

3.0 Character of the Holmes Road Context

Heterogenous nature

Holmes Road is an area of mixed use, scale and character. There are Victorian buildings alongside areas in a state of flux with some sites under construction whilst planning proposals are being considered on others. This dynamic aspect of the area has been considered along with the existing buildings and is the context for any current proposal in terms of both the physical and social character of Holmes Road. Holmes Road is both a through route and a destination for both pedestrians and vehicles. Passers-by, parents with kids, college students, local residents, local workers, people going to or from the shops all frequent Holmes Road. The street is rich in the variety of people and purpose. The architectural landscape reflects this difference however the area lacks coherence and any built examples of high quality contemporary design.

From the south east approach to the site, directly off Kentish Town Road the variety of scales, materials, designs and uses are clearly apparent. Buildings encountered include a residential 3 storey brick terrace, a Police Station and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School.



Opposite the application site is the recently completed no. 59, PES Group building. From this end of Holmes Road, the PES building is considered to provide the most immediate context to our proposal, particularly in terms of scale. The building is 5 storeys high (approx 5 ½ domestic storeys) with the top storey being a plant room.

There are a number of sites/buildings that are derelict or under construction. This includes no. 32/34 which received planning approval for a mixed use development that is being built at present. In addition, the former Pugh glass works site to the north of the proposal had a recent approval for a mixed use 7 storey student residents development with commercial floorspace on the ground floor – the proposal is currently under construction. This development is indicative of the changing social and physical make-up of the area.

Approaching the site from the opposite end of Holmes Road from Spring Place, the George IV public house stands proud with its window boxes, hanging baskets and climbing ivy. Neighbouring this is Westminster Kingsway College, with its Victorian mix of London stock and red bricks, with contrasting white window frames.



On the opposite side of the road is the LBC Holmes Road depot, housing LBC's Building Maintenance, and Parking Enforcement amongst others. In contrast to the opposite side of the street, this brutalist, walled building has an anonymous, pebble dashed concrete panelled façade, which provides an uncompromising barrier between the street and the service yard beyond.

The flats of 76 Holmes Rd form part of the same complex and have equal street level anonymity with their discreet entrance. These flats provide the other immediate contextual scale to the proposed site. The building is 5 storeys in height with a further 6th floor plant room addition. An external grassed space separated from the road by a 6ft brick wall and railings lie between the LBC residential block of flats and the west boundary of 74A. It is understood that this external space is used by no.76 residents only.



Existing 74A site & its pivotal context

The site of 74A, currently vacant but previously occupied by a car repair garage is considered to contribute negatively to the general environment of Holmes Road. In addition, as a result of the surrounding development and changing nature of the area over time the site has been left lacking emphasis and mass.



In summary, the character of the buildings in this area demonstrate very little consistency/ relationship with each other, other than by proximity. However it is felt that the appropriate scale for the proposal on this site should take it's cue from the new PES building, the existing LBC residential block and the recently approved Unite scheme. PWAL have proposed a scheme that is complementary in scale and design to these adjacent buildings. The presence of a well designed building on 74A site is necessary to articulate the corner whilst working within the heterogeneous context.