

Planning Statement

This planning application is one of two submissions which proposes to change the use of all of the flats within Langdale, Cartmel and Coniston (153 flats in total) from Use Class C3 (residential) to Use Class E (Commercial, Business or Service). These are split into an initial 8 flats within Cartmel, and then the second application will cover all the other flats across the three blocks. The applications have been split like this to be able to progress an initial 8 units quickly as they are ready to be used.

The flats are all within Camden owned housing blocks, most of which had or have tenants living in them, but some are also owned by leaseholders. The flats are either currently vacant (or are due to be in the coming months) as the Council has run a voluntary rehousing scheme due to the impacts from HS2 works adjacent to the blocks. As the flats are no longer considered to be suitable for living accommodation, the Council is seeking alternative temporary or “meanwhile uses” for the three blocks, rather than leave them empty.

In an earlier trial, 17 flats within Langdale were granted planning permission in January 2022 (Ref: 2021/5446/P) for the change of use from Class C3 to Class E for a meanwhile use in the building which allowed the flats to be used for a semi-commercial /charity use. This current proposal is now seeking the change of use of the rest of the Langdale block and all of the other flats in both Cartmel and Coniston, into a similar use.

The Council wishes to use the vacant flats to support local charities by providing them with an affordable workspace for creatives and makers. The planning application is sought for a period of 2 years, with the possibility of extending it beyond this, depending on the outcome of the negotiations with HS2 and the ongoing works on their site adjacent to the blocks. In the original application, and to ensure this change of use does not impact negatively on other local residents, the charities will only be allowed to use the flats between 8am and 8pm. The Council has already invested in additional security for all three buildings, which will continue. It is not envisaged that a significant change in footfall will emerge as the flats will not be used as a meeting place, although some appointments may take place. There are no planned external changes at this moment in time (apart from possibly some additional paintwork), including no new signage.

Change of Use – Bow Arts

Three organisations were asked to submit bids to provide meanwhile uses at the 3 blocks. Bow Arts were selected. Bow Arts had previously been commissioned for the original 17 flats in Langdale which they have used as artists’ studios, since approval was granted in January 2022.

Bow Arts are an arts and education charity and a social enterprise, who seek to provide artists and creative practitioners with affordable workspace, connecting them with local communities and supporting their professional development. They give communities throughout London greater access to and interaction with the arts, through their schools programme, workshops, exhibitions and events.

The Bow Arts model is a circular, social enterprise model and as such is based around people. “We have learned that if we empower individuals through our support, this then builds resilient sustainable proactive communities. It is through these communities that we are able to provide the services that create meaningful social impact and outcomes”.

As such, Bow Arts is interested in a long-term relationship with Camden, its residents and young people. They see the potential expansion of the scheme as an opportunity to deliver a much greater impact to the community.

The proposal is for Bow Arts to take on an additional 74 flats initially with the expectation that this number could continue to grow as more residents move away. The flats will be released to Bow Arts in batches of c. 10 flats to help manage to process smoothly with the Council. Although the application is for all of the flats in the three blocks, these will only be released to Bow Arts once they become vacated by existing residents. Therefore, for the existing residents within the blocks that remain, their properties won't be used as part of this meanwhile use should they not vacate during the life of the application. However, the application is easier to administer for all flats at this stage, as it's unclear exactly which flats may be vacated now, or at any time over the next 24 months.

Bow Arts will manage the flats as affordable workspaces. Each main room, bedroom or living room will become a workspace with shared amenities: kitchen, bathroom, hallway and heating. This means that a 3 bed unit could offer 4-5 workspaces. There are no internal works proposed to the flats that require planning permission. A typical plan of a flat is shown in Figure 1 below, showing how the flats could be divided.



Figure 1 Example flat use as studios

Bow Arts staff will manage the buildings and ensure compliance and safe practice. Based on the current scheme and its configuration, this project could support up to 190 new workspaces in the borough offered on a Camden resident first principal. 190 affordable community workspaces will create a visible and remarkable asset for the borough.

Bow Arts select licensees and run a policy of local priority across all their sites. They estimate that within a year of opening a site, on average 70% of occupants live within 1.5 miles of their workspaces, and with support from Camden, they anticipate similar high engagement with local residents in this scheme.