use seeks to compliment the other cultural uses in this area.

- 7.13 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.
- 7.14 Bloomsbury House, located to the south of the Royal and Derngate Theatres, is occupied as residential flats. It is considered that these properties are a sufficient distance away from the application site such that there would not be any significant adverse effect on residential amenity arising from activities in this section of the building.
- 7.15 The use would further contribute to the vitality of this part of the Town Centre 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.

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: 4468 020 P1 (lower ground floor plan), 4468 021 P1 (upper ground floor plan), 4468 022 P1 (first floor plan), 4468 023 P1 (second floor plan), 4468 024 P1 (third floor plan), 4468 025 P1 (location plan).

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

3. 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

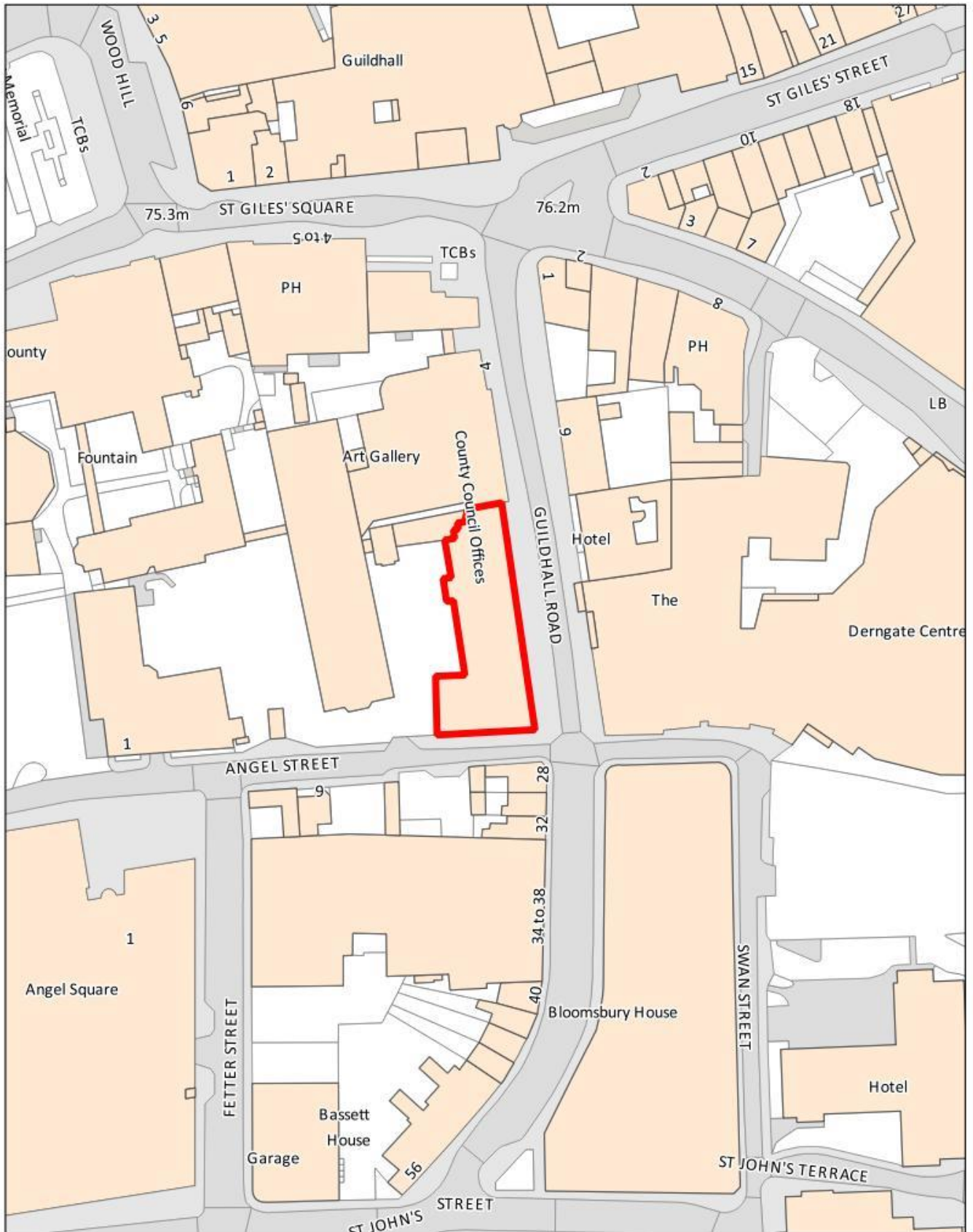
- 10.1 N/2020/1556

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: **24 Guildhall Road**

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Date: 04-02-2021

Scale: 1:1,000

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