



GERALDEVE

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Our ref: NJB/JCW/SGP/J7162

Your ref:

Dear Beth,

**Percy House, Gresse Street, London, W1
Rathbone Place marketing suite**

Further to our recent conversation, on behalf of our client, Great Portland Estates (GPE), we write to submit a planning application for the change of use of the second floor of Percy House, Gresse Street from office (Class B1) accommodation to use as a marketing suite (sui generis) for a temporary period of two years.

The specific company name for the application is Knighton Estates Limited.

The application comprises:

- Four copies of signed and completed application forms;
- The relevant certificate (Certificate B);
- Four copies of a site location plan;
- Four copies of existing and proposed plans; and
- A cheque for the sum of £385 comprising the requisite application fee.

Background

Great Portland Estates own a significant number of buildings within close proximity of Percy House in this important part of the Central London Area. GPE are major landowners owning a number properties north of Oxford Street.

GPE's primary focus is upon offices and they control 270,000 sq m (NIA) of offices within their Estate, with 170,000 sq m (existing NIA) in the development pipeline. Through mixed-use policy GPE also delivers a significant quantum of residential floorspace. Further details of GPE's experience and credentials are provided on their website at www.gpe.co.uk.

GPE also own and manage a large amount of office stock within the London Borough of Camden including 200 Grays Inn Road, 83/190 Tottenham Court Road and 33/35 Gresse Street.

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GPE have recently received a resolution to grant planning permission from Westminster City Council for the major mixed-use redevelopment on the previous Royal Mail delivery office at 35-50 Rathbone Place, which is located immediately to the west of Percy House.

The proposals at Rathbone Place involved substantial demolition and redevelopment to provide a comprehensive mixed use scheme comprising circa 33,000 sq m (GEA) of new high quality office accommodation, 162 new residential dwellings on site, with a further 18 units provided on sites within close proximity, new retail / restaurant / bar floorspace, a new publically accessible open space, a private residential garden and associated car / cycle parking.

The proposals are the result of extensive discussions with the City of Westminster, local stakeholders and amenity groups, the GLA and other consultees, including the London Borough of Camden.

In bringing forward these proposals GPE have been exploring a strategy for the location of the associated marketing suite that will be required to successfully market the residential element of the proposals to London based purchasers.

Given the proximity of Percy House to the site, the existing lease arrangements at second floor level and size of the unit, GPE have identified this as the most suitable place in which to locate the marketing suite for a temporary period. The floor has also been vacant for the past three months.

It is the only vacant property of a suitable size and location that GPE have available as the entire Rathbone Place site will be a construction site.

Percy House is located immediately opposite the site but on the opposite side of Gresse Street within the London Borough of Camden.

Proposal

The proposal involves the change of use of the currently vacant office (Class B1) accommodation at second floor level, to use as a marketing suite (sui generis) in association with the proposed redevelopment of Rathbone Place.

The unit will comprise a marketing suite and mock-up 'show apartment' The show apartment will not be plumbed in but will demonstrate the proposed materials, size and specification of the apartments due to be built out at Rathbone Place. The marketing suite will contain desks for the staff to work at, an architectural model and a specification review room.

Access to the second floor will be via the existing ground floor entrance which serves other floors of the building also.

It is proposed that the suite will be open Monday to Friday, 10am to 7pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 6pm. There will be four members of staff due to be on a rota with a minimum of two people working at any one time.

Viewings of the suite are to be strictly appointment only with an hour allocated per applicant. There is the potential for a maximum of nine appointment slots per day. On the basis a slot could be filled by a family, there could be up to five people (staff and visitors) in the unit at any one time.

It is proposed that the suite would be operational for two years, during the construction period, after which it would revert to its existing use as office (Class B1) accommodation.

No external works to the building are proposed as part of this application submission.

Planning Considerations

The considerations arising from the proposals are related to the temporary loss of the existing use and the nature of the proposed use.

The proposals would result in the loss of 200 sq m (GEA) of existing office (Class B1) accommodation for a temporary period. The unit is currently vacant and was vacated in August 2013, so no existing occupier would be displaced.

Policy CS8 of the Camden Core Strategy stipulates that a concentration of office growth should be promoted across growth areas and Central London, and states that existing employment use should be safeguarded.

Policy CS9 addresses the Central London Area (CLA) of Camden, of which Percy House forms part, and explains that within the CLA the Council will inter alia:

- a) Recognise its unique role, character and challenges;
- b) Support central London as a focus for Camden's future growth in homes, offices, shops, hotels and other uses; and
- c) Take into account the specific identity of the areas within central London when taking decisions on planning applications

Policy DP13 of the adopted Camden Development Policies document deals with employment premises and sites and states that the council will retain land and buildings that are suitable for continued business use and will resist change to non-business unless:

- a) It can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that a site or building is no longer suitable for its existing business use; and
- b) There is evidence that the possibility of retaining, reusing or redeveloping the site or building for similar or alternative business use has been fully explored over an appropriate period of time.

Where a change of use has been justified to the Council's satisfaction, the Council will seek to maintain some business use on site, with a higher priority for retaining flexible space that is suitable for a variety of business uses.

In the supporting text, at paragraph 13.3, it states that when assessing proposals that involve the loss of business use the Council will consider whether there is potential for that use to continue.

The proposals would result in the loss of existing office accommodation for a temporary period of two years. It is therefore not proposed that the office accommodation will be lost from the site forever. Indeed GPE would ask that a condition be attached to any permission which stipulates that

upon the expiry of the temporary period, the lawful planning use would return to office accommodation.

The mock up apartment will not be plumbed in and will be easily removed at the end of the temporary period.

The retention of office accommodation is in keeping with GPE's long term objectives for the building and management of high quality office stock generally across the West End. Upon the expiration of a temporary permission GPE, proposes to invest in bringing the existing office accommodation up to modern occupier requirements thereby improving on what exists on site at present.

The site is suitable for continued business use, by virtue of the other uses within the building, and the proposals would not comprise this suitability given the nature of the use proposed and the temporary nature of such. The proposals seek to react to an opportunity that has arisen in the existing lease structure of this part of the building but are not intent on compromising the existing business use in the long term.

The remainder of the building provides approximately 1,600 sq m (NIA) of office (Class B1) floorspace at basement, ground and first to third floor levels. This floorspace will remain occupied during the proposed temporary period as it forms an important part of GPE's office portfolio. The continued office functioning of the remainder of the building is a valid consideration in accordance with LBC policy.

The proposals themselves will retain an element of business use on the site and will not compromise the ability of the space to provide for a variety of business uses in the future. This is consistent with the broad objectives of Policy DP 13 which supports retaining sites in business use.

Moreover, the proposals will be supportive of the wider social and economic function of the Central London Area by enabling this strategically important development to be marketed to a local audience. The success of developments such as Rathbone Place is a key element of central London's unique role that Policy CS9 also seeks to support.

Given the very close proximity of Rathbone Place to the borough boundary, a successful development will have a considerable beneficial effect on both sides of the boundary that will significantly outweigh the temporary, limited effect of the proposed change of use at Percy House.

By way of illustration, the Environmental Statement for Rathbone Place estimates that 596 full time jobs on average per year will be created during the construction phase and a further 1,123 net additional full time jobs once the scheme is completed and fully occupied. The direct, indirect and induced spending in Greater London resulting from the proposed development is projected to be approximately £5 million per annum.

We hope therefore that Officers and Members can support the GPE proposals at Percy House for this temporary period and recognise that this is linked to the inherent benefits flowing from the Rathbone Place development.

We look forward to officers' confirmation that the application has been validated. However, please contact Nick Brindley or James Wickham of this office if you wish to discuss any matter in the meantime, or if you require any further justification.

Yours faithfully

Gerald Eve LLP

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