

Date: 18/10/2022
Our ref: 2022/3185/PRE
Contact: Edward Hodgson
Direct line: 020 7974 8186
Email: Edward.Hodgson@camden.gov.uk



Planning Solutions Team
Planning and Regeneration
Culture & Environment
Directorate
London Borough of Camden
2nd Floor
5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG



Dear Beth,

www.camden.gov.uk/planning

2022/3185/PRE – 18 Little Russell Street

I refer to your pre-planning application enquiry 2022/3185/PRE – 18 Little Russell Street WC1A 2HL. Thank you for sending the pre-application pack.

Development Description

Proposed change of use from backpacker's accommodation (Sui Generis) to a single residential dwelling (Class C3).

Planning History

Please refer to Appendix 1.

Site Description

The application site is a four-storey plus basement terraced period property which is Grade II listed and located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The building is currently in use as a backpacker's hostel (sui-generis).

Assessment

The main issues for consideration are:

- Design and Heritage
- Land Use
- Housing and Quality of accommodation
- Affordable housing
- Transport

Design and Heritage

Policies D1 and D2 from the Local Plan are relevant as the site is a listed building and is located within a Conservation Area and so the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Statement is also relevant. This pre-application has been discussed with a Conservation Officer who has provided observations on the proposals.

The building is an early 18th Century townhouse and was originally built as a single-family dwellinghouse and later subdivided. The proposal to return the property back to its original use is

supported in principle in heritage terms. The proposals would reinstate the original plan form in most part by removing non-original partitions, services, fittings and fixtures and sanitaryware. Any physical works should be done in a conservation-sensitive manner with traditional methods. Any internal works will be an opportunity to reveal and reinstate features of architectural and historic interest, such as fire surrounds, and at ground floor level, the proposed opening between the kitchen and living spaces should emphasise the cellular plan form of the building by retaining generous nibs and downstands. The reuse of existing services runs for kitchen and bathroom appliances is supported. Where historic features have been removed, such as panelled doors, this is an opportunity to install sympathetic replicas.

Land Use

Policy E3 of the Camden Local Plan seeks to protect existing visitor accommodation in appropriate locations including Central London. It is however noted that the current hostel offers poor quality accommodation with a lack of communal facilities on site, insufficient bathroom facilities and 40 bunkbeds crammed into the 8 bedrooms. In addition, there is a provision of similar backpacker hostels within Central London locations in Camden and a sufficient number of visitor accommodations are in the pipeline. It is therefore considered that in this instance, the loss of the visitor accommodation would be acceptable on balance.

Housing and Quality of accommodation

The proposed change of use to a single-dwellinghouse would accord with policy H1 which seeks to maximise the supply of housing and self-contained housing is considered to be the priority land use of the borough. The proposal would provide one additional unit; however it is considered that the use of the property as a single-dwellinghouse is preferable in heritage and conservation terms rather than being subdivided into flats. Any subdivision may harm the original and historic plan form of the property. The proposed house would largely provide acceptable living accommodation in accordance with policy H6. However, the proposed basement bedroom may not receive adequate light levels as it is only served by single aspect lightwells. It is encouraged therefore that this space should not be used as a habitable space.

Affordable Housing

Under policy H4 and CPG Housing, affordable housing should be provided in schemes providing additional homes and with a residential uplift over 100sqm GIA. The Council will accept a payment-in-lieu of affordable housing where developments have capacity for fewer than 10 additional dwellings. A payment-in-lieu (PIL) would therefore be acceptable in this instance as fewer than 10 units are proposed. The payment rate for housing development for payment-in-lieu is £5,000 per sqm GIA. Targets are based on an assessment of development capacity whereby 100sqm (GIA) of housing floorspace is generally considered to create capacity for one home. A sliding scale target applies to developments that provide one or more additional homes and have capacity for fewer than 25 additional homes, starting at 2% for one home and increasing by 2% for each home added to capacity.

The proposal has a floorspace of approx. 235sqm GIA and 2 unit capacity at 4%. The total PIL would be 235 sqm x 4% x £5,000 which equals a payment of £47,000. Should an application be submitted and granted approval, this payment would be secured through a section 106 agreement.

Transport

The proposed development would be a car-free development which would be secured through a section 106 agreement in accordance with policy T2.

Summary

The proposed change of use would likely be considered acceptable by the Council. The proposals in principle are acceptable in heritage, land use and housing terms and present an opportunity to restore some of the historic features of the building. The Council would expect a payment-in-lieu for affordable housing contributions and a car-free development, secured via section 106 agreements.

If you submit a planning application, I would advise you to submit the following for a valid planning application:

- Completed forms (full planning and listed building consent applications)
- An ordnance survey-based location plan at 1:1250 scale denoting the application site in red.
- Floor plans at a scale of 1:50 labelled 'existing' and 'proposed'
- Elevation drawings at a scale of 1:50 labelled 'existing' and 'proposed'
- Design, access and heritage statement (making specific reference to the conservation area and listed building)
- Marketing evidence to justify the loss of the hostel
- The appropriate fee

We are legally required to consult on applications with individuals who may be affected by the proposals. We would notify neighbours by putting up a notice on or near the site. We would also place an advertisement in the local press. The Council must allow 21 days from the consultation start date for responses to be received.

It is likely that that a proposal of this size would be determined under delegated powers, however, if more than 3 objections from neighbours or an objection from a local amenity group is received the application will be referred to the Members Briefing Panel should it be recommended for approval by officers.

This document represents an initial informal officer view of your proposals based on the information available to us at this stage and would not be binding upon the Council, nor prejudice any future planning application decisions made by the Council.

If you have any queries about the above letter or the attached document please do not hesitate to contact me on Edward.Hodgson@camden.gov.uk.

Thank you for using Camden's pre-application advice service.

Yours sincerely,
Edward Hodgson

Planning Officer
Planning Solutions Team

Appendix 1:

Relevant Planning History:

Application Site:

2010/2325/P - Retention of the building as a single residential dwelling (Class C3). Withdrawn - 06/09/2010.

Nearby Properties:

22 Little Russell Street

2009/1137/P - Change of use from office accommodation (Class B1) to 4 x bedroom single dwelling house (Class C3). Granted Subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement - 16/07/2009.

46-47 Cartwright Gardens

2007/2140/P - Change of use form hotel (Class C1) to form two dwelling houses (Class C3). Granted - 04/04/2008

Relevant Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework – 2021

London Plan – 2021

London Borough of Camden Local Plan – 2017

A1 Managing the impact of development
D1 Design
D2 Heritage
E3 Tourism
H4 Maximising the supply of affordable housing
T2 Parking and car-free development

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy

Camden Planning Guidance

Design 2021
Amenity 2021
Housing 2021
Transport 2021
Developer Contribution 2019