

## **Indexing the Norwich Building Control Plans, 1894-1945: Introduction**

Since the late nineteenth century, new buildings and major alterations to existing properties have required local authority approval. Plans and supporting papers may have been lodged with the local building control or planning departments.

The Norfolk Record Office (NRO) holds building control plans for Norwich City Council, 1877-1994. The plans include all sorts of buildings, including houses, chapels, shops, factories and schools. They relate to new developments and to extensions or alterations to existing properties. The plans are particularly useful for people tracing the history and development of a property. They also provide practical information about the original architectural/engineering specifications of existing buildings.

After 1894, the descriptions of the plans on the NRO's catalogue, NROCAT, give only the plan reference numbers, and do not include addresses or any means to identify buildings. The only way to locate the plan for a particular building is to order the City Council's original sets of indexes from the strongrooms, search through them and then order any plans which look relevant by their reference number. This can be very time consuming, especially if users don't know the date when plans were submitted. Even then, the indexes often don't give enough detail to allow users to identify a building for certain, and they may have to order and look at many different plans before they find the ones they want.

The aim of this project is to enhance the NRO's catalogue descriptions of the building control plans, so that people can search them by street name. We will also add other information to the catalogue (such as names of building owners and architects) which will help researchers who are interested in a particular person.

There are about 235 boxes of plans covering the period 1894-1945. Each plan is stored in a paper envelope and is arranged numerically by its original plan number. Plans are usually accompanied by a notice of intention to build and sometimes there are other papers, e.g., correspondence, building inspectors' reports or drainage agreements.

The first phase of the project covers plans up until the end of the Second World War, but in the long term we hope to extend the project to encompass post-war plans.