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Daylight/Sunlight

BRE DAYLIGHT & SUNLIGHT REPORT
IN RESPECT OF THE
REDEVELOPMENT OF
5/7 BUCK STREET, LONDON NW1 8NJ

by

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of

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF REPORT

- 1.1 We are instructed by Starcourt Developments Limited to advise on the potential impact and further testing and assessment required as a result of the redevelopment of the site known as 5/7 Buck Street, London NW1 in respect of the Amenity Policy in the Replacement UDP of the London Borough of Camden. In the context of the Council's policy in connection with "amenity" the principal objective of their amenity policy is to ensure that new development does not materially or adversely affect the daylight and sunlight to habitable rooms within existing neighbouring dwellings. The area around the Application Site is in mixed use with a combination of commercial offices/workplaces, educational establishments in the form of the Open University and Hawley Infant and Nursery School, and various residential dwellings in the upper parts of Lawrence House, 1-11 Hawley Crescent and on the opposite (south west) side of Stucley Place.
- 1.2 In assessing the potential impact of the proposals, the Council's policy applies the standards recommended in the Building Research Establishment (BRE) Guidelines *"Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A Guide to Good Practice"* 1991. Those Guidelines contain a number of well established tests for daylight, sunlight and overshadowing.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to identify where those tests should be applied together with the nature of those tests. It is envisaged that a more detailed analysis and report containing empirical calculations is to follow.

2. INFORMATION RELIED UPON

- 2.1 We have been provided with copies of the Calvert Kemp Project Management drawing numbers 143.1pm-EX001, EX002, EX003 and CP001 illustrating the existing buildings on the site and proposed redevelopment. We have also undertaken an initial site inspection.

3. THE RELEVANT BRE TESTS

Daylight

- 3.1 The Council's policy in connection with amenity is measured objectively by use of the scientific and empirical measurements contained in the BRE Guidelines. These are the standards that are generally adopted for assessing the impact on "amenity" in the context of daylight and sunlight for planning purposes and are also the standards adopted by the Planning Inspectorate at appeal.
- 3.2 Those Guidelines contain an initial Rule of Thumb for assessing whether a more detailed analysis is required. That "Rule of Thumb" is a simple trigonometric angle test where a proposed development is unlikely to have any material impact on the availability of daylight to neighbouring premises provided that it does not breach a vertical angle subtended at 25 degrees from the horizontal, taking the mid point of the lowest window serving a habitable room in the neighbouring existing building as the origin. That 25 degree rule is a very simple and crude test and should only be applied where the proposed obstruction is directly opposite and parallel to the plane of the window being tested. In the present circumstances, the Application Site lies within a "land locked" site surrounded by various existing buildings of differing heights and "massing". The simple 25 degree angle test is therefore entirely inappropriate.

- 3.3 Where more detail numerical testing is required, the most appropriate test from the Guidelines is the measurement of Vertical Sky Component on the face of the lowest windows under “existing” and “proposed” conditions. The VSC is a “spot” measurement taken on the face of the window and takes no account of the size of the window or the size of the room being assessed. It should therefore be followed by the calculation and plotting of internal daylight distribution contours within each of the rooms by plotting the “no skyline” contour.
- 3.4 These daylight tests only apply to habitable rooms within residential dwellings. A habitable room is defined as a living room, kitchen or bedroom. Bathrooms, hallways and circulation space are excluded. Further attention should be given to the definition of a kitchen as a habitable room. That is, a kitchen should be classed as a habitable room where it is large enough to accommodate an additional use apart from food preparation such as dining or as a dayroom. The accepted threshold area is 13m² excluding fixtures and fittings. Where a kitchen is incorporated into a living room or dining room to form an open plan area, the dominant use should dictate the standard of light required.

Sunlight

3.5 For sunlight, as the United Kingdom is in the northern hemisphere, sunlight is received from the south and the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. The relevant test date for sunlight is the spring equinox at which time the United Kingdom receives twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness. On that test date, sunlight is only available where a window faces within 90 degrees of due south. In addition, sunlight need only be tested where the proposed development lies to the south of the window in question. Although sunlight is desirable in all habitable rooms, greater emphasis is usually placed on living rooms with a lesser requirement for kitchens and bedrooms.

4. APPLICATION OF THE COUNCIL'S POLICY

4.1 Having undertaken an external inspection of the site and the neighbouring buildings, we have identified that the extent of residential dwellings in close proximity to the site that could fall within the BRE testing criteria comprise the following:

- The upper parts (third and fourth floors) of Lawrence House, 1-11 Hawley Crescent.
- Parts of 9-16 Stucley Place to the south west of the site.

4.2 The habitable rooms within those premises will therefore need to be tested for Vertical Sky Component and internal daylight distribution in order to assess the impact on daylight. For sunlight, it will only be necessary to test the south facing windows in the dwellings in Lawrence House as those windows face within 90 degrees of due south. The windows in 9-16 Stucley Place with a direct outlook over the Site face north east and therefore do not fall within the BRE sunlight criteria.

4.3 The BRE Guidelines are generally only applied to habitable rooms within residential dwellings. There are however other non-domestic uses where daylight and sunlight should be safeguarded. These other non-domestic uses include Schools, Hospital lying-in wards and other forms of cultural and community uses where there is a specific requirement for natural light such as Galleries, Museums and places of worship. In the present circumstances, Hawley Infant and Nursery School lies to the east of the site and Lawrence House to the north of the site is occupied by the Open University. It will therefore be necessary to determine whether each of those buildings has rooms that are used as classrooms or seminar rooms overlooking the site rather than conventional offices or ancillary uses.

4.4 The main playground of Hawley Infant and Nursery School lies to the east of the main School building but appears to extend around to the north of the existing School building. If that part of the hardstanding area is used as part of the School playground, it will be classed as "amenity" space and it will therefore be necessary for the School playground to be analysed in respect of permanent overshadowing.

4.5 Having identified the various issues that will need to be addressed to demonstrate the potential impact of the proposals, we are presently awaiting further survey information and confirmation of instructions to undertake the detailed empirical tests so that the scheme can be assessed against the Council's policy requirements.



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Kaivin Wong

4 February 2008