

Statement of Use

The Leighton, 101 Brecknock Road, London

4th November 2014

Origin

The property at 101 Brecknock Road was built and used as a public house since the mid 19th Century. The design is typical of the style of London public house that is seen all over London usually with a design that marks the corner of two roads; in this case Brecknock Road and Torriano Avenue.

The original layout included accommodation for the pub landlord to live above the premises on the upper floors. The public house in its original form also includes a basement and rear garden. The large first floor room to the front of the building was designed to be used as a function room as part of the public house, again a typical feature of London public houses built in the 19th Century.

Recent history

The property has been continually used as a public house until the present day albeit in a different form and reduced areas of use. In line with social change since the Second World War there has been a gradual and steady decline in the use of the public house. As such the spaces within these public houses has been altered to reflect this dying use and The Leighton is no exception.

The way in which a public house operate in terms of ownership and tenancy has also changed during this period. The notion of the landlord living above The Leighton ended in 1989 when the owners at the time began a system of management rather than traditional landlords. This new period where pub management live elsewhere ended the long tradition of the landlord living above the pub. In an attempt to gain additional revenue, the upper floors were then let out independently from the public house and this has been the case ever since.

As part of this change, the first floor function room was also divided into separate bedrooms and let out as part of the independent flat in the upper floors of the building. Records of residential rates and Council Tax registration against the property are available from 1999 and clearly set out this time frame.

The upper floors have not been used as part of the public house since the early 1990's, a period of nearly 25 years and as such, can now be classed as a separate residential unit in its own right.

The Leighton has continued to function well without these spaces and the connection to the residential unit. Indeed the pub has thrived because of the reduction in area and the additional revenue from the flat on the upper floors has been an important income for the owner of the property.

The fact that the residential unit is only accessible through the public house has been a problem for some considerable time. As well as the access issues, the property does not conform to current building regulations or fire escape requirements. The upper floors of the property are also in very poor condition and full renovation is long over-due.

The Pub Garden

The garden to the public house has been a cause of problems over recent years. The garden is difficult and expensive to maintain and can only be used through part of the year being dependant on good weather. The use of the garden has also caused a nuisance to the local community within the immediate area and in particular the residents of the adjacent properties. An increasing number of complaints have been received by Camden Environmental Health over a long period of 7 or 8 years and several reports of antisocial behaviour have been reported to the local police.

As a result of this, operating hours have been restricted due to the close proximity to adjacent residential properties on Brecknock Road and Torriano Avenue. There have been an increasing number of complaints by local residents to Camden Environmental Health and to the local neighbourhood police due to noise and antisocial behaviour related to the use of the pub garden. These hours of closure mean that the pub has lost customers as a result of this and with the combined affect of the smoking ban that came into force several years ago.

This in turn has lead to the garden becoming an unviable space for the pub to run efficiently and to be able to control properly. The new owner of the property was approached by the tenant of the public house with a request to remove the garden from the lease. This has been agreed and the public garden ceased to be part of the public house in the summer of 2014.

We understand from the previous owners that they were approached by local residents keen to buy the land from the pub in order to stop the nuisance for local residents. This may well have lead to development proposals for residential use in any case.

Change of use of the pub garden

The garden is now not part of the public house and has little or no community value. In any event the use of the garden was already restricted in operating hours and was always privately owned and not a public space. The loss of the garden as a community use associated with the pub has meant that the current tenants of The Leighton can operate economically and the pub is now a viable going concern. With the garden, the public house was struggling with heavy costs of maintaining and monitoring security of the garden.

As such, the land is ideal for development into residential use within an area well served with public transport, local amenities and being part of a predominantly residential area. This is an ideal 'brown field site' and justifies being developed.

The Operation of the Public House

It is well documented and recorded that public houses struggle to survive in the current economic climate and general social change. The Leighton has done well to have survived this far. In order for the pub to continue to survive and indeed thrive into the future, its economic model has to be efficient and simple. The reduction in the area of the public house has been incremental over the last 25 years, beginning with the loss of the upper floor function room and living accommodation which was previously restricted only for the landlord and now the pub garden.

These changes and the reduction of liabilities have allowed the public house to exist economically. The customer numbers for the public house are small and the range of regulars is steady but dwindling. Local pubs nationwide have struggled to remain viable and many have closed in recent years.

The operation of The Leighton is now such that it can continue to run efficiently with a comfortable amount of space and facilities. The existing basement provides for more than

enough storage for beers, furniture and other back of house items. The bar and sitting areas are large and varied to allow for drinking and light family meals.

The Leighton does not offer typical pub food and concentrates on beer and its steady customer base. Bar meals are provided in a simple way and there is no demand for a full menu of cooked food during the week. A simple Sunday roast is provided with limited sales. The food is prepared in a simple and small kitchen to the side of the bar and this is more than enough for the number of customers that the pub attracts.

All deliveries for the kitchen come in through the main entrance door to the public house. Waste and rubbish leave by the same way. Beer and drinks are delivered through the pavement hatch to the outside of the pub in the traditional way that pubs are serviced.

The Proposed Alterations

As well as providing additional residential accommodation on the upper floor with an additional floor and separate entrance, the application scheme also provides several improvements to the public house. These include providing new and properly designed toilets, new kitchen and storage areas to the public house, rationalising the internal space of the pub. The renovation of the building will also update acoustic performance between the public house and the residential units, improve fire control and prevention and provide separate entrance to the flats.

All of these improvement will benefit the efficient and economic operation of the public house hopefully securing it future as local pub within community.

As well as providing a secure future in which the public house can now operate, the proposals provide for up dated good quality residential units of one and two bedroom flats. The dis-used garden also provides for two new houses in keeping with Torriano Avenue and completing the street scene on the north side of the road.

Conclusion

While there is a general popular and romantic concern over the loss of public houses, it is important to note that the Previous owners had given up on this pub as it was no longer viable in its previous form.

The new owners would like to retain the pub and have now made it free of constraints giving the landlady the ability to source the best products without having to pay punitive sums to large breweries and have further substantially reduced the rent to insure that the present business can be sustainable.

Overall the proposal is a good development of the site, within current planning policy and responding to the current demand for new homes. The site is ideal for such a development while securing the sustainability of the public house at the same time.