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| Address: | 25-27 & 29 Sicilian Avenue London WC1A 2QH | |
| Application Number: | 2011/2254/P | Officer: Angela Ryan |
| Ward: | Holborn & Covent Garden | |
| Date Received: | 20/04/2011 | |
| Proposal: Change of use of unit 29 from retail (Class A1) to restaurant (Class A3) use and amalgamation with units 25-27 (existing use Class A3) to form a single enlarged restaurant unit (Class A3). | | |
| Drawing Numbers: 8900 LO1_002_00; (03)010 Rev 01; (03)300 Rev 01; (03)301 Rev 02; (03)302 Rev 04; (03)303 Rev 02; (03)304 Rev 02; (03)305 Rev 02; (04)300; (04)301; (04)302; (04)303 Rev 01; (04)304 Rev 01; (05)300;(05)301 Rev 01; (05)302; (05)303 Rev 01; (40)300 Rev 01; (40)301 Rev 01; (40)302; (57)300 Rev 01; (57)301 Rev 02; (57)302 Rev 02; (57)303 Rev 03; (57)304; | | |
| RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Grant Planning Permission | | |
| Date of related Application: | 20/04/06 | |
| Application Number: | 2011/2256/L | |
| Proposal: Internal and external alterations in connection with the change of use of unit 29 from retail (Class A1) to restaurant (Class A3) use and amalgamation with units 25-27 (existing use Class A3) to form a single enlarged restaurant unit (Class A3). | | |
| 8900 LO1_002_00; (03)010 Rev 01; (03)300 Rev 01; (03)301 Rev 02; (03)302 Rev 04; (03)303 Rev 02; (03)304 Rev 02; (03)305 Rev 02; (04)300; (04)301; (04)302; (04)303 Rev 01; (04)304 Rev 01; (05)300;(05)301 Rev 01; (05)302; (05)303 Rev 01; (40)300 Rev 01; (40)301 Rev 01; (40)302; (57)300 Rev 01; (57)301 Rev 02; (57)302 Rev 02; (57)303 Rev 03; (57)304; | | |
| RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: (2) Grant Listed Building consent | | |
| Applicant: | Agent: | |
| Holborn Links Ltd Fao. Martin Wright 1 Southampton Row London WC1B 5HA | Tate & Hindle Design Ltd., 1 Lindsey Street LONDON EC1 9HP | |

ANALYSIS INFORMATION

| Land Use Details: | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|
| | Use Class | Use Description | Floorspace |
| | | | |

| | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Existing | <i>A1 Shop</i> | <i>62m²</i> |
| | <i>A3 Restaurants and Cafes</i> | <i>91.7m²</i> |
| Proposed | <i>A3 Restaurants and Cafes</i> | <i>146.6m²</i> |

OFFICERS' REPORT

Reason for Referral to Committee:

This application is being referred under part 3 (iv) involving the change of use, the extension to the floorspace of a class A3, A4 or A5 use

1. SITE

- 1.1 The site at nos. 25-27 Sicilian Avenue comprises a 5 storey plus basement building with commercial use on the ground floor (retail shop and a restaurant) and office premises located on the upper floors. There are some residential units within the 5th floor of the adjoining building known as Vernon House and three units on the 5th floor in the building opposite at 31 Southampton Row. No. 29 Sicilian Avenue is also five storeys and wraps around the corner to Bloomsbury Way. The unit is currently being used for a temporary site office, but has an authorised use for retail. The site adjoins Vernon House an existing office building with ground floor lobby, which provides access into the courtyard elevation.
- 1.2 The buildings are grade II listed and lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The buildings are noted as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal involves two properties nos. 25-27 Sicilian Avenue and no. 29 Sicilian Avenue. In terms of nos. 25-27 Sicilian Avenue, the applicant seeks to amalgamate the two existing A3 units to form a single enlarged A3 restaurant, the space measures approximately 56.7m² at ground floor level and 35m² at basement level. At present the two restaurants are separated by a partition wall. In terms of no. 29 Sicilian Avenue the applicant seeks to change the use from retail use (Class A1) to restaurant use (Class A3), this unit measures 25m² at ground floor level and 37m² at basement level. The unit is currently vacant, and is being used as a temporary site office. The proposal would result in the creation of a 146.6m² restaurant. The basement areas are currently used for storage. The objective of the proposal is for the purpose of improving the quality of tenancies to secure use of the buildings
- 2.2 The site is owned by Holborn Links Limited who manages a 4acre plot bounded by High Holborn to the south, Vernon place to the North, Bloomsbury Court to the west and Southampton Row to the east. It includes Sicilian Avenue which has junctions with Southampton Row and Vernon Place. The Holborn Links Estate provides a wide range of land uses, including retail, residential and offices.

2.3 Works will entail, general refurbishment, knocking through partition walls and re-configuring the internal layout and creating openings to providing routes for future ducting. It also proposed to refurbish the existing shopfronts

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

3.1 In 1999- permission granted for change of use of ground floors of no. 25 from A1 retail to A3 (food and drink) use; together with the change of use of the ground floor and basement of no. 27 from cafe/sandwich bar to A3 (food and drink) use (Ref: PS9805005R2)

3.2 In 1999- listed building consent granted for works of lateral conversion on the ground floors in connection with the change of use to A3 (food and drink) use at no.25 Sicilian Avenue(Ref: LS9805006R2)

4. CONSULTATIONS

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

4.1 **Bloomsbury CAAC:** Raises objections on the ground that the loss of yet another retail unit and part of the original design of this unique development would further erode the character of the conservation area and should be resisted.

4.2 Adjoining Occupiers

| | Original |
|---|----------|
| <i>Number of letters sent</i> | 29 |
| <i>Total number of responses received</i> | 1 |
| <i>Number of electronic responses</i> | 1 |
| <i>Number in support</i> | 0 |
| <i>Number of objections</i> | 1 |

4.3 The owner/occupier of no. 31 Pied Bull Court, Galen Place has objected to the proposals on the following grounds:-

- The site notice was only made visible or appeared to have been displayed on the 14/07/11 (**Officer's response:** The notice was first displayed on 17/06/11)
- The construction outside the spaghetti house restaurant is a type of marquee which enables cover over the restaurant tables and chairs. It appears to be of a permanent nature which effectively has cut off 50% of the thoroughfare which interferes with the pedestrian flow and poses a safety risk. It is ugly and obtrusive and destroys the character and ambience of Sicilian Avenue (**Officer's response:** The application does not relate to Spaghetti House (Which occupies nos. 14-20 Sicilian Avenue). There is an existing canopy at this application site which is to be replaced but this only extends over the shop unit's existing forecourt.
- Proposal flies in the face of public interest and favours only a single restaurant 5.

5 **POLICIES**

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

5.1 **Core strategy:**

- **CS5-** (Managing the impact of growth and development)
- **CS7-** (Promoting Camden's centres and shops)
- **CS8-** (Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy)
- **CS9-** (Achieving a successful Central London Borough of Camden)
- **CS14-** (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage)

5.2 **Development policies:**

- **DP10-** (Helping and promoting small independent shops)
- **DP12-** (Supporting strong centres and managing the impact of food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses)
- **DP24** – (Securing high quality design)
- **DP25** – (Conserving Camden's heritage)
- **DP26** – (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours)

5.2 **Supplementary Planning Policies**

- Camden Planning Guidance 2006
- Camden Planning Guidance (2011 Phase 1)
- Draft Bloomsbury Conservation Management Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)

6. **ASSESSMENT**

6.1 The principle considerations material to the determination of the application are summarised as follows: -

- Principle of the land use- Increase of floorspace in the food and drink use;
- Design- Impacts on the listed building the character and appearance of the conservation area; and
- Amenity- Impact on neighbours and surrounding occupiers
- Sustainability

Land use

6.2 The site is not within a designated retail area zone, but is located in the Central London area, where policy seeks to promote a mix of uses as part of a successful and vibrant part of London to live, and work in and to visit. The use of nos. 25-27 Sicilian Avenue will not change as both premises are currently being used for restaurants (Class A3). The amalgamation would result in the loss of the original small scale units. A similar scheme was previously approved at the corner units on the opposite end of the Avenue at nos. 2-6 Sicilian Avenue & 27 Southampton Row. Moreover the vacant unit at no 29 Sicilian Avenue has been vacant since 2008 and the applicant has conveyed that there is a lack of interest in using the space for retail which is the authorised use.

6.3 In terms of the proposed change of use of no. 29 from retail to restaurant use policies CS7 and DP10 are relevant as they seek to promote and protect retail uses in specific areas such as the Central London Area of which the site forms a part.

Policy DP10 does make exceptions for the loss of retail where alternative provision is available within 5-10 minutes walking distance. The site is within close proximity to and is less than a 5 minute walk to the existing shopping parade along High Holborn, which lies within a designated Central London Frontage which serves a similar function to town centres. There is also shopping facilities and a street market on Leather Lane which is within a 10 minute walk. There are 6 existing retail units along Sicilian Avenue. This site together with the existing restaurant at 14-20 Sicilian Avenue (Sphagetti House) are the only two A3 uses within the avenue. There is not a cluster/concentration of A3 uses along this part of High Holborn as a majority of the units are in retail use. Given the above it is considered that the cumulative impact of A3 uses in the locality is insignificant.

- 6.4 Policy DP10 also makes an exception to a net loss of retail floorspace where development within the Central London Area positively contributes to the local character, function, viability and amenity. The proposal is considered to do this as it would result in enhancement to the building's fabric through the general repair and refurbishment of all the shopfronts and bring an otherwise vacant building back into beneficial use. DP12 seeks to ensure that the development of food, drink and other town centre uses does not harm the character, function, viability and vitality of the local area. The development is considered to sit well with the existing mixture of uses within the Avenue, retail, food and drink, offices and residential and therefore the change of use is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Design/works to the listed building

- 6.5 Externally the works would refurbish and improve the appearance of the existing shopfronts. Level access into the units will be retained, and all three doorways are to be retained also, with the dilapidated one at no. 29 Sicilian Avenue being replaced with a solid hardwood oak door. The awning is to be replaced in line with the previously agreed 'signage strategy' defines signage types, locations, sizes and specification of materials to ensure consistent level of aesthetic quality throughout the Avenue.
- 6.6 The greatest impact on the buildings is at nos. 25-27 Sicilian Avenue by virtue of the amalgamation of the units to create an enlarged unit. This would result in the loss of some historic fabric, namely the internal load-bearing partition wall between the existing units. However, given the size of the Avenue compared to the amount of loss it is considered to be minimal and therefore not harmful as enough of the historic fabric will be retained. The opening would retain nibs and columns, thereby suitably allowing the original forms of the wall to be recognized. No decorative features or other features of architectural interest would be affected by the works at either floor level (ground and basement). The replacement of the non-original wc door would not harm the plan form of the building at no. 27. The existing staircase at no. 27 is considered to be of no historic merit and the proposed new staircase balustrade is considered to be suitable.
- 6.7 The loss of the internal basement walls between 25-27 and 29 Sicilian Avenue, and the installation of openings in the wall to accommodate a route for future ducting are considered to be acceptable as it would not result in the loss of any historic fabric.

- 6.8 The enlargement of this end of terrace unit is consistent with what has been established in terms of the corner units on both sides of the terrace. The developer's objective is to achieve larger 'gateway' units as a draw to passing pedestrians at the entrances to the arcade – two of which are already established on the corners on the opposite side at nos.4-6 and 14-20 Sicilian Avenue. Therefore it is considered that the increased A3 unit would be in keeping and would not harm the character and appearance of the conservation Area, particularly due to the fact that the extended part of the restaurant at no. 29 Sicilian Avenue's frontage is on Bloomsbury way reducing its impact even further.
- 6.9 The proposed works would not harm the special interest of the listed building or the character and appearance of the conservation area and complies with the relevant policies.

Amenity

- 6.10 Policies DP12 and DP26 seeks to ensure that development proposals do not have any adverse impact on the amenity of its neighbours. The site is located in a mixed-use area, where there is a predominance of commercial uses on the ground floors. There are residential premises within the vicinity of the site one on the 5th floor of the adjoining building to the south of (Vernon House) and three on the 5th floor of the building opposite the site at no. 31 Southampton Row. The immediately adjoining premises on Bloomsbury Way are commercial including on upper floors. The A3 use exists and is currently in operation at 25-27 Sicilian Avenue, therefore the additional affect on the area to be considered is from the change of use and amalgamation of no. 29.
- 6.11 The existing kitchen in the basement of nos 25-27 will be retained to the same size and location as that which is exists. All the flue equipment will be located internally at basement levels in both buildings. Details of the flue arrangement will be secured via a condition as the end user has not yet been identified and the final fit-out will be left in the occupier's domain. It is not envisaged that the enlarged premises (an increase of 62m² of floorspace) would give rise to any significant levels in noise or air pollution. The existing duct for gas intake and lift motor rooms would need to be re-routed, but will be extracted externally as existing into the courtyard area.
- 6.12 Refuse collections for the avenue are arranged with Camden Council, and are carried to an agreed collection point at the south end of the avenue on Southampton Row twice daily, six days per week. This arrangement will continue for the refurbished units 25-29. Servicing will continue to be via the south end of the avenue off Southampton Row with produce being moved to the specific unit via a trolley. There is no vehicle access on the avenue.
- 6.13 The operating times are to be confirmed by the prospective tenant, but are based on being open from 7.30am to 12.00 midnight. This is in accordance with para. 6.20 of Camden's revised planning guidance for central London (Food, Drink and Entertainment, Specialist and Retail Uses) 2007. It is recommended that these hours be restricted to the maximum opening times by a condition attached to any grant of permission.

Sustainability:

- 6.14 Council guidance in CPG section 4 requires that at least 10% of the project cost should be spent on improvements to the energy efficiency rating of a building that is subject to a change of use. As stated previously this application involves a change of use of no. 29 from retail to restaurant use involving a floor area of 30sqm or more and therefore the section 4 requirement would apply. The application site is grade II listed and it is acknowledged that the special features need to be conserved and therefore need to be treated sensitively. An appropriate condition will be attached to the decision notice requiring the applicant to submit a sustainability statement indicating the proposed energy efficiency measures that would be installed to meet the above requirement.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal overall complies with the relevant policies contained in Camden's Local Development Framework and is in accordance with the relevant CPG's and Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy. It would secure refurbishment of the existing shopfronts that would make a positive contribution to the aesthetic quality of the area and also bring an otherwise vacant dilapidated building (no. 29 Sicilian Avenue) back into beneficial use contributing to the vitality and vibrancy of the existing streetscape.
- 7.2 Given the above it is recommended that planning permission and listed building consent is granted.

8. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 Members are referred to the note from the Legal Division at the start of the Agenda.