

# **PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

**For**

**University of London**

**Proposed Change of Use from D1 to B1 Business**

**2 Gower Street, London WC1**

**HIGHCROFT PLANNING  
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**12 DECEMBER 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

This statement seeks to explain and justify the applications for planning permission and listed building consent made by the University of London for the Change of Use of 2 Gower Street, WC1 from D1 use to B1 Business Use.

The statement addresses the specific issues in relation to the development plan policy context that is not dealt with in the statutory Design and Access Statement (DAS), and provides an overview of the proposal. It should be noted that this report does not seek to recite each and every policy statement that might be perceived as having some bearing on the proposed development. Such an approach would be unnecessarily cumbersome and serve little purpose. Hereinafter we address only the specific matters of supporting community facilities, heritage considerations, visual amenity and any environmental impacts on neighbouring properties.

No. 2 Gower Street is a mid-terrace property, originally constructed as a dwelling, but currently occupied by Royal Holloway for D1 and ancillary purposes. However, the University propose that the property should be marketed at the end of the current lease on a flexible basis, so as to permit its future use as either a continuation of the current D1 use or as B1 Business use including general office accommodation or for research and development. These latter uses are defined in the GPDO as *"a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit"*.

The University is in the process of refurbishing the North Block of Senate House so as to accommodate Colleges with accommodation such as the subject of these applications currently in outdated and unsuitable buildings on the periphery of the Campus within the upgraded central campus area.

As such, we trust that the Planning Authority will support this proposal and grant the necessary planning permission and listed building consent.

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## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

### **Site and Surrounding Area**

As mentioned above, No.2 Gower Street is a mid-terrace property, originally constructed as a dwelling, but currently in D1 use and occupied by Royal Holloway for education and ancillary purposes. The building, whilst listed and containing some interesting architectural features is in need of refurbishment. Its change of Use to B1 Business use will no doubt lead to that refurbishment and upgrading. However, its designation as a listed building places great constraints on its continued use for educational purposes due to the fact that it is very difficult if not impossible to make the accommodation DDA compliant.

Nevertheless, the sites location close to the CBD and on the edge of Bedford Square makes the property suitable for alternative B1 use, which may well be a general office use related to the University and/or in research and development.

The site falls within the Bloomsbury conservation area, where the policies of the Council in relation to design and external appearance have particular significance.

### **The Proposed Development**

The change of use of the property requires no structural or cosmetic alterations, but will no doubt result in the refurbishment/redecoration of the accommodation within the building.

### **The External Appearance**

No changes or alterations are envisaged at this time and therefore there will be no affect on the external appearance of the building.



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## **LDF POLICIES**

There now follows a brief discussion of certain relevant policies, with a response on how the proposed development addresses the LDF (adopted 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010) requirements.

### **Community facilities and services**

#### **Policy CS10 – Supporting community facilities and services.**

*The Council will work with its partners to ensure that community facilities and services are provided for Camden's communities and people who work in and visit the borough. This includes:*

*b) supporting the higher education sector in Camden...*

*f) support the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities.*

#### **DP15 – Community and leisure uses.**

*The Council will protect existing community facilities by resisting their loss unless:*

*c) a replacement facility that meets the needs of the local population is provided.*

**Response:** It is acknowledged that the change of use of this property from D1 Education purposes to B1 Business will result in a small net loss of such accommodation. However, it is pointed out that this is part of the continuing rationalisation of the University estate, which includes the total refurbishment of the Senate House North Block and its provision for education/lecture room purposes rather than the previous under-utilised library use. Consequently, we contend that the Planning Authority should support the change of use in this case, because much improved community facilities are to be provided elsewhere in the Senate House North Block which will be fully DDA compliant. Whereas, the property subject of these applications is not DDA compliant, nor can it be made compliant at a reasonable cost or without irretrievably damaging the heritage asset, thus its loss to D1 use should not be considered detrimental to the Planning Authority's policy.

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### **Improving and protecting Camden's environment and quality of life**

#### **Policy DP26 – Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours.**

This provides that: *the Council will protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours by only granting permission for development that does not cause harm to amenity. The factors we will consider include:*

- a) *visual privacy and overlooking;*
- b) *overshadowing and outlook;*
- c) *sunlight, daylight and artificial light levels;*
- d) *noise and vibration levels;*
- e) *odour, fumes and dust;*
- f) *microclimate; and*
- g) *the inclusion of appropriate attenuation measures.*

**Response:** This change of use from D1 to B1 Business does not involve any alterations to the building or installation of new plant/equipment. Moreover, B1 use is defined in the GPDO as *"a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit"*.

Thus the installation of the plant and enclosure will be compliant with policy DP26.

### **Design**

**Policy DP24 – Securing high quality design.** This policy says that: *The Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest of design and will expect developments to consider:*

- a. *Character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;*

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- b. *The character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;*
  - c. *The quality of materials to be used;*
  - d. *The provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;*
  - e. *The appropriate location for building services equipment; f. to i. omitted.*

**Response:** This change of use does not require any alterations to the building whatsoever.

The design of the proposal is therefore compliant with policy DP24.

**Policy DP25 – Conserving Camden’s Heritage.** This policy says that:

***Conservation Areas***

*In order to maintain the character of Camden’s conservation areas, the Council 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 or enhances the character and appearance of the area;*
- c. *d. and e. omitted.*

***Listed buildings***

*To preserve or enhance the borough’s listed buildings, the Council will:*

- f. *only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and*
- g. *Not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building.*

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**Response:** As discussed above, the change of use of this property does not involve or require any alterations whatsoever. Thus the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Therefore the proposal complies with policy DP25.

## CONCLUSIONS

In brief, overall it is concluded that the proposed development would:

- be compliant with relevant national planning policy guidance as set out in the NPPF and the provisions of the LDF in all respects;
- have no detriment to the provision of community facilities;
- have no adverse affect on the appearance of the listed building, and, thus preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- not materially harm neighbouring residential amenities;
- not unacceptably harm any other material planning consideration.

The planning authority is therefore respectfully requested to support our client's application and grant planning permission and listed building consent for the proposed development.