

TD/HB/P08802
19/12/2023

Planning Department
London Borough of Camden
2nd Floor
5 Pancras Square
c/o Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Application for Full Planning Permission for the installation of a new shopfront and awnings and other associated alterations and; installation of plant at rear first floor level in association with the use of the basement and ground floor

58 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AR

Planning Portal Reference: PP-12628830

This Planning Covering Letter has been prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning ('the Agent') on behalf of A-Cubed Ltd. ('the Applicant') to accompany a planning application to the London Borough of Camden relating to the installation of a new shopfront and awnings, and the installation of plant at rear first floor level at the address 58 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AR ('the Application Site').

For the purpose of the Planning Application, the description of development is as follows:

'Installation of new shopfront and awnings and associated alterations and; plant at rear first floor level in association with the use of the basement and ground floor'

This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following additional documents, which accompany the application:

- Planning Application Forms duly signed;
- Site Location Plan (drawing no. 001) – *prepared by SEAM Architects*
- Design & Access Statement – *prepared by SEAM Architects*
- Existing and Proposed Drawings – *prepared by SEAM Architects*
 - Existing Front Elevation (drawing no. 210);
 - Proposed Drawings (drawing no. 101);
 - Existing Ground & Basement (drawing no. 200);
 - Proposed Ground & Basement (drawing no. 100);
- Proposed Ventilation Services drawings – *prepared by JPA*
 - Proposed Rear Elevation - Proposed Ventilation Services Layout (drawing no. J0226-JPA-

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ZZ-00-DR-M-57101, Rev.P05)

- Proposed Layout - Proposed Layout of Fan Enclosure (drawing no. RF91481 SK001A);
- Existing Rear Elevation - Existing Ventilation Services Layout (drawing no. J0226-JPA-ZZ-00-DR-M-57001, Rev. P03)
- Plant Noise Impact Assessment – *prepared by Noise Solutions Limited*
- Lighting Assessment (included in DAS) – *prepared by SEAM Architects*

The requisite application fee of £578 (excluding VAT) has been submitted online via the Planning Portal.

Site Description & Location

The Application Site relates solely to the basement and ground floor of 58 Southampton Row. The basement and ground floors are located in an existing nine story building located on Southampton Row (A4200) and abutting Theobalds Road (A40). The basement and ground floors currently lie vacant and were previously occupied by Barclays Bank. The floorspace therefore benefits from existing Class E use and the flexibility this enables, including for the intended restaurant use. The remaining site (first to ninth floors) currently operates under NYX Hotel Holborn (C1 use) (following planning permission reference P/96/01687). The site sits within the authoritative bounds of the London Borough of Camden and is located on a prominent commercial street in the city.

The northern side of Southampton Row, leading on from the Application Site, is characterised by a continuous strip of Edwardian buildings consisting of residential uses, with commercial uses at ground floor level. The building heights prevail at 6 storeys. To the south, opposite the site, lies Victoria House, a Grade II Listed building located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area housing contemporary laboratories within and Bloomsbury Square Garden, London's oldest square, at the rear of the southern façade. Adjacent to Victoria House lies a similar pattern of residential and commercial properties, varying in architectural styles. The Bedford Hotel lies approximately 210m west.

Immediately neighbouring the site to the east lies a wellness centre, neighboured by a variety of commercial shops and eateries; including convenience stores, cafes, restaurants, art studios and pharmacies. The NYX Hotel contains Glasshouse, a rooftop cocktail bar with panoramic views of the city, as well as a restaurant and health & leisure centre. At the rear of the site lies a public parking lot and other commercial buildings of a similar architectural style and height to the NYX Hotel.

Further afield, within a 750m radius of the site, there are a variety of prominent locations, features and buildings such as The British Museum, Brunswick Square Gardens, The University of London, the Charles Dickens Museum, and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Russell Square underground station lies approximately 370m west of the site, whilst Holborn underground station lies approximately 260m southeast. The closest bus stop is located on Southampton Row, approximately 80m east of the site. The site has a PTAL rating of 5.

The site lies proximal to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, but does not pertain to any historical designation and is not located within the Conservation Area itself. As noted, the statutory Listed Victoria House (LEN:1378788) lies opposite the site.

Further to the above, the site is subject to the following designations:

/ Flood Zone 1;

/ Local Plan Growth Area;

/ Archaeological Priority Area.

The site does not pertain to any Site Allocations, as identified in the Camen Local Plan (2017). Further detail on relevant policy designations have been included in the sections below.

Relevant Planning History

The planning history below has been accessed via Camden Council's planning application search.

The table below demonstrates the latest planning application for the basement and ground floors was in 2003 and related to the relocation of the bank entrance.

APPLICATION REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION TYPE	DECISION	DECISION DATE
8500358	Installation of a new ground floor frontage incorporating a repositioned entrance night safe and cash dispenser. (As shown on drawing no: 8185/PE and site plan).	Full Planning Permission	Granted	04/04/1985
8580054	Installation of an internally illuminated fascia sign. (As shown on drawing no: 068509). Period of Consent from 1st May 1985 until 30th April 1990.	Advertisement Consent	Granted	04/04/1985
8500362	The installation of a new frontage and re-positioning of the night safe and the installation of sun blinds. ^As illustrated in drawing no: 81585/PE.	Full Planning Permission	Granted	30/04/1985
8501136	Installation of sun blinds to the ground floor frontage (blinds project 1.5m from the face of the frontage with a height to the underside of 5.5m); as shown on drawing numbered 81585/PE/A & location plan.	Full Planning Permission	Granted	14/08/1985
9580153	Display of two internally illuminated circular projecting signs as shown on drawing number BAR.38.95.	Advertisement Consent	Granted	11/08/1985
2003/0553/A	Display of internally illuminated fascia and projecting sign above ATM.	Advertisement Consent	Granted	25/06/2003
2003/2661/P	Relocation of main bank entrance, create new entrance at pavement level.	Full Planning Permission	Granted	19/11/2003

As noted, there have been no recent planning applications made at the site. The information available consists of associated work with relation to external and internal signs, advertisement, and reconfiguration of the existing entrance.

The site has been vacant since 24th April 2023, following the branch closure of Barclays Bank.

The Proposal

Openable Shopfront

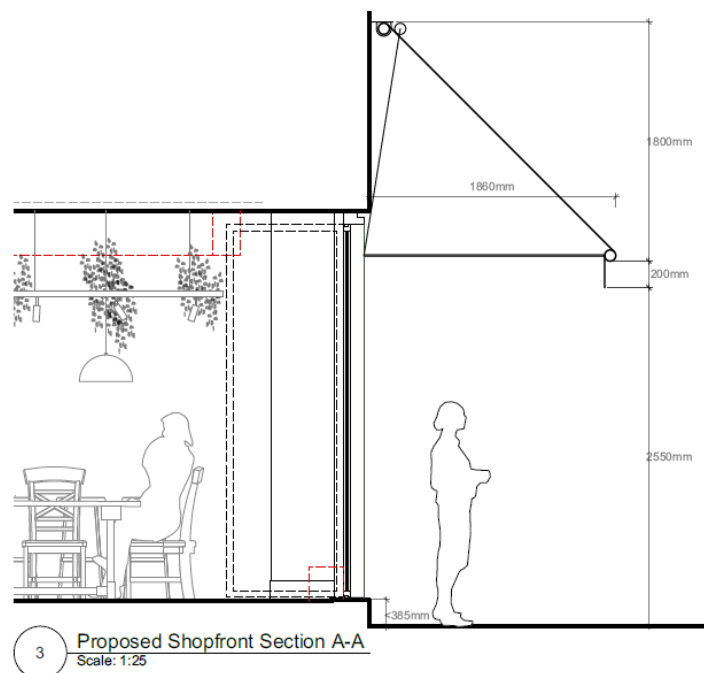
The proposals include the installation of an openable shopfront, which will serve the new restaurant. The shopfront is contained within the footprint of the existing apertures and does not represent a change from the existing height or glazing width. The bi-folding shopfront will be finished with powder coated polyester (RAL 1024), with a pigmented concrete relief panelling proposed at the entrance. The proposed shopfront will consist of steel 'Crittall' double glazed windows.

There will be a total of 3 no. bi-folding and 1 no. bi-part doors, allowing for a double leaf pass door in the event of a fire, operated by a thumb turn lock. The new entrance door featuring clad wall panels is proposed, with the door to be recessed into the shopfront therefore allowing the doors to open outwards whilst also protecting passers-by. A surface mounted LED downlighter with a matte black finish is proposed above the entrance door.

The openable shopfront, and restaurant, will be limited to opening between 8 AM to 11 PM Monday to Saturday, and 8 AM to 10.30 PM Sunday (excluding Bank Holidays). The applicant would be happy to agree to a suitably worded condition with the Council on this element.

Awnings

The awnings will consist of an overhanging design, with a total of 4 no. awnings of this nature proposed. The dimensions of the awnings will be 1,860mm x 1,800mm, approximately 2,550mm from the ground at their closest. The awnings will align with each of the of the openable shopfront panels (i.e awnings shall cover the width of four openable panels, for each of the bi-folding elements). A section extract has been included below, whilst a full suite of detailed drawings and plans have been submitted as part of this submission.



Plant

The proposals include the installation of new plant at the rear of the building, providing a suitable kitchen extract system in order to support electric cooking equipment installed at ground floor level. The new plant/extract system will consist of an external Reco System air handling unit (AHU) which will be located on the first-floor plant deck at the rear of the site within the existing servicing yard. The associated ductwork will pass through the existing opening, and the opening of the existing windows.

The existing plant currently consists of a redundant heat pump, which will be removed prior to the installation of the new AHU.

A Plant Noise Impact Assessment has been carried out by Noise Solutions Ltd and is included as part of the application. The Plant Noise Impact Assessment, and its findings, is discussed in further detail in the Planning Considerations section below.

Basement Reconfiguration

The basement level of the site will be reconfigured to support the future use at ground floor level. The works are limited to internal works only and do not require planning permission.

Relevant Planning Policies

The proposals have been designed in line with, and have given due consideration to, the adopted Development Plan for Camden. The adopted Development Plan consists of the following documents:

- / Camden Local Plan (2017);
- / Policies Map;
- / Site Allocations Plan (2013);
- / North London Waste Plan (2022);
- / London Plan (2021)

In addition to the above documents, the following planning guidance documents are considered relevant to the proposals:

- / Design (SPG) (January 2021);
- / Amenity (SPG) (January 2021)

Emerging Policy Context - Camden Local Plan Review

It is noted that work has started on the review of the Camden Local Plan 2017. A call for views was held from 4th November 2022 to 13th January 2023. The engagement feedback will be integrated into the preparation of

the draft Local Plan, due to be published for consultation in late 2023. It is understood that the draft has yet to be completed at the time of writing. Adoption of the new Local Plan is anticipated for summer 2025.

Alongside the Local Plan review, the Council is continuing to progress the update to the Site Allocations Local Plan, which will set out the Councils approach to sites where significant future development is expected.

Planning Policies

The following policies of the adopted Camden Local Plan are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- / **Policy E1:** Economic development
- / **Policy A1:** Managing the impact of development
- / **Policy A4:** Noise and Vibration
- / **Policy D1:** Design
- / **Policy D2:** Heritage
- / **Policy D3:** Shopfronts

The following policies of the London Plan are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- / **Policy D1:** London's form, character and capacity for growth
- / **Policy D4:** Delivering good design
- / **Policy D14:** Noise

Planning Considerations

The assessment below gives consideration in regard to the principle of the development, with regard to policy and proposed design.

Principle of Development

The proposed awnings, new shopfront and; installation of plant will support the modernisation of a currently vacant space and will directly facilitate the future use of the floorspace as a restaurant (Class E, b), improving the functional and aesthetic appearance of the building. As previously noted, the site already benefits from existing Class E use, making any future implementation of a restaurant use entirely appropriate. The implementation of active commercial use would support Policy E1 of the Local Plan, encouraging economic growth in a suitable premises.

A new ventilation and extract system is also proposed in anticipation of the basement area being utilised as a

kitchen and the ground floor being the main seating/ guest area.

Design

In regard to shopfronts, Policy D3 (shopfronts) outlines how the council will resist the removal of shop windows without a suitable replacement. It is further acknowledged that, when determining proposals for shopfront development, the following will be considered:

- a. *the design of the shopfront or feature, including its details and materials;*
- b. *the existing character, architectural and historic merit and design of the building and its shopfront;*
- c. *the relationship between the shopfront and the upper floors of the building and surrounding properties, including the relationship between the shopfront and any forecourt or lightwell;*
- d. *the general characteristics of shopfronts in the area;*
- e. *community safety and the contribution made by shopfronts to natural surveillance; and f. the degree of accessibility.*

The Design (January 2021) Camden Planning Guidance notes that shopfronts should be designed to a high standard and should consider the character and design of the building and its context, whilst shopfront alterations to existing buildings should respect the detailed design, materials, colour and architectural features of the shopfront and building itself.

In design terms, the existing shopfront is not considered conducive to the requirements of a restaurant given the sites previous use as a bank (Class E, financial service use). The existing shopfront is utilitarian and clunky, evident in the prominent steel framing, which is often associated with the shopfront requirement of banks. Part of the shopfront, to the left when viewing from Southampton Row, is boarded and covers an area which previously housed an ATM. Conclusively, the existing shopfront has limited architectural value. Comparatively, the openable shopfront would add an element of visual interest, quality and vitality to the street scene, enhancing the existing host building. Adopted policy further recognises that *'well-designed shopfronts increase the visual attractiveness of a building and the local area and can have an impact on commercial success by increasing the attraction of shops and centres to customers'*. The proposals would directly deliver this and would encourage both use and interaction with passers-by along Southampton Row and patrons of the restaurant.

Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) additionally outlines the requirement for high quality design in development. Development is expected to respect the local character, enhance the historic environment, comprise of details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character and integrate well with the surrounding streets. It is noted that the current shopfront does not hold architectural or historic value and is not an original frontage, nor does it complement the quality and character of the host building and adjacent windows associated with the NYX hotel on Southampton Row. It is identified that the shopfronts in the surrounding area have no distinctive character or uniformity, with the addition of awnings a feature to shopfronts along Southampton Row and beyond. The disposition of nearby shopfronts, therefore, are not distinctive to either neighbouring commercial frontages or their host buildings, typically common for major commercial roads. Nevertheless, the proposed design will be a sensitive enhancement to the existing building, consisting of high-quality finishes in a suitable colour palette.

In assessment of the design of the proposed plant, this will be located at the rear of the building at first floor level in an area already used to house plant. The proposed reco unit will replace an existing heat pump and will not be visible from the street façade or nearby Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It will therefore have limited impact in design terms given the existing configuration.

As such, the proposals are considered to comply with the above, having considered suitable design precedents allowing for integration with the wider surrounding area.

Principle of an Openable Shopfront

The principle of an open shopfront is conducive with the function and use of modern day Class E requirements and has been approved across a number of applications of a similar nature within the past 5 years. These are detailed below for purposes of reference.

/ Application Reference 2021/3728/P

Permission was granted 1st November 2021 for the *'Alteration to shopfront at no.90 from a fixed panel glass to 4 bifold doors'*. The Decision Notice stated, with respect to openable windows, that although *'Folding shopfronts are not generally considered acceptable, particularly on historic buildings in Conservation Areas, in this case the existing shopfront is not noted as making a positive contribution and comprises a modern fully glazed fixed panel with the entrance to the unit on the adjacent shopfront'*.

As such, the proposal was deemed in accordance with policies A1, CC1, D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017, and in accordance with relevant London Plan policies.

It is noted that, although the application site is not in a Conservation Area, the same principles for approval apply; the existing shopfront can be categorised as modern in nature and does not serve the character of the area or surrounding historical buildings. The current design does not make a positive contribution to the area through the inclusion of an active, engaging frontage.

/ Application Reference 2021/6039/P

Permission was granted 13th October 2022 for the *'Alterations to ground floor frontage including insertion of 2 x bi fold windows, double entrance doors and a retractable awning'*. The Decision Notice stated, with respect to openable windows, that the *'front bi-fold windows hereby permitted shall not be opened outside the hours of 08:00 and 22:30 Monday to Sunday'* as a Condition (Condition 4) of permission. There were no other comments regarding the proposed openable windows.

As outlined above, the openable windows with respect to the application contained herein will be open from the hours of 8 AM – 11 PM Monday to Saturday, and 8 AM – 10.30 PM Sunday.

/ Application Reference 2022/3307/P

Permission was granted 30th October 2022 for the *'Replacement of 2 fixed glazed windows with 2 glazed bi folding doors to ground floor shopfront'*. The Decision Notice stated, with respect to openable windows, that *'The replacement bi-folding doors would occupy the same width as the existing glazing on the front facade and as such, is considered to represent a minor alteration that would retain the overall visual relationship with the design of the front façade of the main building'*.

Similarly, the proposals contained herein will adhere to the same width as the existing windows at the application site and will be sympathetic to the existing appearance of the building in terms of design, location, proportions and materials. As such, the openable element is considered in-keeping and suitable to the area.

Environmental Considerations

Noise

Policy A4 (Noise and Vibration) of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that noise and vibration generated by new development is suitably controlled and managed. Suitable attenuation measures should be provided where high levels of noise are anticipated whilst noise generating development, such as plant, should only be operated where no harm is caused to surrounding amenity.

A Plant Noise Impact Assessment carried out by Noise Solutions Ltd. has been prepared as part of this submission. Plant noise emission levels have been assessed through an environmental noise survey following London Borough of Camden's requirements.

The nearest noise sensitive receptors have been identified as the windows of the hotel, with other potential receptors located at a significant distance to the site, suitably screened from the new plant by the buildings around the service yard. The noise level predictions show that, when attenuated by a partial acoustic enclosure around the plant as detailed in the report, noise levels will comply with local policy requirements and are therefore deemed acceptable. Mitigation measures (in the form of an acoustic enclosure) will ensure at least 15dBA attenuation from the windows of the hotel, therefore causing minimal impact to surrounding amenity.

Amenity

The Amenity (January 2021) Camden Planning Guidance recognises new food establishments, as well as plant, as causing possible impact to the surrounding area.

In consideration of this, the openable shopfront is cited towards Southampton Row, which is characterised by a mix of uses including eateries which line the busy central street and, as such, will not impact sensitive receptors. It is recognised that Glasshouse, the rooftop bar pertaining to the NYX Hotel, is inclusive of openable elements akin with commercial uses. As noted in application reference 2020/5645/P, the existing rooftop consists of retracting glazed wall infill panels and a retractable louvered roof, allowing for a *'complete outdoor environment within the pergola frame'*. The suitability of the proposals can therefore be comparable to existing features in the area. Furthermore, associated noise will be managed through the restriction of opening times.

In accordance with Local Plan policy A1, the proposals will ensure the protection of surrounding amenity, having considered noise and vibration levels and accounted for any odour/ fumes produced by anticipated future uses. Suitable extraction equipment has been included as part of the proposal, ensuring any odour nuisance from commercial cooking has been suitably managed. Conclusively, the proposals and mitigation measures adequately address any anticipated harm or nuisance to amenity.

Heritage and Archaeology

As previously noted, although the application site is not Listed nor within a Conservation Area, due consideration has been given to the heritage of the surrounding locale. The Local Plan highlights the Councils priority in preserving the historic environment of the Borough; as such, it is expected that proposed developments conserve and enhance both heritage assets and their settings.

Policy D2 outlines that the Council will *'resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area'*. It is anticipated that no such harm will be caused by the proposals to the nearby Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposed developments are minor in nature and will not cause an increase in density or scale; the openable windows will be sensitively designed, comprising of high-quality materials and suitable architectural detailing, whilst the proposed plant will be located at the back of the building, visually screened from the surrounding area.

It is also argued that an openable shopfront would promote the enjoyment of the opposing Grade II Listed Victoria House, encouraging unique interaction with the street scene in a typically touristic environment. This should also be viewed in the context of the existing shopfront.

As the development does not include excavation or groundworks, there is no anticipated impact upon the Archaeological Priority Area.

Conclusion

This Application is for the installation of a new openable shopfront and awnings; and the installation of plant at rear first floor level in association with the Class E use of the basement and ground floors at 58 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AR.

The proposals will support the future use of these floors, and will deliver increased interaction with the surrounding area through the inclusion of a bi-folding shopfront. New plant required to facilitate the function of a restaurant will also be installed in an area already used for plant.

The proposals have been carefully designed as to ensure sensitivity to the surrounding area in amenity terms and will directly enable vacant floorspace to become a restaurant use adding to the vibrancy of the area, therefore supporting continued economic growth in the borough. In summary, the proposals are in accordance with adopted local plan policy.

We trust the submitted information is sufficiently satisfactory to enable the validation of the application. We look forward to a swift and positive response; however, should you require further information or should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Helena Burt

For and on behalf of
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited
19 December 2023