Enforcement Delegated ReportReceipt date:OfficerEnforcement CaseJennifer WatsonEN23/0010Breach AddressPhotos & Other material26-28 Whitfield Street, London, W1T 2RGOn file.

Authorised Officer Signature



01/09/2023

Alleged Breach

Without planning permission: the change of use of the property from residential use to use as temporary sleeping accommodation.

Recommendation(s):

That the Borough Solicitor be instructed to issue an Enforcement Notice under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning act 1990 as amended requiring to cease the use of 26-28 Whitfield Street (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) as a temporary sleep accommodation and reinstate the residential use, and officers be authorised in the event of non-compliance, to commence legal proceedings under Section 179 or other appropriate power and/or take direct action under Section 178 in order to secure the cessation of the breach of planning control.

Site Description

The site is a five-storey mid terrace property that lies within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. The front elevation comprises a modern Corten steel, hardwood, and stained-glass shopfront with a red brick façade at first to third floor levels. Fourth floor is a mansard roof with dormer windows. The basement and ground floors are in commercial use as a Japanese-style restaurant/bar ("Sican"), whilst the first to fourth floors are in use as residential flats.

Investigation History

Planning history of the site:

2018/1113/P - Change of use of existing accommodation at first, second, third and fourth floor level to four serviced apartments (C1 use). Withdrawn by the applicant on the 21st August 2018 following a request by the case officer for evidence of its existing lawful use.

EN05/0646 - Change of use from class C3 (Dwelling houses) to class B1 (Business). Enforcement notice served, appeal lodged and dismissed. Closed on the 26th October 2010 following a compliance check.

EN18/0658 - Use of flats for short term lets. Closed on the 5th February 2019. A completed PCN dated 10th September 2018 suggests that the flats were being used as C3 Residential.

Investigations:

The Council's investigations of this site and alleged breach of planning control have resulted in substantial evidence demonstrating that there has been a permanent change of use of the property (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) into use as a temporary sleeping accommodation. The Council has utilised; 'Talk and Code' which is a Short Term Let data collection software, extensive online investigations, and witnesses. This

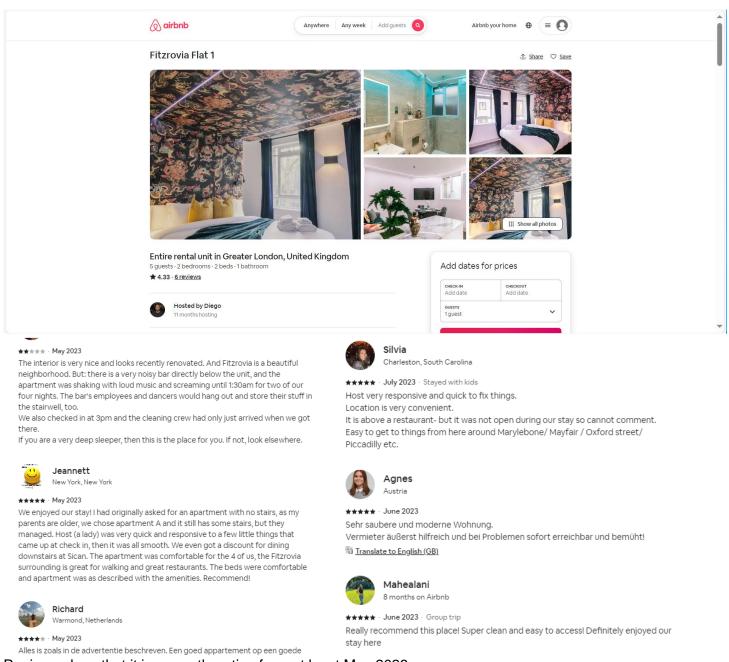
enforcement case was initially opened on the 9th January 2023 as we received an enquiry on a potential change of use.

Airbnb listings:

Host for all below Airbnb listings is a "Diego" (Host ID: airbnb500304888, member since Feb 2023) – commenced near the date of the initial complaint we received in Jan 2023. Co-host is a 'Nicolo'. Nicolo Mascitti is the director of Sican Limited (no. 14063278 // 56101 Licensed Restaurants, 56302 Public Houses and Bars) – who run 'Sican' (Basement and Ground floor level restaurant/bar).

 https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/828219721121925402?source_impression_id=p3_1704816012_wTRZ kcLqGC2L%2FYxd

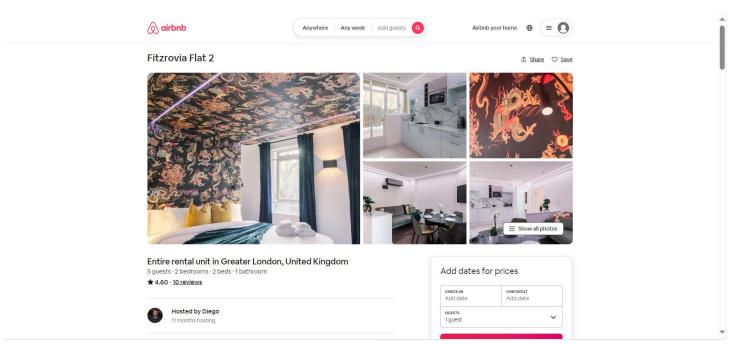
Talk and Code data: airbnb828219721121925402 – Host "Diego" // Year occupancy (1st Jan – 31st Aug 2023): 91 days total.



Reviews show that it is currently active from at least May 2023.

2. https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/828985184326481244?source_impression_id=p3_1704816033_diVaj5
Dtu0T3b8FM

Talk and Code data: airbnb828985184326481244 - Host "Diego // Year occupancy (1st Jan – 31st Aug 2023): 91 days total.





Apolonia 4 years on Airbnb

★★★★ · May 2023

The location was very close to nice restaurants, the underground, coffee shops... Very beautiful area. The place was sparkling clean, very confortable and very pretty. The host was very responsive.



Marie-Anne

Paris, France

★★★★ · May 2023

Great location. Very comfortable flat. Sympatical and fun restaurant downstairs



Narinderpal

3 years on Airbnb

★★★★ · May 2023 · Group trip

Location is very nice, near to metro easy to commute, but its on 2nd floor i had trouble getting up there cause of stairs cause there are no elevator to go up i was with my grandma and my mom it was hard for them to get up there. Location is great for youngsters.



Rob

New York, New York

**** June 2023

Great place close to two tube stations for easy travel. Air conditioning was great on the hot summer days



Rell

New York, New York

★★★★ · June 2023

I loved this stylish and comfortable space! Down to the restaurant downstairs. I was soo sad to leave this place. Razin was mored than accommodating and anything we needed was met! Go downstairs to Sican and ask for Guiseppe! He is the manager and he will treat you well!!



Response from Diego

June 2023

Thank you guys, looking forward to seeing you again soon 8



Reem

Chicago, Illinois

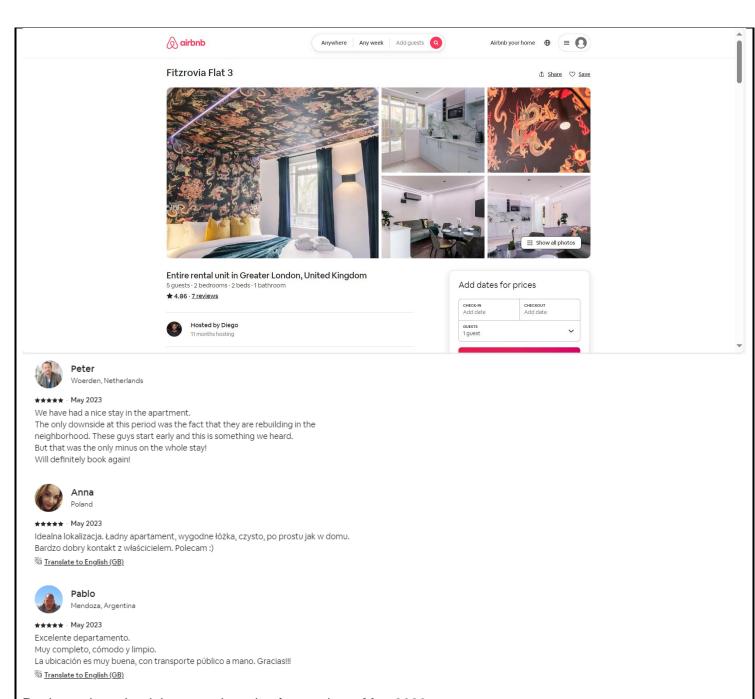
★★★★ · June 2023 · Group trip

PROS: Excellent central location, quick walk to the train station. A million cafes, restaurants, and stores within a five minute walk and less. Very clean overall with a well stocked kitchen. Owner was always very quick to respond. Functional washer.

Reviews show that it is currently active from at least May 2023.

3. https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/829015057161567913?source_impression_id=p3_1704816028_HG2kldGZdLAyflvw

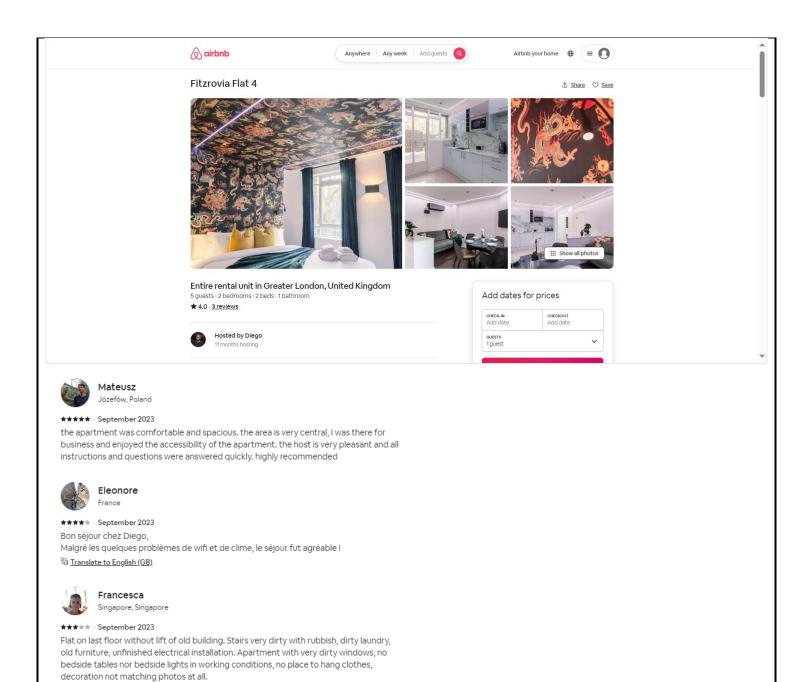
Talk and Code data: airbnb829015057161567913 - Host "Diego" // Year occupancy (1st Jan – 31st Aug 2023): 77 days total.



Reviews show that it is currently active from at least May 2023.

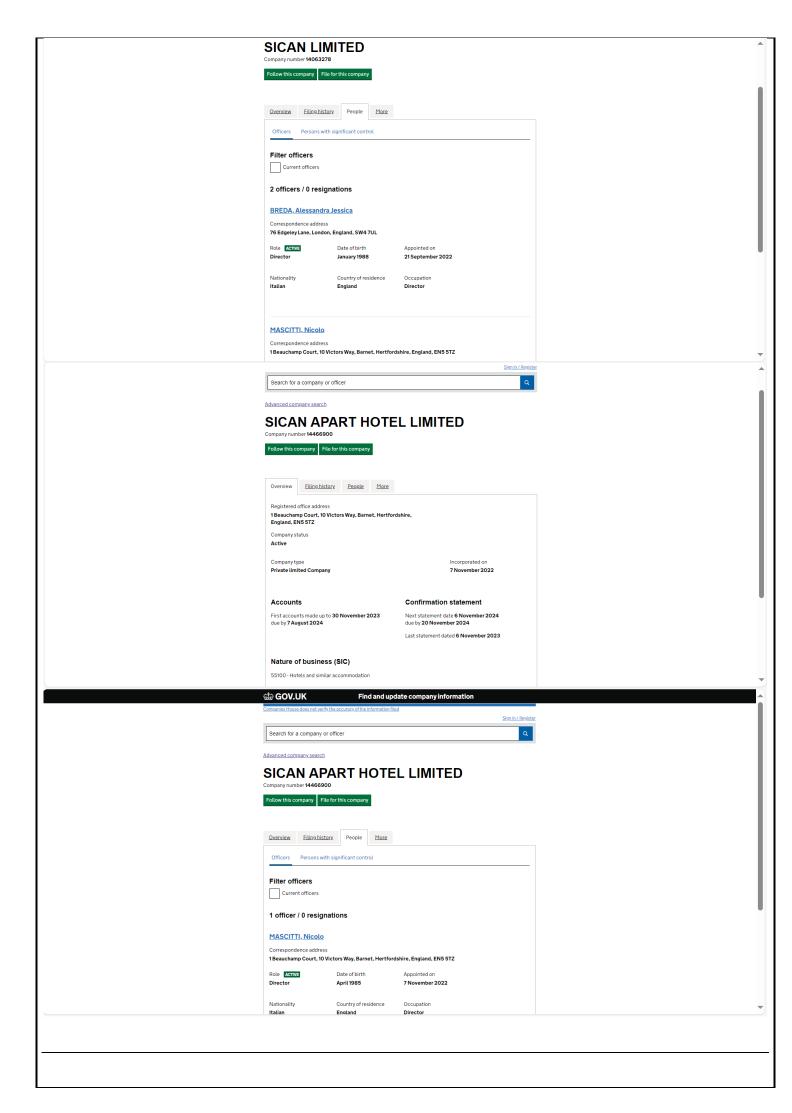
4. https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/954078022107136156?source_impression_id=p3_1704816041_vQbE9e6RWwQHgKq7

Talk and Code data: airbnb954078022107136156 - Host "Diego" // Year occupancy (1st Jan – 31st Aug 2023): missing data.



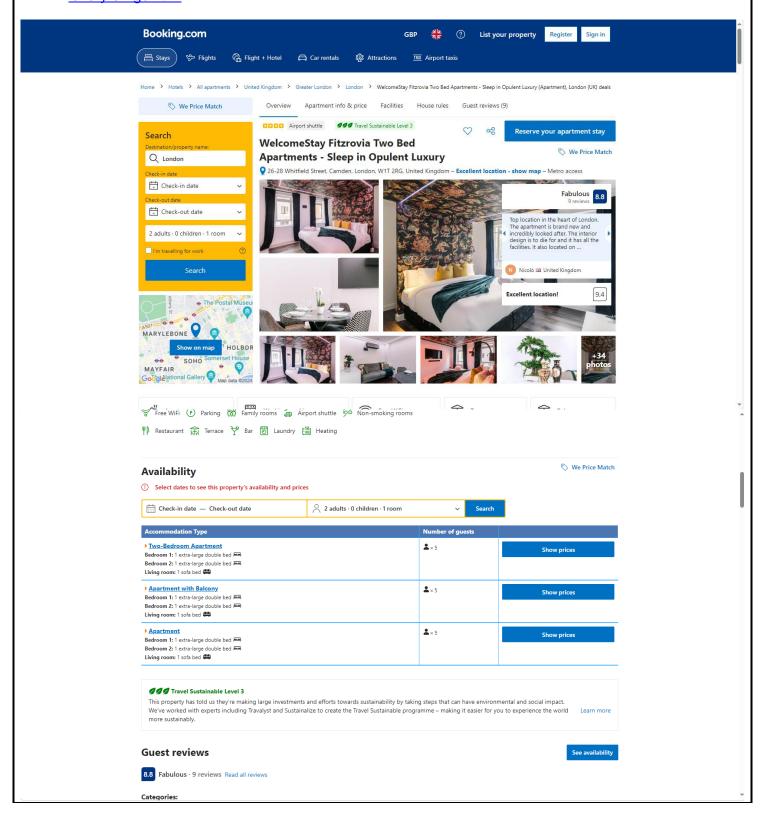
All flats have been let out by the same host, thus owner, on multiple Airbnb listings (as well as on booking.com and various other websites – see below) to allow them the option to allocate coinciding (and potentially differing) groups of holiday makers into the four different flats within the site - thus indicating the change of use of the property as one planning unit, as temporary sleep accommodation.

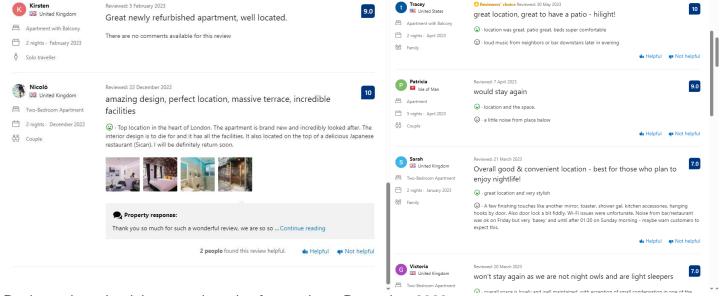
The director of SICAN LTD is also the director of SICAN APART HOTEL LTD (no. 14466900), a company registered under 55100 – Hotels and similar accommodation – supporting the above.



Booking.com

1. https://www.booking.com/hotel/gb/welcomestay-fitzrovia-two-bed-apartments-sleep-in-opulent-luxury.en-gb.html





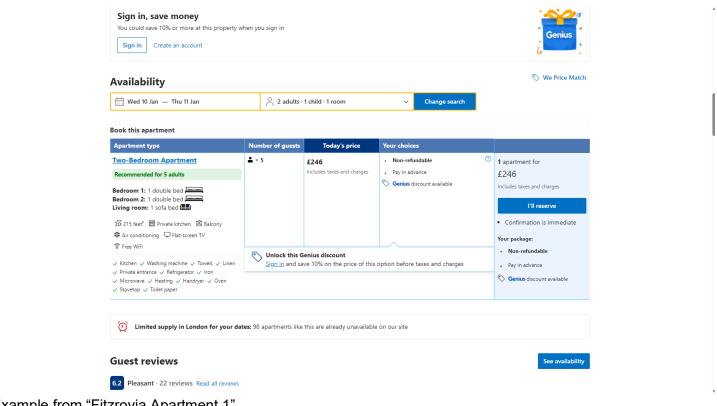
Reviews show that it is currently active from at least December 2022.

This particular listing advertises the flats in a single listing, allowing the host and owner the option to allocate coinciding and differing groups of holiday makers into the different flats – further supporting that a change of use of the property (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) as one planning unit, as temporary sleep accommodation, has occurred. This also opens up the scope to let out the whole property to large groups of holiday makers in a single stay – whilst the listings advertise 2 beds, more temporary beds can always be set out by the host.

There are four more Booking.com listings, and are set out identical to the Airbnb Listings:

- 1. "Fitzrovia Apartment 1";
- 2. "Fitzrovia Apartment 2";
- "Fitzrovia Apartment 3"; and
- 4. "Fitzrovia Apartment 4"

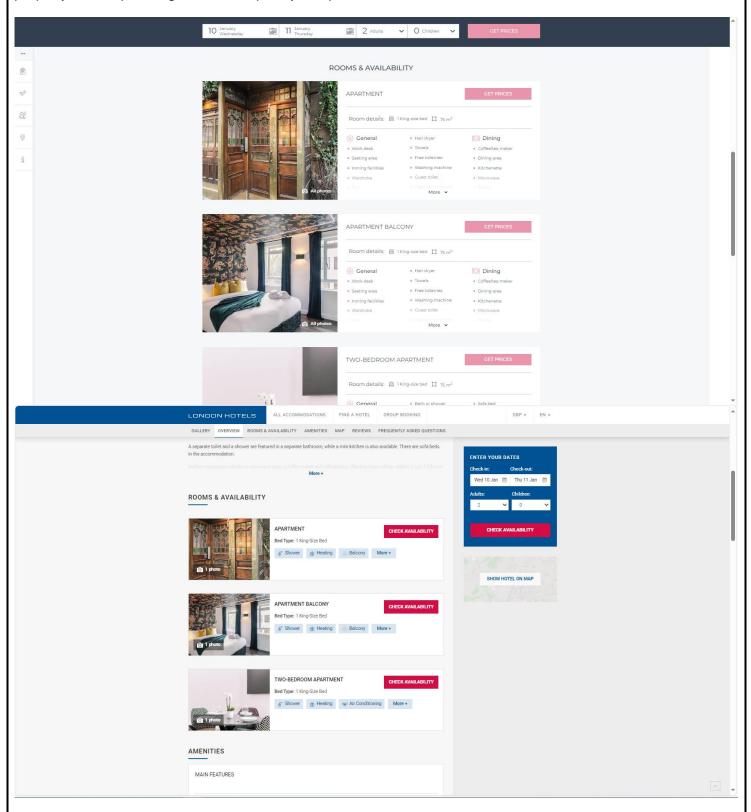
Each of these four booking.com listings recommend for 5x guests per flat, thus confirming the above, to which it can be assumed over 20 people can use the property in a single stay.



Example from "Fitzrovia Apartment 1".

Welcomestay.com - http://welcomestay-fitzrovia-two-bed-apartments-sleep-in.londonapartmentsguide.com/en/ London Hotels - http://www.londonhoteldeal.net/en/accommodation/welcomestay-fitzrovia-two-bed-apartments-sleep-in.html

Like the Booking.com listing, these two listings allow the host and owner the option to allocate coinciding and differing groups of holiday makers into the different flats – further supporting that a change of use of the property as one planning unit, as temporary sleep accommodation, has occurred.



Other listings:

- 1. Lodging-world.com https://www.lodging-world.com/uk/hotels/fitzrovia-apartment-3-in-central-london-99640671
- 2. Lodging-world.com https://www.lodging-world.com/uk/hotels/fitzrovia-apartment-2-in-central-london-99640465

- 3. Makemytrip.com -https://www.makemytrip.com/hotels-international/united_kingdom/london-hotels/luxury appartment a fitzrovia central london-details.html
- 4. LondonHotelDeal.com http://www.londonhoteldeal.net/en/accommodation/luxury-appartment-b-fitzrovia.html
- 5. LondonHotelDeal.com http://www.londonhoteldeal.net/en/accommodation/fancy-apartment-d-fitzrovia-lnd.html

All websites have been gleaned onto a separate document for the event of an appeal.

This particular listing, alongside the Council's investigations, demonstrates that the property (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) is being used as a full time STL.

Relevant policies / GPDO Category

National Planning Policy Framework (2021): Paragraph 59 (Enforcement) and 60-62 (

The London Plan (2021): Policies H8 and H9

Camden Local Plan (2017)

H1 Maximising housing supply

H3 Protecting existing homes

H6 Housing choice and mix

H7 Large and small homes

A1 Managing the impact of development

A4 Noise and vibration

Camden Planning Guidance

CPG - Housing

CPG - Amenity

Fitzrovia Area Action Plan 2014

Assessment

Issues:

The development has resulted in the loss of permanent residential accommodation by virtue of its use as temporary sleeping accommodation and causing a noise and disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.

Assessment:

The Council seeks to control the use of residential properties for temporary sleeping accommodation across the Borough for two main reasons. Firstly, the use of residential accommodation for short term letting goes beyond the scope permitted by law, reduces the stock of permanent housing available to people who wish to live in Camden. In a time of an acute housing shortage the Council cannot afford to lose private dwellings in this manner.

Secondly, the Council seeks to restrict short-term letting because holiday-makers and others staying properties for short periods are less likely to treat their holiday flat in a manner that has respect for the peace and privacy of other, permanent, residents who live within the vicinity, and therefore residential amenity is often diminished through noise and disturbance.

On balance, the evidence suggests that there has been a breach of planning control resulting in the loss of 4 permanent residential units. In these circumstances it is recommended that an Enforcement Notice is issued. The London Plan recognises the importance of maintaining London's housing stock. Supporting paragraph 4.9.3 of Policy H9 in particular specifically states:

"The use of dwellings as short-term holiday rentals can have a detrimental impact on neighbours' residential amenity and community cohesion in the wider area where concentrated in a particular location. The use also reduces the supply of homes available for people to live in."

This policy also advises that given the level of need, existing housing should be retained where possible and appropriate, except where there are acceptable plans for its replacement. Policy H9 states:

'Boroughs should take account of the impact on housing stock and local housing need when considering applications for a change of use from housing to short stay holiday rental accommodation to be used for more than 90 days a year'.

Policy H3 'Protecting Existing Homes' in Camden's Local Plan 2017 seeks to protect 'housing from permanent conversion to short-stay accommodation intended for occupation for periods of less than 90 days'

By virtue of Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973, the use as 'temporary sleeping accommodation' of any residential premises in Greater London involves a 'material change of use' for the purposes of the definition of 'development' which appears at Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Temporary sleeping accommodation is defined by Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973 (as amended) as follows:

"Use as sleeping accommodation which is occupied by the same person for <u>less than 90 consecutive</u> <u>nights</u>, and which is provided (with or without other services) for a consideration arising either by way of trade for money or money's worth, or by reason of the employment of the occupant whether or not the relationship of landlord and tenant is thereby created".

Extent of Use for Short-Term Letting Permitted by the Deregulation Act 2015

Prior to amendments to Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act brought in by Section 44 of the Deregulation Act 2015, the use of residential premises was not lawful (however intense or infrequent its occurrence within any particular 'residential premises') unless planning permission had been expressly granted for such use or unless a Lawful Development Certificate had been granted (i.e. on the basis that the use had been undertaken continuously for a sufficient period - 10 years – to acquire immunity from enforcement action

The amendments to Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973 introduced Section 25A. Subsection (1) of Section 25A states that the use of residential accommodation within Greater London as 'temporary sleeping accommodation' does *not* involve a material change of use [and therefore does *not* require planning permission and is lawful] provided two Conditions are met.

The first of these two Conditions is set out in subsection (2)(a) and (b) of Section 25A, as follows:

'The first is that the sum of -

(a)the number of nights of use as temporary sleeping accommodation, and

(b)the number of nights (if any) of each previous use of the premises as temporary sleeping accommodation in the same calendar year **does not exceed ninety**.'

The second of these two Conditions is set out in subsection (3) (a) and (b) of Section 25A as follows:

'The second is that, in respect of each night which falls to be counted under subsection (2)(a) -

(a)the person who provided the sleeping accommodation was liable to pay council tax under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of the premises, or

(b)where more than one person provided the sleeping accommodation for the night, at least one of those persons was liable to pay council tax under Part 1 of that Act in respect of the premises.

In the case of the 26-28 Whitfield Street it is the Council's contention that the property has breached the first Condition, the requirements of which are set out in Section 25A (2) (a) and (b) of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973 and which restricts the use of a residential property as temporary sleeping accommodation to a maximum of 90 nights in a single calendar year. The property is clearly in full time short term let use. The unauthorised use therefore does not benefit from Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973. A residential use would need to be lawful in order for section 25 to be applicable.

Its status as temporary sleep accommodations are confirmed through the extensive presence of the entire property on a variety of STL websites. On Airbnb and Booking.com, each flat has been advertised more than

once, which enables the host to allocate differing and coinciding groups of guests to different flats of the property depending on availability. A particular listing on Booking.com as well as the Welcomestay and London Hotel listings, collectively advertise all flats, providing potential holiday makers the option to choose which flat they wish to stay in, thus, again enables the host to allocate differing and coinciding groups of guests to different flats of the property depending on availability. The reviews on these listings reveal the flats of the property has been advertised, thus used as a temporary sleep accommodation since at least May 2023, to which Talk and Code data reveals Flats 1 and 2 to have breached the 90 day limit. As the property has been listed out a many online websites not recorded by Talk and Code, it is likely Flats 1 and 2 are even further over the 90 day limit, and that Flats 3 and 4 are also over this limit.

All residential flats of the property are clearly laid out and marketed as a full time professional short term lets. There are no signs nor evidence of residential use of the property. In light of all the above, it would appear that in all probability, that property (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) is in full-time short-term holiday let, and not in permanent residential use. Based on the evidence gathered, it is considered that on the balance of probability a change of use has taken place.

Amenity:

The comings and goings to the property will give rise to overall noise and disturbance to neighbouring residential occupiers via their comings and goings. The property falls off the commercial Goodge Street and is surrounded by residential opposite and adjacent. Holiday makers can also be associated with anti-social behaviours which has led to further/exacerbated noise and disturbances around the area.

Expediency:

The planning history, complainants, and extensive presence of the property online support that a change of use of the property into a temporary sleep accommodation has occurred. Whilst each of the listings advertise 2 beds, more temporary beds can always be set out by the host in each of the eight bedrooms. This is confirmed through the Booking.com listings which recommend for 5x guests for each of the flats. Altogether, suggesting the whole property can be let out as a single unit for groups over 20 people in a single stay. In this case, the cumulative scale of the breaches has been taken into consideration, as large groups of holiday makers have imposed adverse effects on the residential amenity of the area – as demonstrated by the recent complaints. Further, in a time of acute housing shortage it is considered expedient to take action to ensure that such breaches cease and that a permanent loss of 4 residential properties cannot be supported.

Recommendation:

That the Borough Solicitor be instructed to issue an Enforcement Notice under Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning act 1990 as amended requiring to cease the use of 26-28 Whitfield Street (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Floor flats) as a temporary sleep accommodation and reinstate the residential use, and officers be authorised in the event of non-compliance, to commence legal proceedings under Section 179 or other appropriate power and/or take direct action under Section 178 in order to secure the cessation of the breach of planning control.

The notice shall allege the following breaches of planning control:

Without planning permission: the change of use of the property from residential use to use as temporary sleeping accommodation.

WHAT ARE YOU REQUIRED TO DO:

1. Cease the use of the property for temporary sleep accommodation.

PERIOD OF COMPLIANCE: ONE (1) month

REASONS WHY THE COUNCIL CONSIDER IT EXPEDIENT TO ISSUE THE NOTICE:

- a) The change of use has occurred within the last 10 years.
- b) The number of nights the flats has been let on a short term basis has exceeded conditions set by Section 25 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973 except to the extent allowed by Section 25A (1) of that Act, which permits the use subject to Conditions, including Conditions set out at Section 25A (2) (a) and (b) which limit use as temporary sleeping accommodation to a maximum of 90 nights in

- any one calendar year. In doing so it has resulted in the unacceptable loss of permanent residential accommodation contrary to policies A1 (Managing impact of development), H1 (Maximising housing supply) and H3 (Protecting existing home), of Camden Local Plan (2017).
- c) The high turnover of occupiers results in increased potential of incidences of noise and disturbance to the detriment of the neighbouring occupiers contrary to policies A1 (Managing the impact of development), H3 (Protecting existing homes) of the Camden Local Plan (2017) and CPG6 (Amenity) of The London Plan (2016).