

**14 ROGER STREET, LONDON,
WC1N 2JU**

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING
PERMISSION & CONSERVATION
AREA CONSENT**

PLANNING STATEMENT

APRIL 2013

5 Bolton Street
London
W1J 8BA

Tel: 020 7493 4002
Fax: 020 7312 7548

www.montagu-evans.co.uk

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Montagu Evans, to accompany an application for the refurbishment and change of use at 14 Roger Street, from office (Use Class B1) to residential use (Use Class C3). The purpose of this Statement is to provide a planning policy analysis of the scheme in light of planning guidance (**Section 2**).
- 1.2 The proposed development will involve the following changes to the existing development:
- The change of use from a vacant office building;
 - The conversion to six self-contained residential units;
 - The incorporation of a new flat roof extension set back from the existing lower storey facades;
 - The refurbishment of building, providing it with a new lease of life (**Section 2**).
- 1.3 The application site is located in the administrative area of LB Camden. The site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and there are a series of Grade II listed buildings within close proximity (**Section 3**).
- 1.4 **Section 5** and **Section 6** of the report considers the proposals in the context of adopting planning policy, and other relevant guidance.
- 1.5 The main issues to be considered in respect of this proposal are:
- Principle of the proposed change of use on the Site;
 - Conservation Area and Listed Building implications; and
 - Residential Amenity – the impact on future residents and the impact of the scheme on the surrounding area (**Section 7**).
- 1.6 We highlight some of the benefits of this scheme below (**Section 8**):
- Bringing a building back into use;
 - A more efficient use of land;
 - High quality residential development;
 - High quality design; and
 - Community safety.
- 1.7 This application represents a significant improvement on the existing vacant use of the Site (**Section 9**).

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION PROPOSAL

2.1 This report has been prepared by Montagu Evans, to accompany an application for the refurbishment and change of use at 14 Roger Street, WC1N 2JU, from a vacant office (Use Class B1) to four residential units (Use Class C3).

2.2 The full application for planning permission and conservation area consent is for:

“Change of use from office (Use Class B1) to residential (Use Class C3) (1 x 3 Bedroom; 4 x 2 Bedroom & 1 x 1 Bedroom) and associated alterations, including the creation of an additional floor.”

Applicant

2.3 The application is submitted on behalf of our Client, AJAM 4 Limited.

Purpose of the Planning Statement

2.4 The purpose of this Statement is to provide a planning policy analysis of the proposed scheme in light of national, regional and local planning guidance. The Statement also sets out how the material considerations to the determination of the application have been taken into account.

2.5 The Planning Statement forms part of the supporting information which has been submitted for this application, and is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Schedule RS1 – Application Material Submitted;
- Application covering letter;
- Planning Application and Conservation Area Form;
- Location Plan;
- Schedule RS2 – Drawings Submitted;
- Application Drawings;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Marketing Report;
- Sunlight/Daylight Assessment;
- Air Quality Assessment;
- Noise Assessment; and

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Form

2.6 This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme:

- Is in accordance with relevant planning policy at national, regional and local level and delivers sustainable development; and
- Through the comprehensive refurbishment of a vacant building, would deliver an appropriate alternative use and provide a high quality built conversion which is well-related to the surrounding context.

2.7 All the areas quoted in this Statement are in Gross Internal Area (GIA), unless otherwise stated.

Summary of proposals

2.8 Full details of the proposals are set out in the Design and Access Statement. We summarises these below.

2.9 The proposed development will involve the following changes to the existing development:

- The change of use from an office building which has been vacant for greater than three years;
- The conversion to six self-contained residential units;
- The incorporation of a new flat roof extension set back from the existing lower storey facades; and
- The refurbishment of an ageing building and providing it with a new lease of life.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The application site (hereafter referred to as the Site) comprises 118 sqm and is located in the administrative area of LB Camden. The building comprises 6 storeys (B, G + 4 upper floors) and contains 435 sqm (4,682 sqft) of B1 accommodation (Gross Internal Area (GIA)). The proposed building would extend to 532 sqm due to the extension of the 4th floor accommodation.
- 3.2 A full breakdown of areas (existing and proposed) is provided in the Design and Access Statement (see Section 6).
- 3.3 There are a broad range of uses in the immediate vicinity including to the:
- North – office use (85 Gray's Inn Road);
 - East – retail use (81b Gray's Inn Road);
 - South – office use (2/3 North Mews); and
 - West – office use (12 Roger Street)
- 3.4 The site is within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Nearby listed buildings include 75-81a Gray's Inn Road.
- 3.5 The Site is within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ).
- 3.6 The Site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6b which indicates excellent access to public transport.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 After a thorough search of LB Camden's website, the only available planning history for 14 Roger Street dates back to 2009. This is summarised below.

4.2 On 29 October 2009, an application was submitted by Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI). Full planning permission (2009/4805/P) was sought for:

"Change of use of basement to third floors from office (Class B1) to non-clinical substance misuse service (Class D1), to include interview/counselling rooms, group rooms and admin offices."

4.3 The application was withdrawn before a decision was made. Unfortunately, there is not any documentation available which explains why the application was withdrawn.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 This section of the report considers the proposal in the context of adopted planning policy, and other relevant guidance.

Statutory Framework

- 5.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with policies of the statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 5.3 In this case, the statutory Development Plan consists of the:

- London Plan (2011);
- Camden Core Strategy; and
- Camden Development Policies

Principle of the Loss of Office Use

- 5.4 Policy DP13 (Employment premises and sites) supports the retention of land and buildings that are suitable for continued business use and will resist a 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.

When it can be demonstrated that a site is not suitable for any business use other than B1 (a) offices, the Council may allow a change to permanent residential uses...”

- 5.5 It is important to note that the building has been subject to rigorous marketing over the last three years without receiving any firm interest or offer of purchase.

Principle of Residential Accommodation

- 5.6 LB Camden seeks to increase the supply of housing over the period of the Core Strategy and regards housing as being a priority land use. Policy CS6 (Providing quality homes) of the Core Strategy states:

“The Council will aim to make full use of Camden’s capacity for housing by:

a) maximising the supply of additional housing to meet or exceed Camden’s targets of 5,950 homes from 2007-2017.

e) regarding housing as the priority land-use of Camden’s Local Development Framework.”

- 5.7 LB Camden seek to maximise the supply of additional homes. Policy DP2 (Making full use of Camden’s capacity for housing) states that LB Camden aims to achieve this by:

“a) expecting the maximum appropriate contribution to supply of housing on sites that are underused or vacant, taking into account any other uses that are needed on the site.”

Affordable Housing

- 5.8 Policy DP3 (Contributions to the supply of affordable housing) of the Development Policies DPD states:

“The Council will expect all residential developments with a capacity for 10 or more additional dwellings to make a contribution to the supply of affordable housing.”

- 5.9 In this case, as only 6 units are proposed, Policy DP3 does not apply.

Conservation Areas

- 5.10 In order to maintain the character of Camden’s conservation areas, Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden’s Heritage) states that LB Camden will:

“a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas.

b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.”

- 5.11 In referring to the determination of planning applications in heritage settings, the NPPF (paragraph 131) suggests that local planning authorities should take account of:

“the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

Listed Buildings

5.12 As the Site is situated near to the Grade II listed buildings of 75-81a Gray's Inn Road, the proposal must be sympathetic to their setting.

5.13 Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) states:

"To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

g) not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building."

Air Quality

5.14 Policy DP32 (Air Quality and Camden's Clear Zone) confirms that LB Camden will require air quality assessments where development could potentially cause significant harm to air quality.

5.15 Whilst we consider that the development will not cause significant harm to the surrounding environment, we have commissioned an Air Quality Assessment because of the Site's close proximity to Gray's Inn Road (A5200).

5.16 The results of the assessment state that the National Air Quality Objectives (NAQOs) will not be exceeded at the development site, except with the exception of Nitrogen Dioxide where a level marginally over the NAQO is predicted. Unfortunately, since the background concentrations exceed the NAQO in the vicinity of the development, it is not possible to mitigate the effects of Nitrogen Dioxide by taking cleaner air from elsewhere on the Site.

Noise

5.17 Policy DP28 (Noise and Vibration) seeks to control and manage noise pollution. LB Camden will not grant planning permission for:

"a) development likely to generate noise pollution; or

b) development sensitive to noise in locations with noise pollution, unless appropriate attenuation measures are provided."

5.18 As a precaution to the Site's close proximity to Gray's Inn Road, the application is supported by a Noise Assessment. The study has shown that noise from the adjacent road results in the proposed development falling within Noise Exposure Category C. As a result, noise must be considered and attenuation must be provided. Paragraph 7.12 of this report indicates the noise mitigation measures which will be put in place.

Sunlight/Daylight

- 5.19 Policy DP26 (Managing the impact of the development on occupiers and neighbours) ensures new development does not cause harm to local amenity.
- 5.20 The proposal involves the incorporation of a new flat roof, alongside the existing flat roofed lift and plant room, which extends the roof line upwards by 300mm. As a result, a Sunlight/Daylight Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the proposal satisfies policy requirements. The report considers that the reduction in daylight and sunlight to surrounding windows will be small, such that they are unlikely to be noticeable by the inhabitants of the dwellings.

Physical Development of the Site

- 5.21 Policy CS1 (Distribution of Growth) states LB Camden will promote the most efficient use of land and buildings by:

“d) seeking development that makes full use of its site, taking into account quality of design, its surroundings, sustainability, amenity, heritage, transport accessibility and any other considerations relevant to the site.”

- 5.22 As the proposal aims to provide an additional storey, without significantly increasing the height of the building, we consider that the most efficient use of the Site is being made without causing a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

6.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

6.1 The NPPF (paragraph.22) states:

“where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

6.2 The NPPF (paragraph.51) states that local authorities:

“should normally approve planning applications for change to residential use and any associated development from commercial buildings (currently in the B use classes) where there is an identified need for additional housing in that area, provided that there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be appropriate.”

Camden Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

6.3 The proposal acknowledges and pays due-diligence to a series of Camden SPDs, all of which were adopted in 2011. In particular, these are:

- Camden Planning Guidance 1 (Design);
- Camden Planning Guidance 2 (Housing);
- Camden Planning Guidance 3 (Sustainability);
- Camden Planning Guidance 5 (Town Centres, Retail and Employment);
- Camden Planning Guidance 6 (Amenity); and
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy.

7.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES AND PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

7.1 This section deals with the land use principles of the development.

7.2 The main issues to be considered in respect of this proposal are:

- Principle of the proposed change of use on the Site;
- Conservation Area and Listed Building implications; and
- Residential Amenity – the impact on future residents and the impact of the scheme on the surrounding area.

Principle of proposed change of use

7.3 The Site has been subject to a prolonged period of unsuccessful marketing in an attempt to restore it to its lawful B1 office use. The failure of this and its subsequent period of vacancy (greater than three years) illustrates that the building is no longer viewed as suitable for office use.

7.4 The change of use from a vacant office building, with no reasonable prospect of renewed use, is consistent with national, regional and local planning policy considerations.

7.5 The proposal for the change of use to residential is consistent with national, regional and local planning policy.

Conservation Area and Listed Building implications

7.6 The refurbishment of the exterior of the building, which has suffered neglect symptomatic of traffic and environmental pollution, will improve the appearance of the conservation area.

7.7 The proposed development will intensify the use of the local area (day and night) which will improve community safety.

7.8 The proposal does not exceed the height of many of its surrounding buildings, notably 12 Roger Street and 85 Gray's Inn Road (both directly opposite the Site's northern and western frontages respectively).

7.9 Recent 20th century development, such as those referenced above and along North Mews, provide examples of how development can enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area whilst preserving its setting.

Residential Amenity – impact on future residents

7.10 The application is supported by a Noise Assessment to ensure that nearby Gray's Inn Road does not negatively impact on the Site and the amenity of its future residents.

- 7.11 The proposal supports the Noise Assessment findings which recommend the installation of a good level of glazing with passive ventilation to ensure that noise levels are mitigated.
- 7.12 The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment to ensure that nearby Gray's Inn Road does not negatively impact on the Site and the amenity of its future residents.
- 7.13 The Air Quality Assessment reveals that pollutant concentrations are generally low in the area, with the exception of nitrogen dioxide. Nevertheless, it confirms that the local air quality will not cause a significant negative impact on prospective residents.

Residential Amenity – impact of the scheme on the surrounding area

- 7.14 The application is supported by a Sunlight/Daylight Assessment to ensure that the proposed increase in the height of the building does not impede upon the amenity of the surrounding area.
- 7.15 The Sunlight/Daylight Assessment establishes that the proposed development will have a negligible impact on the levels of daylight and sunlight to surrounding properties.

8.0 BENEFITS OF THIS SCHEME

8.1 The new, proposed use offers a significant number of benefits to the site and surrounding area by comparison to the existing building.

8.2 We highlight some of these benefits below:

Bringing a building back into use

- The proposal provides an opportunity to bring a building, which has suffered a prolonged period of uncertainty over recent years, back into lawful use with a new exciting future.

A more efficient use of land

- The incorporation of an additional storey onto a new flat roof, the development makes the most efficient use of its land without compromising its surroundings.

An improved setting of a conservation area

- By bringing a vacant building back into use and significantly improving the 'tired' exterior of the existing building, the development makes a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

High quality residential development

- A mixture of high quality housing which contributes to meeting Camden's housing demand.

High quality design

- The flat roof 'piano nobile' extension set back from the existing lower storey facades demonstrates high quality design by increasing the floorspace of the Site without compromising the setting of the local surrounding.

Community safety

- The proposed development will intensify the use of the building day and night, therefore presenting a safer and more secure environment.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 This application represents a significant improvement on the existing vacant use of the site.
- 9.2 The scheme represents a number of significant improvements on the existing building.
- 9.3 This scheme will deliver a number of planning benefits to the site and surrounding area as set out in **Section 8**.