

SHARPE PRITCHARD

Solicitors and Parliamentary Agents

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11 May 2006

Dear Sirs

**Re: Application for Planning Permission
Elizabeth House, 4-7 Fulwood Place, London, WC1V 6HG**

On behalf of the Applicant and "owner" of the above premises, I enclose 4 copies of a planning application form with the relevant number of documents mentioned in the check list on that form.

I also enclose a Conservation Area application form with the documents referred to in the check list in that document.

In addition to the applications, and in support of them, I would ask you to please take account of and consider the following matters:-

You will be familiar with the application premises in Fulwood Place.

Fulwood Place is a small pedestrianised passageway with an entrance on High Holborn roughly at the junction of Chancery Lane and High Holborn. The other entrance at the opposite end leads to Grays Inn/Field Court. That entrance is locked in the evenings from around 8.00 pm and at the weekend and bank holidays. Fulwood Place is of a "off street" pedestrianised nature and accordingly often attracts rough sleepers/vagrants. They usually appear in the evening and meet up with other rough sleepers/vagrants. Some of them spend the night in Fulwood Place.

In addition to these off street pedestrianised features, some of the properties in Fulwood Place have recessed entrances. Elizabeth House, as you will see from the photographs accompanying the application forms, has such an entrance. you will appreciate this kind of entrance provides shelter for the rough sleepers/vagrants – particularly in the winter months. As a matter of policy I understand that Camden no longer permits new build premises to have such a type of entrance. It is not uncommon for them to "set up camp" in the evening in the entrance to Elizabeth House and spend the night there. They only move on when asked to by the first members of staff who open up the office in the morning of the next working day.

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The rough sleepers and vagrants leave behind them a certain amount of debris such as broken cardboard boxes, empty beer cans and bottles of spirits. They use the entrance and the immediate surrounding area of Elizabeth House as a toilet.

As you will gather this means that members of our staff have to clear away this debris and have to clean and disinfect the entrance and the immediate surrounding area before most of the staff and clients of our business come to Elizabeth House.

In addition to dealing with the mess that the vagrants/rough sleepers leave behind, it is very intimidating for members of staff to try and move these people on or try to negotiate an entrance to the premises by stepping over them. Some vagrants and rough sleepers have been aggressive and abusive when attempts have been made to move them on. On occasions we have called the Police to move these people on but usually it is left to members of staff to deal with them.

Some of our staff, particularly women, find trying to get into the office whilst these people are sleeping in the entrance to be very intimidating. This year, during the winter, one female member of staff arrived at the office in the early morning only to find that the entrance was blocked by two sleeping vagrants. She did not wish to approach them and had to wait outside the office for 45 minutes before a male member of staff arrived to clear them off.

The Council has recognised this problem in Fulwood Place over the years and has sent its own rough sleeper liaison staff to the office. Also, it used to send its contractors to wash down Fulwood Place every morning.

From the above, and your own information, I imagine the Council will agree that there is a problem in Fulwood Place. Having investigated this problem, it occurs to us that the only realistic and effective way of preventing rough sleeping is to erect some kind of moveable barrier to the entrance of Elizabeth House which can be opened whilst the office is open, and closed when the office is locked up – namely after 9.00 pm Monday to Friday, all of the weekend and on bank holidays.

In terms of barriers there are basically two options:-

The first is a lattice grill running the length of the entrance to Elizabeth House. This type of grill is opened and closed by hand and runs on rails. Those rails can be cut into the step and that serves to secure the bottom of the grill. However, the top of the grill is secured by a permanently fixed heavy steel bar which runs the length of the grill and is secured into either side of the entrance walls. That supporting bar is visible at all times (irrespective of whether the lattice gate is open or closed). As you will appreciate, it cannot be integrated into the entrance and will be visually striking and unsightly.

Further, this type of grill is less secure than the second option, an electronic roller shutter.

This second option is, from an appearance point of view, more appealing than the first option because the equipment which houses it can be integrated into the structure of the entrance. It therefore would look less obtrusive when it is in its open position. It is also more secure than the lattice option and is easier and cheaper to maintain.

Option 2, therefore, would have a lesser visual impact than option 1. This is particularly important given that the fairly small number of people who walk through Fulwood Place do not use it as a destination location – rather they are on their way somewhere else and use it as a cut through to Grays Inn or, in the opposite direction, to High Holborn. Once the entrance to Gray's Inn is closed

(not earlier than 8.00 pm on normal working days), the number of people in and using Fulwood Place is very small indeed. It is that small number of people who would see the option 2 roller shutter in its closed position, the larger number of day time pedestrians using Fulwood Place would see it in its less prominent open position.

The impact of the option 2 equipment could be minimised even further by powder coating it in cream paint – being the predominant colour of the entrance to Fulwood Place.

The roller shutter will only impact visually on the small numbers of people who use Fulwood Place and, as indicated above, that impact will be minimised by the factors indicated above. Namely the equipment which houses the roller shutter can be discretely set into the entrance; it will be painted in the same predominant colour as the entrance; the shutter is not prominent when it is open and it will be open from around 7.00 am to 9.00 pm Monday to Friday; most of the people who use Fulwood Place and pass Elizabeth House will, therefore, see it in its open position. None of these factors apply to the much busier and visually prominent junction of Chancery Lane and High Holborn and at this junction there is a property which has a option 2 roller shutter in place and has for many years. I believe this property is 37 to 39 High Holborn. On the basis that planning consent for that roller shutter has been granted, it would not be unreasonable to consider that there is a good case for granting permission for a much less prominent location like Elizabeth House in Fulwood Place.

If you have any queries on the application forms or their attachments or this letter please feel free to telephone me.

Yours sincerely

L. C. Ricciardiello

Enc.