

Rotunda Building,

42 – 43 Gloucester Crescent, NW1

Proposed change of use of the lower ground floor from Class
B1 to Class D1

Design and Access Statement and Planning Review

1 Introduction

This statement sets out the background detail and planning support for the proposed change of use from Class B1 to Class D1 of the lower ground floor only of the premises known as the Rotunda Building, Gloucester Crescent, NW1.

The statement sets out the details of the proposed development and the background to the applicants, SSR Ltd, who are the leaseholders and who are the operators of the proposed use. The statement briefly sets out the planning policy background against which the proposal should be adjudged before going on to assess the planning support for the proposal

The application is retrospective in that the applicants SSR Ltd commenced the use after taking up the lease and undertaking a full refurbishment of the floorspace.

The report finds that:

- The nature and character of the proposed D1 use is wholly appropriate for the space
- The proposal has had the benefit of bringing an underused and virtually derelict area of floorspace back into productive and economic use
- The proposed use of the building is fully supported by the national and local planning policy framework
- There are no other material considerations which would undermine this general planning support

On this basis the report concludes that the proposed use is capable of being fully supported and permission for the change of use from Class B1 to Class D1 so as to allow SSR to continue their successful operation should be granted.

2. Background Detail

The applicant

- 2.1 The applicant for this proposal and the operators of the use is a company called Spirit SSR Ltd, an award winning company providing two primary services:
- Training and education in multi media. SSR provide a full range of accredited courses to a small select number of clients
 - Commercial services, including such as the hire of facilities, provision of office areas and consultancy services in the fields of engineering and production.
- 2.2 Of the two areas, the training and education function is dominant and thus there is a need for the current application to enable a use within Class D1 so as to regularise the position.
- 2.3 The company was been established in Manchester in 1984. Since that time it has built up an enviable record, working closely with industry partners and boasting an impressive graduate employment record. The expansion and establishment of the operation within the Rotunda reflects the successful expansion of the business into wider markets
- 2.4 SSR provides training for adult clients aged 18 and above. The company is a BBC preferred training provider and an Apple centre for education. Courses are delivered either intensively, on a one to one basis over a limited time, weekend training packages or on an extended part or full time basis. The class groups are necessarily small, given the nature of the building and the topic areas, and clients are drawn from a wide cross section from industry professionals through to private individuals.
- 2.5 SSR works with charities and a number of ancillary creative media companies. The Company supports the Roundhouse Creative Projects programme as well as a number of London 2012 charities, all with the intention of providing young people with the skills necessary to support employment in the creative media sector.

The application site

- 2.6 The planning application and proposed change of use relates only to the lower ground floor area of the premises known as the Rotunda building. This is a 6 storey listed building located at the junction of Gloucester Crescent, Jamestown Road and Oval Road. The building sits within a large site which provides for surface car parking, waste storage and general access. The lower ground floor which is the subject of this application relies on the wider services of the building (waste collection and disposal etc) but has no control over any of the parking provision.
- 2.7 The floorspace contained within the lower ground floor has an area of 356.74 sq m. It takes its main pedestrian access from within Rotunda site with the routing leading out via

Jamestown Road. The main entrance to the overall building off Gloucester Crescent provides a secondary access but is not for public use.

- 2.8 The floorspace was derelict when SSR took over the lease in April 2010. The premises had been marketed for a considerable period for B1 uses but the general configuration of the space, not to mention its run down state, resulted in there being little effective interest. Since that time, and in consultation with the Councils conservation officers, SSR have implemented a sensitive refurbishment programme that enhances and respects the style and character of the building. Internally the space has been sub divided so as to create working floorspace to include office/teaching suites, and two industry standard multimedia suites. There is further unallocated space which is used for office/hot desk working areas.

Operational detail

- 2.9 The business operates on a daily basis, generally from 9am through to 10pm including weekends. This provides for the flexibility of use required by clients and ensures that the facility is available to the community as a whole. The use does not operate over bank holidays or for a two week summer break. All clients arrive either on foot or via public transport. There is no parking provision on site.
- 2.10 The current SSR operation on the site employs 3 full time and 3 part time staff supported by freelance. This will expand in time as demand and client requirements dictate. New opportunities, which will be directed towards young people from the local area, will cover matters such as administration, client care and marketing.
- 2.11 The use is very much akin to a normal BI office type use. The teaching is primarily hands on in the computer and multi media suites.

Planning policy

- 2.12 The application premises sit within a mixed use urban location, close to all facilities and capable of being served by a range of public transport options. Before the building was occupied by SSR it comprised essentially derelict floorspace within the building and the effect of the proposal has been to bring it back into effective economic use, providing employment and representing a significant commercial and financial investment.
- 2.13 The planning policy framework against which the proposal is to be assessed is set out in both national planning policy and in the Camden LDF. At a **national** level the clear thrust of planning policy and the emerging Government agenda is to encourage economic growth, investment and the creation of employment opportunities. This general policy support is further strengthened where this can be done whilst bringing about the reuse of derelict and vacant floorspace in sustainable and accessible locations
- 2.14 At a **local** level policy contained within the Camden Core Strategy makes it clear that the aim is for a stronger local economy, to support businesses that contribute to economic growth. Policy seeks to direct growth and investment to appropriately sustainable locations. With particular regard to the SSR proposal the Strategy document states that

- it will seek to enhance access to education and training opportunities for the residents of the Borough
- it recognises and encourages (particular at policy CS8) the concentration of creative and cultural businesses within the Borough

The Strategy also seeks to retain and enhance the architectural and historic fabric of the Borough through sympathetic re-use of existing buildings

3. Appraisal and Conclusions

- 3.1 The assessment of the acceptability or otherwise of the proposed change of use can be considered in both principle and detail. In the light of the background review set out above, it is possible to conclude on both matters as set out below.
- 3.2 In terms of the **principle** of the proposal it is clear that the proposed use of the floorspace within a Class D1 use would be entirely supported by national and local planning policy. The proposal would allow for the refurbishment and re-use of existing space, in a sustainable location and delivering economic and employment benefit. Furthermore the creative and media sector within which SSR operates is one which is actively acknowledged and encouraged by the Core Strategy. In all respects therefore the principle of the proposed use can only be considered acceptable.
- 3.3 In terms of the detail of the proposed change of use it is evident that there are no operational matters which would suggest that the change of use should not be considered appropriate. The key points which underpin this conclusion are as follows:
- as set out above the use has been operating for some time without any conflict or issue with neighbouring occupiers. This demonstrates that the proposal is compatible with and appropriate for its location.
 - In essence the proposal is virtually akin to the existing approved B1 type use, notwithstanding that the educational element raises the need for a change of use
 - the clients who attend for teaching and education generate no material concerns. They almost wholly utilise public transport and generate no parking or traffic concerns. The entrance and exit to the building is via public streets and access arrangements which generates no issue for any neighbouring occupiers.
 - pedestrian access to and movement within the building is available to all
 - the character of the area is mixed, with a significant proportion of business and commercial uses with the attendant associated activity. The proposal would accord with this general character without detriment.
- 3.4 In addition the proposal has had the benefit of sympathetically restoring and bringing back into active use a virtually derelict floor in a listed building to the benefit of the building and the historic fabric of the wider area.
- 3.5 In conclusion therefore it is considered that both the principle and the detail of the proposed change of use is acceptable when considered against the policy framework. The proposed change of use will allow a successful and long established business to make a full and valid contribution within the creative and media sector which is specifically identified by the Council as a key priority.
- 3.6 On this basis it is concluded that there are no materially adverse considerations which would arise and as such a grant of permission for the proposed change should be made.