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M15/13X/A  
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Mr Clyde Boalch RIBA  
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TW9 3HB

Your reference

Our reference

T/APP/X5210/A/85/36778/P6

Date

3 FEB 86

Sir:

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1971, SECTION 36 AND SCHEDULE 9  
APPEAL BY H C BOALCH LTD  
APPLICATION NO:- M15/13X/A

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal. This appeal is against the decision of the Camden London Borough Council to refuse planning permission for the erection of 3 two bedroom flats over 4 small office suites, at Nos 18-20 Northington Street, London WC1. I have considered the written representations made by you and by the council and also those made by one other interested person. I inspected the site on Tuesday 3 December 1985.

2. From my inspection of the site and its surroundings and from the representations made, I consider that the main issues in this case are the need for housing in this part of London; and the suitability of the appeal site to provide residential accommodation at basement and ground floor level.

3. The appeal site is a vacant plot with a frontage of about 10 m to the north side of Northington Street, and a depth of some 11 m. To the east it abuts a 4-storey public house, and to the north there is a primary school. On its west side, the appeal site is bounded by a modern, 6-storey, block of flats. To the south, on the opposite side of Northington Street, there is a further vacant plot and some derelict housing.

4. In March 1983 planning permission was granted for the erection of 2 three storey town houses on the appeal site. Subsequently, in January 1985, planning permission was granted on appeal for the erection of 2 two bedroom maisonettes and 3 two bedroom flats. That scheme proposed the erection of a 4-storey building plus a basement.

5. The building now proposed would be similar in height, mass and elevational detail to the building for which planning permission was granted on appeal. However the proposed internal layout has been modified, and 4 small office suites are now shown to occupy the basement and ground floor accommodation in place of the maisonettes previously planned.

6. The council point out that no office accommodation has previously existed on this site, which they have always intended should be developed for residential purposes. The site is not in one of the preferred office locations listed in the Greater London Development Plan (GLDP). The adopted Camden District Plan indicates that office development will be directed to those preferred locations. In particular,

new office schemes are to be restrained in the area to the south of Euston Road, unless certain specified criteria are met. These criteria do not apply in the present case.

7. Within the past 18 months, draft alterations to both the GLDP and the Camden District Plan have been published. These seek to reinforce the existing restrictive policy towards office developments in this part of London. The council draw particular attention to the effect of speculative office proposals in creating high land costs and displacing other uses such as housing.

8. The GLDP indicates that there is a continuing need for more dwellings to be built in London. The draft alterations to that plan reaffirm this, and describe Camden as one of London's housing stress areas. In 1984 there were 11,000 households on the council's housing needs register. In order to remedy this, the council's policy is to seek an increase in the quantity of housing, and the provision of a range of accommodation suited to the requirements of the local population. The District Plan seeks particularly to encourage the provision of family-sized accommodation, especially in the area south of Euston Road. In the council's view the introduction of an office element into the redevelopment of the appeal site would be counter to these policy objectives. I attach weight to this point.

9. You maintain that the maisonettes previously proposed for the basement and ground floor of the new building would have made unsatisfactory living accommodation. You point out that the basement rooms would have received little natural light and would have had to rely on mechanical ventilation. The ground floor living rooms would have fronted directly onto the footway in Northington Street. Residents would have enjoyed little privacy, and would have been particularly vulnerable to nuisance caused by children going to and from the neighbouring school, and by patrons of the adjacent public house.

10. I think that there is some force in this argument, although I also recognise that, for many people, these disadvantages might be offset by the convenience of living so near to central London. However, I can see no compelling reason why a wholly residential redevelopment scheme should necessarily include habitable rooms with windows facing directly onto the footway at ground floor level. I note that the planning permission for the erection of town houses on this site refers to the fact that there would be integral garages. These would presumably occupy the front part of the ground floor accommodation in each house, alongside an entrance hall. A similar solution has been adopted in the residential development at the corner of Northington Street and John's Mews, where only garages and an entrance lobby face onto the footway at ground floor level.

11. Further, if the appeal site were to be developed with family-sized town houses, the basement areas would not need to be occupied by living rooms and bedrooms. They could equally be used for such accommodation as utility rooms, bathrooms, playrooms, hobby workshops or studios, and storage space. Clearly the manner in which these basements would be used in practice, would depend in part upon the predispositions and requirements of prospective residents.

12. On balance, I am not persuaded that the appeal site is unsuitable for a development consisting exclusively of residential accommodation. I do not doubt that there may be a demand for small office suites in this area. The neighbourhood is already characterised by a mixture of commercial, residential and other uses; and it is conveniently placed in relation to the existing concentration of lawyer's offices around Gray's Inn. However, in view of the pressing need to maximize the supply of residential accommodation in this part of London, and the established policies set

out in the development plan, I take the view that the proposed development would be unacceptable. In reaching this conclusion I have had regard to the emphasis which the Government places on the need to encourage employment and to provide the right conditions for economic growth, as set out in Circular 14/85.

13. I have taken account of all the other matters raised, including the photograph showing that the buildings which previously stood on the appeal site included shop premises at No 20 Northington Street. However, I do not find any of these factors to be sufficient to outweigh the considerations that have led me to my decision.

14. For the above reasons and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss this appeal.

I am Sir  
Your obedient Servant

*Michael Hurley*

MICHAEL HURLEY BA DipTP MRTPI  
Inspector