

Our Ref: MD/JLH0652  
Your Ref:

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Date: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006

Planning  
Development Control  
Camden Town Hall  
Argyle Street  
London  
WC1H 8ND

Dear Sirs

**REDAB FARRINGDON LTD**

**APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF  
THE LOWER GROUND, GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR OF 77-79 FARRINGDON ROAD  
TO B1 OFFICES WITH ASSOCIATED SHOWROOM**

**77-79 FARRINGDON ROAD, LONDON, EC1M 3JY**

On behalf of Redab Farringdon, we enclose a planning application for the change of use of the lower ground, ground and first floor of 77-79 Farringdon Road from B1 offices to B1 offices with associated showroom.

The planning application comprises six copies of the following:

1. Completed planning application forms, agricultural land holding and ownership certificates and notices. The completed forms include:  

Schedule 1 - List of Drawings and Plans Submitted;
2. Site Location Plan with the site outlined in red, Drawing No JLH0652-1;
3. Drawings No. JLH0652-2; Lower Ground Floor Plan;
4. Drawings No. JLH0652-3; Ground Floor Plan;
5. Drawings No. JLH0652-4; First Floor Plan; and
5. A cheque for the sum of £265 in respect of the application fee.

**a) Site and Surrounding Area**

The application site is an 8 storey unit, including a basement level, located at the junction of Farringdon Road and Saffron Street, within the London Borough of Camden. The main entrance to these premises is via an existing access on Farringdon Road.

Planning consent was granted at the site in August 2004 (application ref. no. PSX0205254) for the refurbishment and extensions to the rear and roof levels of the premises to provide additional B1 office space. These works have now been completed and the property has now been vacant for approximately 1 year.

The site is located within a very accessible location, with Farringdon Station approximately 50 metres from the site which is served by three underground lines, the Circle, Hammersmith and City and Metropolitan line. It is also within easy walking distance of Chancery Lane station which provides links to the Central line.

In addition to this, Farringdon station also provides the Thames Link rail service to Brighton and Gatwick. There are also numerous bus routes serving the area with main routes running along Charterhouse Street, Clerkenwell Road and Farringdon Road itself. The area is very well served for public transport links.

**b) The Proposal**

Redab Farringdon are currently seeking the change of use of part of their premises, the lower ground, ground and first floors of 77-79 Farringdon Road for use as B1 offices with associated showroom by Steelcase UK.

Steelcase UK currently occupy premises on Eversholt Street, also in the London Borough of Camden. The lease on Steelcases' current premises is due to expire in February 2007, and in anticipation of this, Steelcase are looking to relocate to the recently refurbished premises at 77-79 Farringdon Road, to occupy premises on the lower ground, ground and first floors of the building.

Steelcase UK are looking to occupy three floors of the property, the lower ground, ground and first floors and due to the nature of their operation, which is discussed in full below, a change of use of the premises is required from B1 offices to B1 offices with associated showroom. The showroom space is intended to provide customers with an image of their furniture in situ and this forms an integral part of their business operation.

The associated showroom space would occupy no more than a third of the floorspace of the Steelcase unit, covering three floors of the premises. The floorspace proposed on each floor has been set out in the table below for clarity and is also shown on drawing numbers JLH0652-2, JLH0652-3 and JLH0652-4.

<b>Floor</b>	<b>Floor area (sq.m)</b>	<b>Proposed floorspace</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>Proposed associated showroom floorspace</b>
<b>Lower Ground Floor</b>	319.5	30%		70%
<b>Ground Floor</b>	308	70%		30%
<b>First Floor</b>	333	100%		0%

As indicated on the drawings, the associated showroom floorspace proposed at ground floor level has been positioned along the facades of the property, to run along Farringdon Road and Saffron Street. This will provide Steelcase with the opportunity to provide an active street frontage along both Farringdon Road and Saffron Street and present the best image to customers.

**c) Steelcase Operation**

Steelcase UK are an office furniture manufacturer, who offer clients the opportunity to change their office environments through strategic consulting and planning of workspaces. Steelcase are an international company who design and produce bespoke office furniture to suit the needs of their individual clients.

Steelcase are now looking to relocate to 77-79 Farringdon Road and create a flagship premises for their UK operation. At present, the Eversholt Street premises is only one of 2 Steelcase units in the UK, with the second premises located in Waltham Cross.

Steelcase UK generally operate by reputation and global accounts. The main means by which orders are placed is via their designated Steelcase Dealerships. Each dealership has a proportion of office floorspace, from which the Steelcase operation is run, but interlinked with each dealership is a certain element of showroom space to provide customers with examples of their products in an office environment.

The majority of clients are existing clients and they would visit the Steelcase premises to view, by appointment only, the furniture designed by Steelcase. The vast majority of the products are available to view on the Steelcase website, however, given the nature of the bespoke products, it is necessary for clients to view and test the products before purchasing, and this is done at the dealerships.

The office space proposed at ground and lower ground floor level will be used by Steelcase employees as an open plan office and the remaining floorspace will display the office furniture for clients to view. Overall, the appearance of the lower ground and ground floor will be no different to that of a B1 office space as the products on display will be set up as operational office space. There are also elements of lounge and reception area products which will also be displayed within the space, but will be used as staff and visitor seating areas, performing dual functions.

An important element of Steelcase's operation that differs from that of a traditional showroom/retail operation is that no monies are exchanged or held on the premises. The dealership floorspace which is used as associated showroom performs the sole purpose of a viewing platform for clients and is intrinsically linked to Steelcase's business operation. Orders are placed at a later stage via telephone, all of which is done on the premises, hence two thirds of the premises are used as B1 offices, for dealing with the administrative element of the Steelcase operation.

Steelcase's main client base is situated in Central London and the premises at Farringdon Road offer the perfect viewing platform for their clients. As such, 30% of the ground floor is proposed to be used as a showroom along the facades of Farringdon Road and Saffron Street. This will also provide an active street frontage for the premises and make a positive contribution to the streetscene along Farringdon Road and Saffron Street. The visible product displays are intended to project a positive image to existing customers and attract future customers. However, it is not intended to attract the general public as the product is aimed purely at high-end corporate clients.

In addition all furniture is produced off the premises and delivered straight to the clients once orders have been placed.

#### **d) Policy Considerations**

The prime emphasis of the Unitary Development Plan in relation to business uses within the borough is for the retention and enhancement of such premises. These proposals accord with the ethos of these policies in that they are providing for the retention of an existing business in the borough and bringing a currently vacant building back into business use. Steelcase has approximately 50 employees, all of whom will be relocated to the Farringdon Road premises.

As such the proposals are considered to be in accordance with the Unitary Development Plan.

**e) Pre Application Discussions**

Initial discussions were held with Stuart Minty of Camden Planning department regarding the above proposal. Following a discussion and overview of the Steelcase operation, he agreed that the proposed change of use at the premises on Farringdon Road would not constitute a loss of employment floorspace based on two principles:

- The majority of the floorspace at the premises would be retained for office use; and
- Should Steelcase choose to vacate the premises, the unit is able to be retained principally as offices for future occupiers without prejudice to the site.

**f) Deliveries**

Steelcase would require two deliveries to be made to the premises each week, namely to deliver new furniture which has been designed off the premises. Following a conversation with Greg Rogers from your Parking Solutions Team, it was established that Saffron Street has a single yellow line, which has a maximum 20 minute loading time.

Steelcase are able to adhere to these restrictions and given the limited deliveries per week to the site, no designated loading and unloading bay is required as part of the proposals for the site.

**g) Summary**

In summary, the proposed change of use of the Farringdon Road premises to B1 offices with associated showroom is acceptable in UDP policy terms. It will not lead to the loss of business floorspace within the borough and is ensuring the retention of a valuable employer in the borough. The proposal as a whole seeks to occupy currently vacant premises and provide an active street frontage along both Farringdon Road and Saffron Street. Our initial discussions with the planning department have indicated that the proposal is acceptable and as such I trust that the application can be approved.

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the enclosed application has been registered and validated. Please let me know if you require any further information or wish to make arrangements to visit the site.

Yours faithfully



Mandip Dhillon  
Planner

Enc.

c.c.	CG Petterson	-	Redab Farringdon
	Adrian Crooks	-	JLL
	Emma Mitchell	-	Steelcase UK
	Peter Dewar	-	Crossland Otter Hunt