

# DESIGN AND ACCESS/ PLANNING STATEMENT

**Change of use of Basement (Use Class E) to facilitate the educational use of  
the site (Use Class F1a).**

**Basement, 62 Belsize Lane, NW3 5AR**

**Prepared by 4D Planning on behalf of Mrs Denise Drinkwater**

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access/ Planning Statement has been prepared by 4D Planning on behalf of Mrs Denise Drinkwater, the applicant, in support of a planning application for the change of use of the basement at 62, Belsize Lane, NW3 5AR, Use Class E to facilitate the educational use of the site (Use Class F1a).

1.2 The Design and Access/ Planning Statement has been prepared in conjunction with the following drawings and documents which accompany the planning application:

- Block and Location Plan (Drawing Reference No. 4D-495 E00)
- Existing Drawings Floor Plans (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 E01)
- Proposed Drawing Floor Plans (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 P01)
- Existing Drawings Elevations (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 E02)
- Proposed Drawings Elevations (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 P02)
- Existing Drawings 3D View (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 E03)
- Proposed Drawings 3D View (Drawing Reference No.4D-495 P03)

1.3 This Statement comprises:

- A description of the application property and surrounding area;
- A description of the proposed development;
- A summary of relevant planning history; and,
- An assessment of the proposed development against relevant planning policy.

## 2 Site Description and Background

- 2.1 The subject property relates to a 4 storey property with commercial uses on the basement and ground floor and the other three floors being in residential use. The immediate surrounding area is primarily residential, nevertheless there are also various commercial uses within close proximity of the site, consisting of shops, restaurants and pubs.
- 2.2 The location is highly sustainable, boasting excellent transport links and accessibility. Bus route No.268 to Golders Green service Belsize Village a short walk from the property. Belsize Park Tube Station is also a short walk away from the property. The local road network also supports and encourages cycling.
- 2.3 Within a wider radius, a diverse range of facilities, services, and amenities can be found within 800 meters (a 10-minute walk) from the site, all interconnected by a network of footpaths. These include shopping centres, social and entertainment venues, healthcare facilities, sports and recreational areas, community centres, and educational institutions.
- 2.4 The site is located within flood zone 1, indicating a low risk of flooding.
- 2.5 The property is situated within the Belsize Park Conservation Area, and there are no statutory listed buildings within close proximity of the property.

### **3 Proposed Development**

- 3.1 The proposal seeks to change the use of the basement at 62 Belsize Lane, NW3 5AR, from Use Class E to Use Class F1a to facilitate its use as an educational site for Limespring, a well-established business providing specialist educational support for children and young people aged 4 to 16.
- 3.2 Limespring, established in January 2012 and based in East Finchley, offers part-time support primarily to children with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. Children typically attend sessions during the school day for between one and twelve hours per week. The business initially provided full-time specialist education until July 2019, when it transitioned to exclusively part-time support.
- 3.3 Limespring serves children from all over North London, funded by local authorities, schools, parents or a combination of these. Over the years Limespring has supported children with additional needs, including Autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome and other genetic conditions as well as mental health needs. Despite these diverse needs, the primary focus remains on literacy, numeracy and study skills support. The business provides bespoke learning in a safe, nurturing, school-like environment, enabling children and young people to access the curriculum and reach their potential. The staff are highly trained and adhere to government guidelines on safeguarding, safer recruitment and health and safety.

- 3.4 The impact of COVID-19 has placed a significant burden on schools in terms of lost learning time and general development. Schools and local authorities are struggling to bridge this gap, and SEN provision is currently unable to meet the needs of SEN children, resulting in increased demand for Limespring's services. The business's teaching methods have a proven track record of success, helping children access the curriculum, achieve success in exams and succeed in further education or the workplace.
- 3.5 The reason for this application is that Limespring must relocate due to their current landlord's need to expand childcare provision. The proposed premises on Belsize Lane meets Limespring's needs in terms of cost and safeguarding. The premises are self-contained apart from the front lobby space, where children will be accompanied at all times to ensure compliance with safeguarding requirements. The landlord also requires that all visitors to the premises are known to the business, further ensuring safeguarding standards are met.
- 3.6 The Belsize Lane premises enables Limespring to continue providing a much-needed local service, offering specialist provision for children, training for local schools, and workshops for parents. Therefore, the proposed change of use is crucial for maintaining and enhancing the educational support services that Limespring offers to the community.
- 3.7 Limespring will operate from 7:30am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 1:00pm on Saturdays and remaining closed on Sundays. Potential users will primarily access the site by public transport, with the Belsize Park Tube Station less than a 10 minute walk away. Parents or guardians typically drop off their children and leave promptly. For those who drive, there is some parking available at the end side of the 'village' paved area. Parents or guardians who chose to stay after drop-off may park there and take advantage of the local shops and cafes, further contributing to the economic activity in the area.

## 4 **Planning History**

4.1 There is no relevant planning history for 62 Belsize Lane, NW3 5AR.

## 5 **Planning Policy and Guidance**

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2014 requires that applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 This section of the Planning Statement sets out the Development Plan policies relevant to the application, as well as identifying the other material considerations which are deemed to be of significance. The relevant local and national policies are listed below and then described in further detail before a Planning Assessment is discussed within the Section 6, to provide a full analysis of the proposed development and how it accords with planning policy.

### **Development Plan**

- 5.3 The adopted Development Plan for the London Borough of Camden consists of the Camden Local Plan 2017 and the London Plan. This document provides spatial policies, development management policies and site allocations to guide and manage development in the Council area. The relevant policies from the Local Plan are as follows:

- Policy C1 – Health and Wellbeing
- Policy E1 – Economic Development
- Policy A1 – Managing the Impact of Development
- Policy A5 – Basements
- Policy D2 – Heritage
- Policy TC2 – Camden’s centres and other shopping areas
- Policy TC4 – Town Centre Uses
- Policy T2 – Parking and Car-Free Development



*Policy C1 – Health and Wellbeing – The Council will improve and promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities through ensuring a high quality environment with local services to support health, social and cultural wellbeing and reduce inequalities. The Council will require development to positively contribute to creating high quality, active, safe and accessible places.*

*Policy E1 – Economic Development – The Council will secure a successful and inclusive economy in Camden by creating the conditions for economic growth and harnessing the benefits for local residents and businesses.*

*Policy A1 – Managing the Impact of Development – The Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours. We will grant permission for development unless this causes unacceptable harm to amenity.*

*Policy A5 – Basements -In determining proposals for basements and other underground development, the Council will require an assessment of the scheme’s impact on drainage, flooding, groundwater conditions and structural stability in the form of a Basement Impact Assessment and where appropriate a Basement Construction Plan.*

*Policy D2 – Heritage – The Council will preserve and where appropriate enhance Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. Within Conservation Areas the Council will require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area; resist the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area; resist development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character or appearance of that conservation area and preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden’s architectural heritage.*

*Policy TC2 – Camden’s centres and other shopping areas – The Council will promote successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough to serve the needs of residents, workers and visitors.*

*Policy TC4 – Town Centre Uses – The council will ensure that the development of shopping, services, food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses does not cause harm to the character, function, vitality and viability of a centre, the local area or the amenity of neighbours.*

*Policy T2 – Parking and Car-Free Development – The Council will limit the availability of parking and require all new developments in the borough to be car-free.*

- 5.4 The policies outlined above from the Camden Local Plan are particularly significant to the proposal as they underscore the appropriate scale, type and form of development appropriate within the town centre, ensuring it complements and augments the area’s role and function. Moreover, these policies shed light on the Borough’s economic objectives, suitable development within a Conservation Area, basement development and the necessity for car-free developments.

### **The London Plan**

- 5.5 The relevant policies from the London Plan are as follows:
- Policy SD6 – Town Centres and High Streets – The vitality and viability of London’s varied town centres should be promoted and enhanced.

5.6 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is consistent with the above London Plan and Camden Local Plan provisions. The proposed development is a specialist educational use and one which is wholly appropriate for a town centre and will play a pivotal service for the local community.

5.7 It is further submitted that:

- The proposed use will complement and support the ongoing operations of neighbouring commercial/business uses. The proposal will maintain significant footfall to the area.
- The proposed use is a commercial business and is in keeping with the current use of the facility.
- There is no potential for adverse impacts to nearby residential properties.
- There would be no adverse traffic impacts.
- The proposal will maintain and enhance the vitality of this section of Belsize Lane.
- The proposal would enable Limespring to continue its vital service for SEN Children/Young Adults across North London in a new facility.

### **Other Material Planning Considerations**

#### **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2023)**

5.8 The NPPF mandates that plans and decisions should favour sustainable development. In the context of this planning application, this translates to:

- Approving development proposals that are in line with an up-to-date development plan promptly.

- 5.9 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.10 Moreover, Paragraph 38 of the NPPF prescribes that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision-makers at every level should seek to approach applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.11 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.
- 5.12 Paragraph 86 of the NPPF is of particular importance given planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 5.13 Furthermore, the London Borough of Camden has adopted several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), however none of these documents are relevant to this proposal.

## 6 Planning Assessment

- 6.1 The proposed change of use of the basement at 62 Belsize Lane from Use Class E to Use Class F1a aligns with the Camden Local Plan, London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This assessment outlines how the proposal meets the relevant policies.
- 6.2 The proposal contributes positively to health and wellbeing by providing specialist educational support for children and young people with specific learning difficulties, in accordance with Policy C1 of the Camden Local Plan. This service fosters a high quality, active, safe and accessible environment that supports the social and cultural wellbeing of the community. By offering tailored educational support, the proposal helps reduce educational inequalities and promotes a vibrant and healthy community.
- 6.3 In terms of economic development, the change of use supports Camden's objectives as outlined in Policy E1. It creates conditions for economic growth through educational services that benefit local residents. The relocation of Limespring to Belsize Lane ensures that the business can continue to operate and grow, contributing to the local economy and providing essential services to the community.
- 6.4 The proposal also ensures that the quality of life for both the occupants and neighbours is protected, adhering to Policy A1 of the Camden Local Plan. The change of use involves no external alterations, minimising any potential impact on the surrounding area and maintaining the existing character of the neighbourhood.

- 6.5 Whilst Policy A5 of the Camden Local Plan requires a basement impact assessment for basement developments, this application is solely for a change of use of an existing basement, therefore this is unlikely to be required. Nonetheless, a brief basement impact assessment has been prepared to satisfy policy requirements, ensuring that any potential concerns are addressed.
- 6.6 The proposed change of use preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area, as required by Policy D2. There are no external changes to the property and the educational use is compatible with the existing character of the area, ensuring that it does not detract from its conservation status.
- 6.7 The relocation of Limespring to Belsize Lane also supports Policy TC2 of the Camden Local Plan by promoting successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough. The educational centre will serve the needs of residents, workers and visitors enhancing the vitality and viability of the local area.
- 6.8 Additionally, Policy TC4 of the Camden Local Plan ensures that the development of services in town centres does not harm their character, function, or the amenity of neighbours. The proposal adheres to this policy by maintaining the existing character and function of the area without causing harm. Likewise, the proposal aligns with London Plan Policy SD6, which emphasises promoting and enhancing the vitality and viability of London's varied town centres. By establishing a specialist educational centre, the proposal contributes to the resilience and diversity of the town centre, ensuring it remains vibrant and accessible hub that meets the needs of the community.
- 6.9 Importantly, the proposal aligns with Policy T2 of Camden's Local Plan which supports parking and car-free development. The premises are well-served by public transport, with a bus stop in close proximity and an underground station nearby, allowing children to access the site from all parts of London.

6.10 Lastly, when parents or guardians drop off their children for sessions at Limespring, they may utilise nearby business establishments such as cafes, shops and other services, thereby encouraging local economic growth. This increased foot traffic can contribute to the vitality and viability of the area, supporting local businesses and enhancing the economic vibrancy of Belsize Lane and the surrounding area.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning Act requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The application seeks the proposed change of use from Class E to Class F1a at 62 Belsize Lane, NW3 5AR which is a well-considered development that aligns with the Camden Local Plan, the London Plan and the NPPF. It provides essential educational services, supports economic growth and preserves the character of the conservation area, ensuring minimal impact on the neighbourhood.
- 7.3 The change of use will maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre, contributing to the diverse range of uses that meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors. Given that there are no external changes to the property or its layout, the proposal integrates seamlessly with the existing operations, ensuring minimal disruption and minimal impact on the Belsize Park Conservation Area.
- 7.4 The application site is located on Belsize Lane within the Belsize Park area of Hampstead in London, within a primarily residential area with some commercial uses such as shops, restaurants and bars.
- 7.5 According to the National Planning Policy Framework, planning decisions should facilitate the expansion and adaptation of existing businesses to foster and sustain business growth. It is therefore respectfully requested that the London Borough of Camden approves the application without delay given the proposal represents a thoughtful and necessary adaptation of existing space to meet contemporary educational needs without compromising the area's vitality or functionality.