

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		29/05/2012	
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		10/05/2012	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Gideon Whittingham				2012/1619/P			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
40 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3PH				Refer to draft decision notice			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
Change of use of basement floor from office (Class B1) to therapy use (Class D1).							
Recommendation(s):		Grant Planning Permission					
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	13	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		A site notice was displayed from 13/04/2012 (expiring 04/05/2012) and a public notice was displayed in the local press (Ham & High) from 19/04/2012 (expiring 10/05/2012).					
CAAC/Local groups comments:		The Bloomsbury CAAC – ‘no comment’.					

Site Description

The application property is a four-storey (plus basement) mid-terraced building located on the South side of Great Russell Street. The ground floor is currently in use as a bureau de change, the first and second floors are in office use and the third floor is in residential use. The basement, for which this application relates, is authorised as an office.

The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of uses including residential, office and retail. The building is part of the Museum Street Area Protected Retail Frontage.

Relevant History

2005/2201 – PP Granted - for the change of use from showroom/office (Class B1) to 2 x 1-bed residential flats (Class C3) at first and second floor level and the erection of a four storey plus basement rear extension including rear roof terrace at first floor level.

2006/4395 –PP Granted – for the continued use of the basement for office (class B1) purposes.

2010/6917 - PP Granted –renewal of permission for the change of use from showroom/office (Class B1) to 2 x 1-bed residential flats (Class C3) at first and second floor level and the erection of a four storey plus basement rear extension including rear roof terrace at first floor level.

Relevant policies

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

LDF Core Strategy

- CS1 – Distribution of growth
- CS5 – Managing the impact of growth and development
- CS8 – Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy
- CS9 – Achieving a successful Central London Borough of Camden
- CS10 – Supporting community facilities and services
- CS11 – Promoting sustainable and efficient travel
- CS14 – Promoting high quality places and conserving heritage / conservation areas

LDF Development Policies

- DP13 – Employment premises and sites
- DP15 – Community and leisure uses
- DP16 - The transport implications of development
- DP17 – Walking, cycling and public transport
- DP19 - Managing the impact of parking
- DP26 - Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours

Camden Planning Guidance 2011

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

NPPF 2012

Assessment

1. Proposal:

1.1 The application proposes:

-The change of use of the existing basement floor level of the building, approximately 36 sqm, authorised as an office within Class B1 (see history) use to a therapy centre within Class D1 (Non-residential Institutions) use.

1.2 No external alterations are proposed forming part of this application

1.3 The main issues for consideration are:

- The loss of the existing business use;
- The satisfactory provision of community/leisure use
- The impact that the proposal may have upon the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties; and

2. Loss of the existing business use

2.1 The Council's development policy DP13 seeks to retain land and buildings that are suitable for continued use. 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 higher priority for retaining flexible space that is suitable for a variety of business uses. 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, or community uses, except in Hatton Garden where we will expect mixed use developments that include light industrial premises suitable for use as jewellery workshops.

2.2 The application site has indicated that the narrow corridors and restricted circulation space of the basement floor level would limit the potential of the building to be used for other employment uses. The basement is artificially lit, due to a lack of windows and therefore lacks access to day/sunlight or an outlook. In terms of access to the basement, there is only one entrance into the property at ground floor level. Two doors off to the right of an internal passage lead into the ground floor retail area. Further into the building a door across the passage secures access to stairs leading to upper floors and another door off to the right leads to the basement. The applicant has also indicated that the premises has been vacant for over twelve months and has actively been marketed since January 2011. The applicant has provided copy of marketing material for the property in the form of an online advertisement, although no further evidence has been provided, for example to demonstrate how long the property was marketed for. However, this information does provide some indication that the property may not be viable for future B1a office use.

2.3 The design and access statement provided with the application emphasises that market conditions are currently difficult and that the previous tenants had not used the site as an office (Class B1), but rather as a mini-cab office (Sui Generis).

2.4 Within this context, it is considered that the site is constrained, to an extent, to provide a suitable employment use. Thus the loss of the B1 use at the site has been sufficiently demonstrated and complies with DP13 in that it involves a loss of B1a office and change to a community use.

3. Provision of community use

3.1 In accordance with DP15, it is considered that a community/leisure use is a suitable alternative to traditional employment use where there is little or no prospect of such a use continuing in the future. This continues to provide employment and also provide training for its students who in turn can potentially provide support to the local or wider economy.

3.2 The applicant has stated the D1 (Non-residential institutions) use would provide therapeutic

treatments including massage, acupuncture, cupping, infra-red treatments, 'Rieki' treatments and aromatherapy, all considered to fall within Class D1 use.

3.3 Class D1 also includes a wide variety of uses, including places of worship and museums. It would ordinarily be possible to change between different types of D1 use without the need for planning permission. Such other class D1 uses could generate different impacts on the local area than a therapy treatment use. For example, more concentrated traffic generation and noise disturbance for the local area could be associated with a place of worship or school. It is therefore considered that it would be appropriate to restrict the permission to medical use (including surgeries and therapy centres) only, through the use of a planning condition, in order to remove the ability to change to other D1 without planning permission. This would allow the Council to manage any potential impacts associated with a possible change to another type of D1 use.

3.4 The proposed D1 use would generate employment benefits, creating 5 jobs at the premises. It is considered that the proposals would represent an improvement on the existing situation by providing employment opportunities at currently vacant premises. As required under policy DP15, the site would provide an appropriate location for a community/leisure use as it is accessible by a range of public transport modes, including walking, cycling and public transport, and is located in the central London area.

3.5 It is therefore considered that, on balance, the proposed change of use would be acceptable.

4.0 Neighbour amenity

4.1 It is considered, that the proposed D1 use would not generate significant additional impacts on the amenity of local residents, in terms of noise or traffic generation when compared to the existing office use. Due to the limited size of the basement floor level (36 sqm) and the limited impact of the proposed use, it is not considered necessary to impose any conditions on the opening hours of the premises. It will have no impact on the character of the conservation area.

Recommendation: Grant Planning permission

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