

Planning, design and access statement
For **93 Agar Grove, Camden, London, NW1 9UE**



Project **Change of use of the basement floor from office (Class E) to a one bedroom flat (Class C3) and subsequent external alterations.**

London Borough of Camden

Revision (-) Sep 2024

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1.0 Introduction

We apply on behalf of our client to seek planning permission from Camden Council to change the use of the basement office at 93 Agar Grove into a one bedroom flat (Class C3)

The site is located at an end-of-terrace plot on Agar Grove. The existing mixed use building (office use at basement level and residential above) is a detached Georgian property within Camden Square Conservation Area.

The basement has been vacant for six months, and the conversion is intended to provide high-quality residential accommodation in an area that is primarily residential. A similar application was granted planning permission in 2022 for the ground-floor unit, which was also converted from office space into a residential flat.

Existing Gross Internal Area – Ground Floor: 45 sqm



Bird's eye view of the site (93 Agar Grove)

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2.0 Assessment



Front view of the site (93 Agar Grove)

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2.1 Physical Context The unit site is located near the junction of Agar Grove and York Way.

Boundaries:

North; Cantelowes Road
East; Pedestrian, public walkway
West; 91 Agar Grove
South; Agar Grove

The property is located within the Camden Square Conservation Area. The basement has access via a south-facing light well, and despite its current opaque elevation, this south-facing orientation provides an ideal opportunity to introduce increased glazing. This will maximize daylight and sunlight in the proposed flat, creating a much brighter and more welcoming interior.

2.2 Social context

The conversion will contribute to local housing needs by transforming underutilized commercial space into a high-quality one-bedroom flat. The area is predominantly residential, and this change of use enhances the social fabric of the neighborhood. The flat is designed for a single occupant, providing a much-needed housing unit in Camden.

2.3 Economical context

The area surrounding 93 Agar Grove has seen significant development in recent years, particularly with the expansion of modern and flexible Class A office spaces. New developments along York Way and within the Vale Royale/Brewery Street commercial protected area, as well as the revitalization of King's Cross, have resulted in a substantial increase in high-quality office accommodation. These new developments are within walking distance of the application site, offering state-of-the-art commercial amenities that far exceed the potential of the existing basement office at 93 Agar Grove.

The existing basement office space fails to meet modern standards for commercial accommodation. Given the advancements in building specifications, including natural lighting, access, and amenities, it is clear that the basement unit cannot compete with the newer office developments nearby. Its inability to be brought up to these standards further diminishes its economic viability.

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Moreover, despite an extensive five-year marketing campaign to lease the ground floor office (which is more visible and accessible than the basement), no viable interest was secured. It is important to note that this marketing effort occurred before the recent surge in local office developments, underscoring the lack of demand for this type of commercial space in this location.

Based on this, it can be concluded that retaining office use (Class E) in the basement or ground floor is not a feasible option for 93 Agar Grove. The surrounding area has shifted toward more modern and attractive office developments, leaving this property's commercial potential uncompetitive and redundant in the current market context. Reallocating the space to a more appropriate use would contribute more effectively to the site's long-term viability and alignment with the area's economic trajectory.

2.4 Planning policy context

Camden Local Plan (2017)

The proposed development aligns with several key policies in the Camden Local Plan, including:

- Policy H1 - Maximising Housing Supply: The development supports Camden's housing needs by converting vacant office space into a functional residential flat, making efficient use of the available land.
- Policy D1 - Design: The design of the proposed flat enhances both the internal and external aspects of the building. The use of timber-framed glazing respects the conservation area's historical context and improves the building's overall aesthetic and functionality.
- Policy D2 - Heritage: The proposal aligns with Camden's goal of preserving and enhancing heritage assets by ensuring that the new fenestration complements the building's character and the surrounding conservation area.
- Policy E2 - Employment Premises and Sites: While Policy E2 generally resists the loss of office space, this basement unit is small, outdated, and unsuitable for modern office use. Its layout, size, and access do not meet contemporary standards for office accommodation. Additionally, the predominantly residential nature of the surrounding area supports a change to residential use, making the conversion a more appropriate and beneficial development.
- Policy A1 - Managing the Impact of Development: The conversion improves the amenity of the building, enhancing both its usability and appearance. The increased glazing will bring significant natural light into the flat, improving the quality of life for its future occupants.

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- Policy CC1 - Climate Change Mitigation: By increasing natural daylight through the introduction of larger windows, the flat will reduce reliance on artificial lighting, contributing to the energy efficiency of the building and supporting Camden's climate change mitigation objectives.
- Policy CC2 - Adapting to Climate Change: The proposal incorporates sustainable design elements such as energy-efficient timber-framed windows, which reduce the need for artificial lighting and enhance the sustainability of the building.
- Policy H7 - Large and Small Homes: The conversion provides a much-needed smaller residential unit, aligning with Policy H7, which encourages a balanced housing mix to meet the diverse needs of Camden's population.

Compliance with the Camden Square Conservation Area Guidelines

The proposed development at 93 Agar Grove falls within the Camden Square Conservation Area. The conservation area is subject to a range of policies aimed at preserving its special architectural and historical character. The Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal highlights that while development and changes are not prohibited, any alterations must be carefully considered to ensure they enhance the area's character or, at the very least, do not detract from it.

The appraisal outlines that key aspects of the area's character include the use of high-quality materials such as traditional brick and slate, and the importance of maintaining the original scale and form of buildings, particularly in rooflines and garden spaces. The guidelines emphasise the preservation of front gardens, rear garden spaces, and trees as vital contributors to the area's appearance and biodiversity.

The basement office at 93 Agar Grove does not contribute significantly to the conservation area and is identified as neutral in its impact. Therefore, its conversion aligns with the opportunity for enhancement as identified in the appraisal. The proposal ensures that the alterations will be sensitive to the existing character of the building and its surroundings, utilising appropriate materials and avoiding any significant changes to the visible façade or the established building scale, in line with conservation policies.

This approach will ensure that the proposed development complies with the conservation area guidelines by preserving the character of the conservation area while addressing the need for functional improvement of the property.

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3.0 Evaluation

This proposal represents a sensitive and contextually appropriate conversion of a vacant basement into a one-bedroom flat. The south-facing light well offers an ideal opportunity to maximise daylight and sunlight, significantly improving the living conditions within the space. The introduction of timber-framed glazing will also enhance the building's overall appearance, contributing positively to the Camden Square Conservation Area.

Although Camden generally resists the loss of office space under Policy E2, the small size and physical limitations of the basement make it unsuitable for modern office use. Converting the space into residential use better aligns with the surrounding context and addresses housing demand in the area.

4.0 Design Constraints

The site is visible from Agar Grove.

The site is within Camden Square Conservation Area.

The property is not a listed building and is not of special Architectural merit.

(93 Agar Grove)

4.1 Design Ethos

The design features new timber-framed windows and doors, consistent with the style of the upper floors. These changes will significantly increase natural light within the flat and enhance the building's appearance in line with the character of the conservation area. The materials and design align with Policy D1 - Design and Policy D2 - Heritage.

Internally, the proposed open space flat will benefit from a light and airy character given by the generous open day-space and the high amount of glazing throughout.

A Velux Light Tunnel product is proposed to provide daylight from the rear aspect of the flat, thus further enhancing the natural daylight levels internally.

4.2 Amount

The scope of the proposal is limited to converting the entire basement space into a one-bedroom flat, making efficient use of the available area and contributing to housing supply.

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4.3 Layout

The layout includes an open-plan kitchen and living area, a semi-open bedroom, and a bathroom, designed to provide a functional and well-proportioned living space for a single occupant.

4.4 Scale

The external changes are limited to the light well and will not alter the building's overall scale. The proposal focuses on enhancing the existing structure rather than expanding it.

4.5 Landscaping

No changes to the landscaping are proposed, as the development is limited to internal modifications and fenestration improvements.

4.6 Appearance

The use of timber-framed windows and doors aligns with the character of the Camden Square Conservation Area. The increased glazing will not only enhance the light well but also improve the visual appeal of the building, supporting Policy D1 - Design and Policy D2 - Heritage.

4.7 Building Regs.

The proposed conversion will comply with all relevant building regulations, including fire safety, thermal insulation, and structural requirements. A Building Control submission will follow the planning approval.

4.8 Access

Highways

The site's response to the road layout is not seen as changing from its current condition.

Servicing

Access to services remains unchanged.

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Disabled Access

The layout, design and material specifications for the proposed additions and layout alterations will comply with all Building Regulation Guidelines and the policies set out in the DDA Act, providing unaltered access to the main entry.

Transport

The development is aimed at serving the local community thus encouraging walking and the use of sustainable transportation. The access to public transport and the need for private parking space remain unchanged.

The applicant looks forward to signing a Section 106 agreement, should the LPA consider this a necessary condition upon granting planning permission.

Refuse

A refuse collection point will be installed in the lightwell, to be accessed via the entrance gate to the existing ground floor office.

5.0 Recommendation

The proposed conversion of the basement at 93 Agar Grove is a sensitive and contextually appropriate development that aligns with Camden's Local Plan. Although Policy E2 resists the loss of office space, the small size and unsuitability of this basement for office use justify the change to residential. The conversion enhances the building's appearance and provides much-needed housing in a predominantly residential area. The design respects the Camden Square Conservation Area's character, and the proposal contributes positively to the housing mix.

We respectfully request that Camden Council grant planning permission for this development..