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MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
PLANNING,

Chesham House,
136/150, Kent Street,
London, W.1.

tel. Regent 444.

Our ref. 576/520/1305.

Your ref. M/77 6678/2451 100.

28th May, 1951. *51/890*

Minister's Decision -

Appeal allowed.

Sir,

Town and Country Planning Act, 1947 - 6 - JUN Recd

Section 16

Appeal by the Central School of Speech Training
and Dramatic Art relating to Spedan Tower,
Harpstead.

I am directed by the Minister of Local Government and Planning to say that he has considered the report of his Inspector, Mr. T. Roberts, B.L.Sun.E., following the local inquiry into the above-mentioned appeal against the refusal of your Council to permit the use of Spedan Tower, Harpstead, as a school for speech training and dramatic art.

The appellants who are at present accommodated partly in the Royal Albert Hall and partly in a house in Hyde Park Gate, of which the lease expires in 1952, wish to concentrate all their activities in one place, and they consider that the appeal premises are eminently suitable for their purpose, providing that they will be allowed to erect a small private theatre in the grounds. This part of the proposal, although not included within the terms of the present appeal, is regarded by the appellants as an essential part of their scheme and they have asked that the Minister should take it into account in reaching his decision on the general question of the future use of the premises.

Approximately 250 non-residential students of about 12 years of age attend the school between 9.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. during three terms of roughly eleven weeks duration, to receive training in speech for the stage and for teachers of speech training; for speech therapy, which the Ministry of Education consider to be of great importance; and for dramatic training. Apart from certain dancing and period movement classes, for which a piano is used, the instruction does not involve the playing of musical instruments. A canteen serving midday meals for the students would be provided within the house.

At the inquiry, it was contended on behalf of the appellants that their proposals would in no way injure the amenities of the nearby residential property, but on the contrary would confer a cultural benefit upon the Borough of Harpstead. It was contended that Spedan Tower, comprising about 30 rooms and standing in 4 1/2 acres of land, was far too large for single family occupation, for which it was rebuilt shortly before the recent war, and that it was unsuitable for conversion into flats owing to the large size of the rooms and the height of the ceilings, which reach to between 12 and 13 feet. The school would not create any traffic difficulties, as the majority of the students would use the Harpstead Underground Station and arrive and depart on foot, and it was claimed that the school would not only satisfy the requirements of good planning but also put the premises, which had remained empty for over two years, to a good use.

Permission for the proposed change of use was refused by your Council on the grounds that it does not conform with the Council's planning proposals for the area, and is considered to be undesirable and inappropriate, and likely to be detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood. This view was not shared by the

E JUN Recd

Warpstead Metropolitan Borough Council. Your Council contended that the proper use of the premises was residential, and that the house could be converted economically into 8 self-contained flats. They thought that the appellants' proposal would be bound to affect the amenities of neighbouring properties, particularly No. 14, Templewood Avenue and The Grange, and that the increased activity consequent upon the establishment of an institution such as the appellants' would upset the general quietness of the area. Nevertheless, it was stated that the Council would raise no objection to some of the multiple residential uses mentioned in Classes XI, XII and XIV of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1950.

The owners of seven neighbouring properties were represented at the Inquiry by Counsel, who submitted that the proposed theatre would be a conspicuous eyesore, especially when viewed from The Grange and the Judges Walk, and that the quietness of the area would be disturbed and his clients' properties depreciated in value.

The Minister has carefully considered the facts of this case, and has come to the conclusion that he is unable to accept your Council's view that there is any significant difference between some of the alternative uses which they would be prepared to approve, and the proposal put forward by the appellants. Moreover, he is satisfied that the use of the house in the manner proposed would cause no serious harm to the residential amenities of the area, and he thinks it desirable that this valuable property should be fully used for a purpose such as the appellants', for which it is undoubtedly suitable, and for which there is a shortage of accommodation at the present time.

Accordingly, the Minister has decided to allow the appeal and this letter is issued as his formal decision.

I am to add that in reaching his decision the Minister has taken account of the appellants' wish to erect a small private theatre in the grounds of Spedan Tower, and he thinks that the erection of the proposed building should be regarded as a natural consequence of his decision. Particular care will need to be taken, however, to ensure that the design and siting of this building are satisfactory, but these matters must be considered when an application is made for permission to erect the building.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

(sgd.) G. G. CHIPPING.

Authorised by the Minister
to sign in that behalf.