



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Planning Committee

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 28th January 2015
DIRECTORATE: Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
DIRECTOR: Steven Boyes

N/2014/1328: Change of use to provide a community arts hub including 57 workshops, meeting spaces and associated amenities including alterations and refurbishment of existing buildings, erection of three/four storey building and demolition of existing structures and associated external works, 34 Guildhall Road

and

N/2014/1329: Listed Building application for change of use to provide a community arts hub including 57 workshops, meeting spaces and associated amenities including alterations and refurbishment of existing buildings, erection of three/four storey building and demolition of existing structures and associated external works, 34 Guildhall Road

WARD: Castle

APPLICANT: Northampton Borough Council

REFERRED BY: Director of Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

REASON: Borough Council Application

DEPARTURE: NO

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE subject to:

- a) both applications being referred to the Secretary of State;

b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to satisfactorily resolve those matters and objections currently outstanding; and

c) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to satisfactorily formulate a list of appropriate planning conditions

and for the following reason:

The development would provide significant regeneration opportunities within the town centre and would result in under used listed buildings being brought into a long term viable use with no significant harm to heritage assets having been demonstrated. There would be no adverse highway or flooding implications and acceptable relationships with surrounding properties. This would accord with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 and Policies 1,2 and 5 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan as well as Policies S7, S10, E7, BN5, BN7 N1 and N2 of the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 It is proposed to convert the former Vulcan Works into a community arts hub. This would see the buildings used for workshops with communal meeting and amenity spaces. As part of the proposed development, a building fronting Angel Street, which has subsequently been identified as the former Weights and Measures building, would be demolished and a four storey building erected as a replacement.
- 2.2 To facilitate the change of use it would be necessary to carry out various internal works to the buildings, however the Guildhall Road elevation would be largely unaffected. The Fetter Street frontage would have several openings created.
- 2.3 The application includes the creation of an area of public realm at the corner of Angel Street and Fetter Street. It is also proposed to create an area of garden accessed from Fetter Street in the southern most part of the site.
- 2.4 As the applications are submitted by the Borough Council and involve the demolition of buildings within the conservation area and works to listed buildings, they must be referred to the Secretary of State before planning permission or listed building consent can be granted.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site is within the Derngate Conservation Area sits between Guildhall Road, Fetter Street and Angel Street and was originally used for the production of machinery associated with the Boot and Shoe industry.

- 3.2 The buildings which front Guildhall Road are 19th Century and of brick construction with a decorative façade. These are Grade II listed.
- 3.3 The buildings fronting Fetter Street are of a later period and were an extension to the Guildhall Road buildings. These have north/south roofs with a more industrial appearance. Given their relationship with the listed Guildhall Road buildings these buildings are also listed.
- 3.4 The buildings fronting Angel Street consist of a single storey flat roofed brick built building and a two storey building which has the appearance of a dwelling. The single storey building was originally the Weights and Measures building and would have been associated with the group of civic buildings on the opposite side of Angel Street. There is also a single storey building which runs at a right angle to Angel Street which is proposed to be demolished as well as boundary walls.
- 3.5 There are a variety of land uses in the vicinity of the site with office, retail, commercial and residential premises. On the opposite side of Angel Street to the north is the County Hall group of buildings, while on the opposite side of Fetter Street is the site of Project Angel the County Council's proposed new headquarters. Planning permission was granted for this in July 2014.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 No planning history relevant to these applications.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Development Plan

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), Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies, Northampton Central Area Action Plan (2013), and emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans where relevant.

5.2 National Policies - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Part 2 of NPPF is committed to ensuring the vitality of town centres, while Part 7 requires good design. Part 12 is concerned with conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

The 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. The JCS has been adopted by the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee and consistent with Section 38(6) it carries full weight when considering planning applications.

Policy S7 requires provision to be made for a net increase of 28,500 jobs to 2029.

Policy S10 sets out sustainable development principles including the achievement of high standards of design.

Policy E7 states that cultural development proposals will be supported where they contribute to the achievement of regeneration aims and objectives.

Policy BN5 stipulates that heritage assets will be protected.

Policy BN7 states that development proposals will comply with flood risk assessment and management requirements.

Policy N1 supports the regeneration of Northampton with a focus on development in the central area which provides high quality urban design and public realm and which protects heritage assets.

Policy N2 makes provision for major office, leisure and cultural development within the central area.

5.4 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)

Policy E20 of the Local Plan requires new development to reflect the character of its surroundings.

Policy E26 of the Local Plan requires development in conservation areas to enhance the character and appearance of the area

5.5 Central Area Action Plan 2012 (CAAP)

Strategic Objective 1 seeks to regenerate the town centre by expanding town centre facilities and employment opportunities.

Strategic Objective 2 aims to achieve a well designed town centre.

Policy 1 of the CAAP seeks to promote design excellence which positively contributes to the character of the area.

Policy 2 concerns tall buildings and requires buildings which are taller than their surroundings to be justified and demonstrate their impact.

Policy 5: Flood Risk and Drainage requires development to have no adverse impact in terms of flood risk.

5.6 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Northamptonshire County Parking Standards SPG 2003

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

Derngate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

6. **CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

6.1 **English Heritage** object to the proposals in their current form and recommend:

1) The Weights and Measures Office and its boundary walls should be retained. The possibility of integrating them into the scheme as the entrance to the café and reception building should be explored.

2) The proposed 4th storey of the new workspace building on Angel Street should be removed from the scheme. A less-harmful alternative should be found for providing the necessary accommodation, possibly in an extension or new building to the south of the Fetter Street sheds.

3) The glazed openings proposed on the west elevations of the Fetter Street sheds should be reduced in scale.

4) Further assessment should be carried out on the significance of the other buildings proposed to be demolished on Angel Street.

6.2 **Council for British Archaeology** is supportive of the principle of the application and sees benefits should the application be permitted. However the demolition of the Angel Street buildings is seen as a negative aspect and questions are raised as to whether the design of the replacement building would benefit the conservation area.

6.3 **NBC Conservation** are supportive of the general principle of the conversion and bringing under used listed buildings back into use. There are concerns though over the current lack of understanding of the buildings proposed to be demolished on Angel Street as well as the lack of justification or assessment of the impact of the height of the four storey new build element. Concern is also expressed regarding the extent of the new openings to be created in the Fetter Street elevation.

6.4 **Environment Agency** object to the application due to the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and recommend refusal. The applicants are aware of this and are currently working to resolve this matter.

6.5 **NCC Highways** do not object to the application but request further details concerning the Travel Plan and access for refuse vehicles.

- 6.6 **Western Power** have no objections.
- 6.7 **One letter** from the owner of a neighbouring property generally supporting the application but raising concerns due to red line boundary encroaching on his property and overlooking from the new development. Concerns are also raised regarding the condition of one part of the building and the effects of this. The letter also seeks for provision to be made within the development for shared access and refuse provision.

7. **APPRAISAL**

Principle of Development

- 7.1 It is considered that the broad principle of the development is acceptable. The application proposes the re-use of redundant buildings within the town centre for a use which would contribute to the vitality and regeneration of the town centre and complement other recent and proposed developments in this locality and the vision of the Cultural Quarter. This would be consistent with the advice contained in Part 2 of the NPPF and Strategic Objective 1 of the CAAP as well as policies S7, E7, N1 and N2 of the JCS.

Design/Appearance

- 7.2 The Guildhall Road elevation of the building would be largely unaffected by the proposed development. The Fetter Street elevation would see the insertion of large glazed openings in the building. English Heritage in particular have concerns regarding these and their impact on the listed building.
- 7.3 Concerns have also been expressed regarding the height of the new build element adjacent to Angel Street. The height of this would be four storeys. This would be higher than the majority of adjacent buildings and would have an impact upon the area and the heritage assets (listed buildings and conservation areas). The significance of this impact is not fully clear from the information submitted with the application

Demolition

- 7.4 As part of the application several structures along the Angel Street frontage of the site are to be demolished. Concerns have been raised by several consultees concerning this.
- 7.5 The most significant concern is over the loss of what has been identified as the former Weights and Measures building at the corner of Fetter Street/Angel Street. Historically this would have been associated with the group of Civic buildings on the opposite side of Angel Street.

- 7.6 Attached to the Weights and Measures building is a building which has the appearance of a house. Concern has been raised regarding the lack of understanding of the function of this building and its history.
- 7.7 Similarly there is a lack of information concerning the historic function of another narrow single storey building which runs at 90 degrees to Angel Street and links to the main Vulcan Works buildings.

Flooding

- 7.8 The Environment Agency have objected due to the lack of an adequate Flood Risk Assessment to accompany the application. It is considered that in all probability the submission of the appropriate work would address this matter and demonstrate that the development would have an acceptable impact from a flooding perspective, as was the case with the nearby Project Angel development.

Further work/amendments

- 7.9 Following the receipt of the objection from English Heritage, and other concerns being raised regarding conservation matters, officers and the applicant met with English Heritage to discuss a potential way forward.
- 7.10 Consequently the retention of the Weights and Measures building and the incorporation of this into the development is to be explored, with the view being that this may be achievable. Similarly, the new openings in the Fetter Street elevation are likely to be reduced significantly in size. The applicant is also considering the removal of the fourth storey to the new build element. It is hoped that amended details will be available by the time of the Committee meeting.
- 7.11 The applicant is also due to undertake further work with regard to providing more information as to the significance of those buildings proposed to be demolished on Angel Street. It is hoped that this would address the various concerns expressed regarding this issue.
- 7.12 Work is also being undertaken by the applicant to address the objection of the Environment Agency. It is considered that, in all likelihood, the submission of the appropriate assessment will overcome this objection.

Relationships with surrounding properties

- 7.13 The main relationship issues are with the properties to the south on Guildhall Road. The installation of windows on the southern elevation of the development would potentially create overlooking to the rear of these properties. These proposed windows would therefore need to be reconsidered or steps taken to ensure there was no overlooking arising from them.

Highways

- 7.14 The development would provide no car parking and would utilise the public car parking facilities in the vicinity. As a result of there being no designated car parking the Highway Authority have commented that a Travel Plan will need to be robust and well supported. It is considered that this matter could be addressed through conditions.
- 7.15 The lack of car parking is not considered to be unacceptable given the proximity of public car parking and the central location of the site and the availability of public transport.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is considered that the broad principle of the development is acceptable and would contribute towards the aims of regenerating the town centre and providing employment opportunities and would bring underused listed buildings back into a viable long term use. There would be significant public benefits arising from the development.
- 8.2 There is however a paucity of information with the application to enable a full assessment of the harm of the development in terms of the demolition of buildings within the conservation area and the height of the new build element to be made. The proper consideration of the balance between the public benefit of the proposal and the harm is therefore not possible. However it is likely that, with the extra work to be undertaken by the applicant and potential changes to the scheme, that this assessment will be possible shortly and it is hoped that at that stage the various objections would be overcome or addressed and that the development would be deemed as being acceptable.
- 8.3 It is accepted that there are a number of matters which need to be resolved and that the information being presented to Members is at this stage, unfortunately, less than comprehensive. However additional information should be available for the Committee meeting and it is considered that if it can be demonstrated that the potential harm is not that significant, or would not outweigh the public benefit of the development, then the development can have significant positive effects, in accordance with the wider aims of the Council, and that delegation to officers to resolve those outstanding issues is the most appropriate way to deal with this matter.

9. CONDITIONS

- 9.1 Given the matters outstanding at this point in time it is not considered reasonable to produce a list of proposed conditions. Approval is sought for this matter to be delegated to the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to decide on the appropriate planning conditions which would be required.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

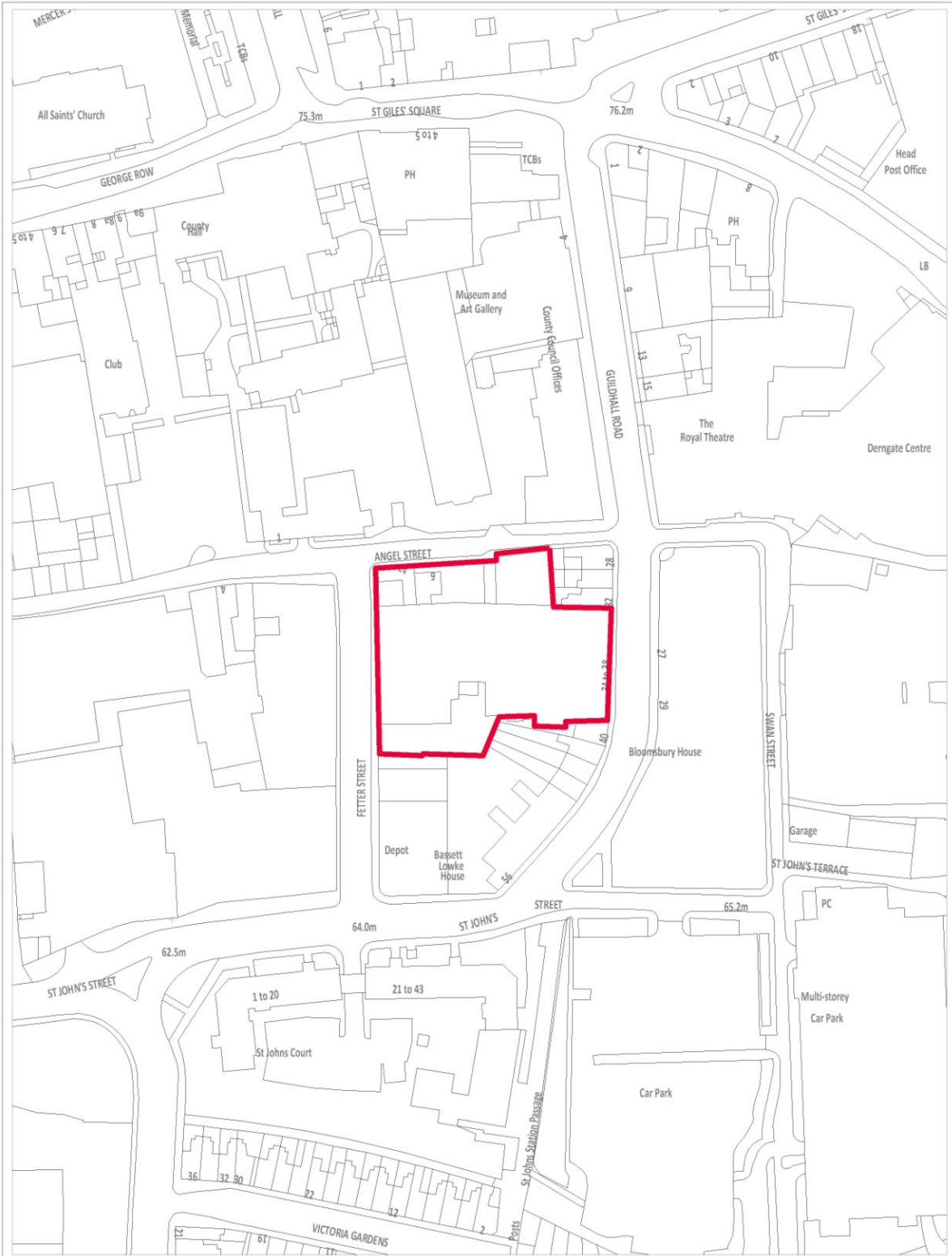
- 10.1 N/2014/1328 and N/2014/1329.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

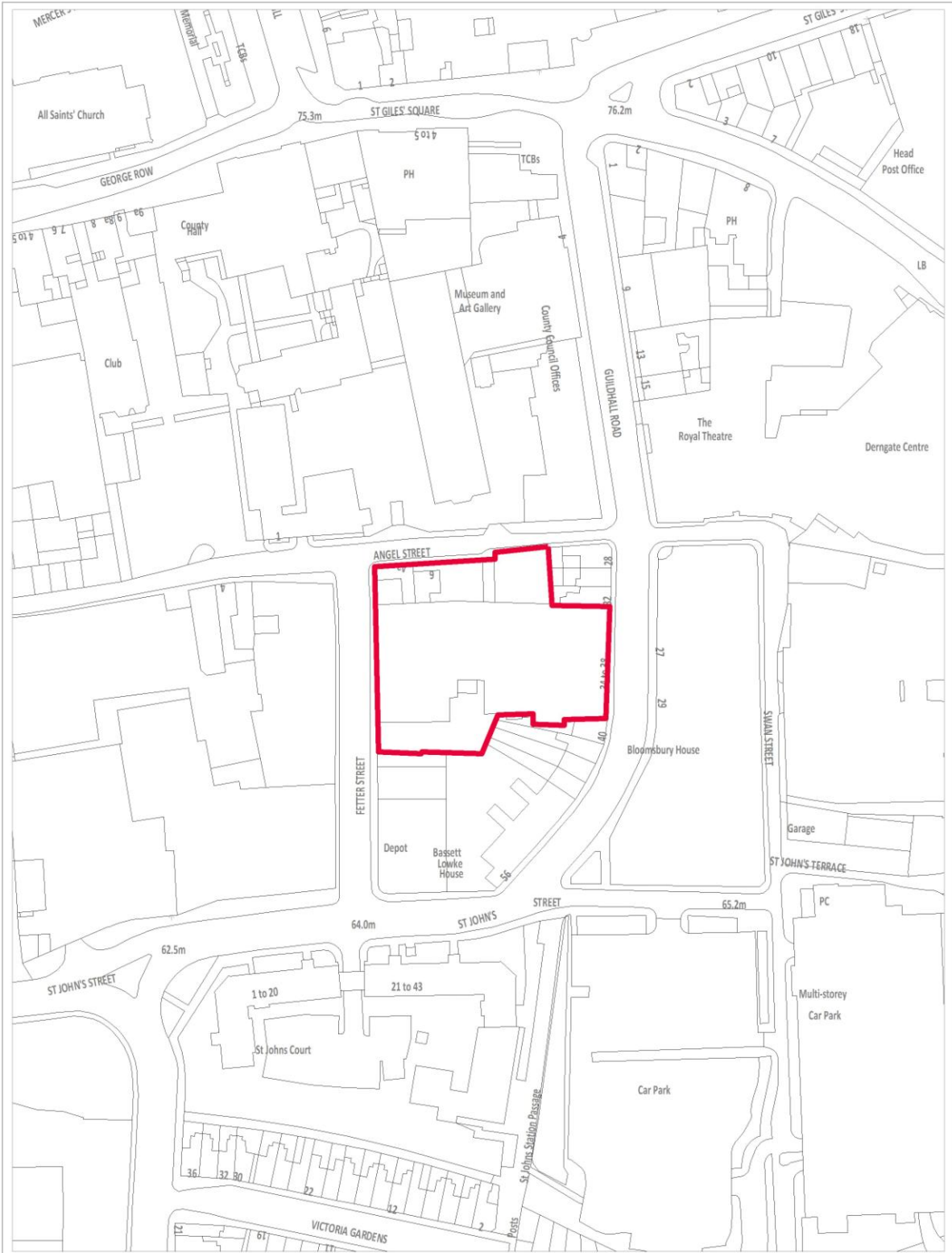
12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Name: Location Plan
 Date: 8th January 2015
 Scale: 1:1250
 Dept: Planning
 Project: Planning Committee

Title
34 Guildhall Road

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