

## **Planning application 2024/4116/P:**

**Consultation 293-299, 301-305 Kentish Town Road and 8 Holmes Road London NW% 2TJ, Change of use of part ground and first floors and full second and third floor levels from offices (class E) to hotel accommodation (Class C1). Installation of rooflights and PV solar panels at rear roof level.**

### **Traffic increases and problems with dropping off and picking up guests.**

Holmes Road is narrow, and any waiting taxis will cause an immediate tailback at busy times of the day. Since the peak time for check-in to hotels is typically in the early afternoon, around 3 to 4 PM, this coincides with school pick-up. Similarly, the majority of checkouts are between 7.00 and 10 am, a further busy period of the day. On the opposite side of the street of the planned entrance on Holmes Road there are usually delivery motorbikes stationed awaiting their next delivery jobs and cars loading goods bought on the high street. Between 4 and 7 pm, in particular, queuing cars build-up all along Holmes Road waiting to turn onto the high street. The queue on the Northern lane and the waiting vehicles on the Southern lane tend to already now lead to bad congestion and at times road rage.

The high street is also mentioned as a guest drop space. The street is very often congested, exacerbated by the many food delivery services that gather around McDonalds, waiting for their orders and the cars turning into the high street from Holmes Road. This situation is directly next to the junction of the high street and Holmes Road.

In addition, The Old Farmhouse (Formerly the Lady Hamilton) across the road is about to open rooms above the pub, so the congestion on Holmes road with short term residents will already be exacerbated. Do we need two hotels on the same corner? Albeit attracting different markets.

### **Hotel guest access.**

The access to the proposed hotel for the guests is via Holmes Road. The current proposal shows a small reception space with no lobby area directly off the street.

This differs greatly from other micro-room hotels that have proliferated in the last few years – notably Premier Inn Hub (directly referenced in the D & A statement) and Citizen M, for example. These micro-room hotels have relatively spacious reception areas, with multiple automated check-in stands to help ease the congestion of the check-in and check-out process. Additionally, these hotels standardly come with a lounge area and some food facilities. This provides guests with a space to congregate while waiting for taxis and the checking-in/out processes. KTNF is concerned that, given that the rooms are designed to be just a sleeping pad, they will attract short, possibly just one-night stays, and there will be a constant churn of new arrivals and leaving guests. The lack of space at the entrance constitutes a real functional problem for the hotel and for the residents who live directly opposite. There will inevitably be a build-up of groups on the pavement and into the street. Bear in mind that Holmes Road is already a busy thoroughfare.

If guests arrive late at night (it is 24-hour access), residents along the street will have to deal with the rolling suitcases, the lights and noise of taxis and the general commotion of the arrival of people into the reception that is almost on the street. This would be in addition to the rolling

suitcases that arrive on a continuous basis to and from the 2 student residences on Holmes Road (Student Unite, Stay Club).

Another effect of having no lobby is its impact on the workers in reception. How is it envisioned that the space will be a comfortable working environment? How will the temperature be controlled and how to avoid unwanted entry?

The reception area also lacks staff toilets/ change areas and space for luggage storage. We see no evidence of any facilities for the staff on any of the floors. Again, we are concerned that the approach to the design is solely focused on placing as many rooms into the space as possible without considering the impact on the hotel workers and guests.

### **The access to rooms.**

The plans show that access to most of the higher-level rooms will involve travelling up to the first floor via one lift and traversing across the building via a series of corridors to a second lift. The guests would then need to take the second lift to the second or third floor before reaching their rooms. This is circuitous, disorientating, and awkward, and it hardly suggests a well-designed, instinctively ordered space that should be part of any public circulation route.

### **Lack of windows.**

While we appreciate that these micro/budget hotel rooms now often come without windows (since they are designed not to be lived in but just slept in, with a high turnover rate), the ratio of windowless rooms to rooms with views is striking. Our calculation put the ratio at 49% without to 51% with windows. Essentially, half the rooms will have no views and will be lit either by artificial means or skylights. This is usually countered by lounges with good natural light, creating a safe and comfortable space outside the room. In these proposals, there are no provisions for this.

The D & A statement has claimed that the hotel will provide 'high-quality short stay accommodation' and 'not be budget or orientated by groups'. This statement must be justified by high-quality finishes and excellent technical facilities (see comments immediately below). Otherwise, given the basic form of the rooms, the lack of views, and any other facilities, it is likely to present as a budget hostel.

### **Providing for good room environments.**

The plans are obviously only indicative at this stage, but for these micro room hotels to work successfully, there needs to be an investment in excellent IT /lighting and climate control. A large part of what makes them bearable as spaces are these facilities. Has the developer made allowances for integrating these elements into the design? Is there space within the ceiling heights/ space for the plant? The rooms' design, furniture, storage and toilet/areas require highly ergonomic and robust planning. What is the developer's interior strategy?

### **Loss of potential local jobs.**

The current office space has the potential to provide 115 jobs, of which 21 can be evaluated as likely local. The number of full-time jobs proposed by the hotel is between 5-9 (as per D & A Statement). This is a considerable fall, not only in employment numbers but also in the number of people that could be using the shops and services of the surrounding area. The hotel is being pitched as a location for Camden, its markets, and nightlife. While there may be some advantages to people moving through the area, a realistic assessment of any local economic benefits needs to be done.

In summary,

While empty office spaces benefit no one, and the provision of a new hotel may bring some new groups of people into the area (even if only very temporarily), we are not convinced that the design is likely to provide quality accommodation. Furthermore, KTNF is concerned that the position and size of the hotel and service entrances are likely to create noise, traffic, light, (and anti-social behaviour?) issues for the surrounding local residential population on Holmes Road. The outline of the proposed hotel shows similar design problems to a student accommodation that has brought considerable noise and congestion problems in the Western part of Holmes Road (Stay Club), and KTNF is concerned that these problems would be mirrored on the Eastern end of Holmes Road, aggravated by serious traffic congestion that would spill onto the high street.