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DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE FROM CLASS A1 TO CLASS D1 WITH
FLEXIBLE PART B1 AND A1 USES**

**74-76 CROMER STREET
LONDON, WC1H 8DR**

for

THE ARTS CATALYST

Ref: TP-H/AR/MH/13398

Date: 22 January 2015

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Planning Validation
London Borough of Camden
5 St Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG

22 January 2015

Dear Sirs

74-76 CROMER STREET, LONDON, WC1H 8DR

Background

74-76 Cromer Street is a double retail unit arranged over ground and basement and fronting onto Cromer Street. It forms part of a disjointed parade of ground floor retail units which comprise the ground floors of separate 5 storey residential mansion blocks on the northern side of Cromer Street, with typically four shop frontages per block. The property is located within the Central Activity Zone, designated within the London Plan and adopted in London Borough of Camden's LDF policies. The building dates from the 1930s albeit is not listed. It currently benefits from A1 planning use which was gained in August 2010 following a change of use application from D1 to A1. The current application seeks to return the use to D1 use with part B1 use in the basement of 74 Cromer Street and flexi D1 / A1 use on ground floor 74 Cromer Street. The proposed uses are shown on the attached plans - Existing and proposed ground floor and basement plans.

The subject property falls just within the boundary of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The area is predominantly residential with a series of 1890s tenement blocks to the north along Loxham Street, Tankerton Street, Midhope Street and Whidborne Street and more modern estates lying to the east and south. The Cromer Street facing mansion blocks are dated from the late 1930s and are listed as *positive contributors* within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy Adopted in April 2011.

We have measured the subject site as having a PTAL rating of 6b one of the highest transport accessibility levels and is therefore highly accessible by a range of transport.

History of Property

The shop is currently occupied by a similar user to that proposed – Redhanded who have occupied as a 'meanwhile' user i.e. not paying any rent in order to avoid the premises being vacant and to provide interest at street level. They have used the premises for art installations originally from 28 October 2013 and provided a programme of exhibitions, workshops on weaving, printing and book-making, poetry, performance and discussions from the property. They will be vacating the premises at the end of January 2015.

Prior to this the shop had been vacant from 28th June 2011 when the previous occupiers, a butchers operating under an A1 planning permission, vacated. The premises was then marketed by the landlord Camden Council between June 2011 to October 2013, followed by a period in which it was considered whether the landlord themselves could utilise the units,

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and then marketed again from November 2014 to December 2014 when potential tenant The Arts Catalyst was identified. The Arts Catalyst's lease is dependent on the grant of a change of use from the current A1 use to D1 with part B1 use, hence the requirement for this application.

The existing A1 use permits hours of operation between 8.00 am to 20.00 pm daily.



74-76 Cromer Street view from front showing double frontage and residential above and behind

Surrounding Area

The area is characterised by a high number of under-utilised or vacant premises for example on a recent inspection at c. 2.30 pm on a Monday afternoon 7 out of a total of 14 shops (or 18 individual units) had either the shutters drawn down or were vacant. Those units which do appear occupied include the South Camden Youth Access Point at nos 82-84 a D1 user, Legal Advice at no 78, Raval Dental Surgery at no 86 another D1 user and two A1 convenience stores at 94-96 and 98, together with an A1 clothes shop at nos 100-104.

The area is characterised by a high residential density and it is noted that the residents living directly above the subject premises would be directly affected by any unsocial uses. Indeed there were 4 objections from neighbouring residents in response to the proposal to change the use from the original doctor's surgery D1 use to A1 use (as a meat and fish shop) due to perceived or actual associated noise and smells.

Proposal

The Arts Catalyst intend to occupy the premises as an arts, related workshops and educational charity. The Arts Catalyst commissions art that encourages engagement with science and has been operating for over 20 years.

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Republic of the Moon Exhibition

They intend to employ 1 full-time and 4 part-time employees.

They intend to use the shops for the display of art and ancillary uses on the ground floor together with ancillary offices for staff in the basement. This use will therefore retain and use the existing shop frontage for the display of art, thus providing active interest at street level and will be open to members of the public at the specified times.

Basement of no 74 – Proposed use as B1 offices

required for operational day-to-day running of charity and associated storage. Hours of operation 10 am to 6 pm

Ground level of no 74 – Proposed use as a visual archive, bookshop, resource space for visual art science including space for workshops and meetings. Hours of operation 12 pm to 6 pm Wednesday to Friday.

Ground level no 76
– Art exhibition space, artist led workshops and seminars. Hours of operation 12 pm to 9 pm Monday to Friday and some Saturdays.

It is proposed that the shutters on both units would be open from Monday to Friday 10 am to 6 pm (to coincide with office hours).



Lab Easy Cocktails and DNA Workshop

Visitor numbers would be expected to vary dependent on exhibitions, workshops running and window displays however would expect planned visitors to vary between 10 to 40 per week and casual visitors to be 30/40 per day from passing footfall. As the capacity for each ground floor space is 30 to 40 people Arts Catalyst do not expect large audiences that will disrupt local residential life on the street. The Arts Catalyst will target local community groups and residents to take part in science based workshops and activities.

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No external alterations are proposed as part of this application.

Planning Policy Considerations

The Camden Core Strategy was adopted in November 2010 and forms the basis of planning policy in Camden.

The subject is not within a designated growth area such as Euston or Kings Cross, however it is located within the Central Activity Zone. The areas outside the growth areas but within the central zone are *'particularly suitable locations for uses that are likely to lead to a significant increase in travel demand (for example, retail, offices, leisure and tourism), although the scale of development at these locations is expected to be less than that in the growth areas.'* Whilst it is not expected that the subject use will result in significant increases in visitors compared to a typical A1 use, due to the high public transport accessibility of the property it is considered that the proposed use is appropriate development in a highly accessible location encouraged by policy CS1.

Policy CS5 seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents and those working and visiting the borough and focuses on encouraging strong and successful communities. Potential conflicts can arise through noise, privacy and light issues, as also highlighted in DP26. The proposal should not cause any detriment to local residential occupiers through these issues as hours of operation are typically up to 9 pm and noise from visitors would not be expected to be above that generated by a typical A1 user. The property was previously in use as a D1 doctor's surgery and therefore this has long been considered a suitable location for a D1 user. The proposed use should indeed promote amenity within the local community, a part of central London that has pockets of deprivation. Policy DP26 highlights potential harmful factors to neighbouring occupiers such as noise and vibration, artificial light levels and waste disposal. It is noted that lighting will only be from internal shop lighting and would be typical of previous users. In fact by bringing the property back into use and therefore not having the shutters drawn down during the day, the lighting from the property will add vitality to the street, reduce the opportunity for criminal activity and increase the sense of safety.

Policy CS7 covers Camden's centres and shops. Whilst the shops on Cromer Street are not designated as a protected retail frontage, the council policies aim to *'promote successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough to serve the needs of residents, works and visitors by: seeking to protect and enhance the role and unique character of each of Camden's centres, ensuring that new development is of an appropriate scale and character for the centre in which it is located; and providing for, and maintaining, a range of shops, services, food, drink and entertainment and other suitable uses to provide variety, vibrancy and choice.* There are already A1 retail shops on Cromer Street providing convenience stores, legal advice and clothing, as well as D1 uses in the form of a dentist and a council run youth support unit, and the continuing vacancy of the unit has demonstrated no demand for the unit in its current A1 use. The proposal would add a unique use to the street, providing public access to art exhibitions, workshops and art material and encouraging community involvement and participation.

Camden Planning Guidance policies provide further guidance on the application of planning policies. CPG 5 – Town Centres, Retail and Employment (updated in September 2013). The subject parade is not designated whereas Marchmont Street / Leigh Street a short distance to the south west have been designated as neighbourhood centres. Therefore the loss of an A1 retail use on Cromer Street is not policy significant.

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Policy CS8 – ‘Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy’ seeks to ‘*recognise and encourage the concentrations of creative and cultural businesses in the borough*’. One of the ways in which the council can support growth in the creative industries is through the provision of a range of suitable premises. The proposed use would provide new jobs in the area with 1 full and 4 part-time employees, and would also promote artistic enterprise together with scientific learning. The Arts Catalyst promotes the liaison between artists and scientists such as those from the Central Laser Facility and the Indian Space Research Organisation. The workshops should also encourage young people to learn about and engage in scientific activities and raises their interest in this area. By commissioning new work and instigating varying projects the Arts Catalyst promotes employment opportunities in both the artistic and scientific communities.

Policy CS9 covers Camden’s Central London area which forms part of London’s Central Activities Zone where the subject premises is located. Due to the high accessibility of this part of Camden the council will encourage growth here and will support the concentration of cultural and community facilities.

Policy CS10 seeks to support the retention and enhancement of existing community, leisure and cultural facilities. Within this policy Camden Council states ‘*The Council works in partnership with a wide range of institutions and various community groups to deliver art and cultural projects, for example, by hosting and supporting community festivals across the borough. We also encourage public art installations, organise workshops and provide space for local artists. . .*’

Whilst Camden Council has set out that it will resist the loss of shops where this would cause harm to the character or function of a centre, Policy DP10 sets out Council policy in protecting and retaining small and independent shops. Whilst the Council will resist the loss of Class A1 shops unless there is an alternative provision within 5-10 minutes walk, the council will also take account of the viability of the premises for the existing use, any history of vacancy and the prospect of achieving an alternative occupier. Appropriate alternative uses that will also contribute positively to the local area include services for residents, business, workers and visitors including community facilities. The high apparent vacancy or under-utilisation of premises on Cromer Street supports the change of use to a D1 use that will provide variety and interest at street level and will attract new visitors to the street that will benefit other occupiers.

Whilst the proposal does not include any external alterations policy CS14 ‘Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage’ will be supported by the bringing back into use of a vacant unit in a Conservation Area which otherwise could have become derelict and suffered from lack of repair. Indeed already the window frames have largely rotted and will require repair.

Camden’s Development Policies include Policy DP13 whereby the council seeks to retain premises which are in business use. By proposing a change of use the proposal retains employment uses on site and does not alter the fabric of the building, so if required the property could easily be converted back to A1 use should demand for this use against D1 or other uses recover.

DP15 covers Community and leisure uses and states that ‘*new community and leisure uses must be close or accessible to the community they serve, accessible by a range of transport modes and if expected to attract larger numbers of visitors located in the Central London Area or allocated town centres.*’ The current proposal is served by excellent public transport, is surrounded by residential estates and it is not expected that visitor numbers will exceed 40

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visitors a day. Whilst policy DP16 which covers the transport implications of development seeks to ensure that any impact on the transport network has been considered and allowed for as well as integrated into the transport network we would not consider this minor change of use will generate any impact on the surrounding public transport network. Also parking on Cromer Street is resident permit holder only between 8.30 am to 6.30 pm Monday to Friday and 8.30 am to 1.30 pm on Saturdays, with 3 pay and display spaces located further towards Gray's Inn Road limited to two hours per stay. Therefore there should be no impact on local parking with visitors accessing the property either by foot from the local area or by public transport as will be promoted on the Arts Catalyst website.

As mentioned above the property falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation area and thus any proposed development must take account of policy DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage which includes an aim to *'only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area'* As the proposal is not proposing any alteration to the external fabric and indeed will be helping to conserve a building listed as a *'positive contributor'* the proposal fully complies with policy.

The London Plan adopted in July 2011 encourages support and enhancement of arts, culture, sport and entertainment under policy 4.6 with an intention that the *'Mayor will and boroughs and other stakeholders should support the continued success of London's diverse range of arts, cultural, professional sporting and entertainment enterprises and the cultural, social and economic benefits that they offer to its residents, workers and visitors.'* Related developments *'should be located on sites where there is good existing or planned access by public transport.'*

Planning History

12/03/1992 – Planning permission granted for the change of use from retail shop (Class A1) to doctors surgery (Class D1).

17/06/2010 – Planning permission refused for the retention of change of use of the ground and basement unit from Doctor Surgery (Class D1) to Retail (Class A1). **Reason for refusal** - In the absence of sufficient evidence and justification to demonstrate that the previous use as a community use was surplus to requirements, or has been re-provided elsewhere or there is no demand for another suitable community use of the site, use of the site as a retail unit is considered to be contrary to the principal aim of Policy C2 (Protecting community uses) of the London Borough of Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006.

04/10/2010 – Planning permission granted for the retention of change of use of the ground and basement unit from Doctor Surgery (Class D1) to Retail (Class A1)

Transport

Given the high PTAL rating for the site and its position in Central London, as well as the limited size we would expect virtually all visitors and staff to access the site using public transport and therefore we do not predict any negative impact on resident parking. On its website the Arts Catalyst will encourage that all visitors use public transport to access the venue due to it being in a residential area and give directions and links to its location via public transport and via foot.

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Waste

We would expect no significant impact. The Arts Catalyst employs a private waste and recycling company for waste refuse - which will be picked up from the property on a weekly basis. The Arts Catalyst will not leave any waste on the street as requested in the head of terms letter from the property department.