

JO/DM/P5571
29th June 2015

Development Management Planning Services
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8ND

For the attention of Mr Neil Collins

Dear Sirs

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (As Amended)
2-8 Bloomsbury Street and 52-56 New Oxford Street, Bloomsbury Plaza, London, W1
Planning Application – Alterations to ground floor façades on both New Oxford Street and Bloomsbury Plaza frontages, including new shopfronts and new office entrance portico associated with refurbishment of building and reordering of uses at ground floor level including conversion of rear courtyard building from retail to ancillary office facilities (Class B1). Alterations at roof level comprising the alterations to the roof profile, insertion of new dormer windows, and alterations to the rear fenestration and addition of balconies at rear.
PP-04309703

We write on behalf of the applicant Friends Life Limited (Commercial Fund) and our client F&C REIT Asset Management, in support of the planning application submitted via the planning portal relating to the above property for a series of alterations relating to the wholesale refurbishment of the property to provide high quality, efficient and modern floorspace.

These alterations include a reordering of the uses at ground floor level alongside associated ground floor façade alterations, as well as alterations at roof level to alter the mansard roof profile and insert new dormer windows. The works proposed also include the installation of new windows/glazed panels and balconies on the rear elevation of 2-8 Bloomsbury Street.

The requisite statutory fee for £385 will be submitted separately.

In order to assist you with your consideration of this application please find enclosed the following information which has been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal:

- Application form and certificates
- Site Location Plan
- Existing and Proposed drawings prepared by Buckley Gray Yeoman
- Design & Access Statement prepared by Buckley Gray Yeoman
- Completed CIL form

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Site Description

The site is comprised of 2-8 Bloomsbury Street and 52-56 New Oxford Street, which are not listed but are located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The building faces on to the north-eastern corner of the junction with these two streets, and occupies a prominent position with facades stretching back along both Bloomsbury Street and New Oxford Street. The properties are comprised of basement, ground and first to fourth floors, with a large plant room at roof level. The ground floor is a mix of offices (Class B1) and retail units (Classes A1 and A3), including retail units located in a separate building to the rear which is accessed along a passageway leading from New Oxford Street. The upper floors are all in office (Class B1) use.

The entire application site formed part of a larger redevelopment site which was granted permission in 1987. Page 16 within the Design and Access Statement shows the site under construction in the early 1980's. The existing buildings in their current state are considered to provide outdated office accommodation and the fourth floor mansard is also considered to be domestic in scale with small dormer windows which do not provide any useful or useable floorspace.

Externally the facades are primarily mock classical facades. Along New Oxford Street the facades are finished with white render/stucco with moulding details, and along Bloomsbury Street the dominant material is red brick. The mansard roof structures are slate tiled.

Relevant Planning History

Other than the redevelopment of the site granted permission in 1987, there is little else in terms of relevant planning history, aside from new shopfronts and other minor ground floor alterations approved at 52-54 New Oxford Street in 1993 (Ref: 9301198) and 1996 (Ref: P9602356).

Background and Pre-application Consultation

The applicant is seeking planning permission to carry out the refurbishment and updating of the property with the overall aim of the proposals being to improve the building and bring it up to modern office standards in terms of floor plates, layout and external appearance.

This application follows a recent pre-application enquiry (ref: 2014/6834/PRE) in relation to the site which sought to increase the office floorspace by over 200sqm primarily through the demolition of the existing roof storey and 5th floor plant room and the erection of a replacement two storey roof extension in its place. Whilst this element of the pre-app proposals are not included within this application, many of the other alterations included in the pre-app remain, including the re-ordering of the uses (retail and office uses) at ground floor level, shopfront alterations at ground floor level and the installation of balconies to the rear.

The proposals now include a remodelled 4th floor mansard storey, which slightly alters the roof profile and proposes the insertion of new dormer windows which are complimentary to the host building and more suitable for modern office requirements.

The formal pre-application advice issued by officers on 29th June 2015 confirmed the following points which are relevant to this application:

- The increase in office floorspace and the enhancement of the existing offer is supported

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within Policy CS8 and DP13;

- The loss of Class A1 retail floorspace was considered acceptable on balance because these retail units are located within the underpass and the principal units facing New Oxford Street would be enlarged and refurbished.
- The scheme presented at pre-app (a larger scheme than that now proposed) was not envisaged to give rise to significant impacts upon neighbouring residential occupiers.
- The introduction of cycle storage for the offices was welcomed.
- The revised dormers windows were welcomed but further refinement in their design was encouraged to reflect the proportions of the building.

The Proposals

Planning permission is sought for a number of alterations and internal reconfigurations which will bring about a more efficient use of space resulting in a higher quality offering of office and retail floorspace.

In land use terms the proposals will bring about only a very small increase in office floorspace of approximately 4sqm. There would be a small loss in retail floorspace, but this is considered to be offset by other benefits including the provision of secure cycle storage and shower facilities for the office worker, and the refurbishment of the principal retail frontage facing onto New Oxford Street.

Externally the scheme proposes a number of alterations which are summarised below:

- Erection of a new office entrance portico on Bloomsbury Street;
- New shopfronts and façade alterations at ground floor level across the site;
- Installation of new glazing panels to rear of Bloomsbury Street building at 1st-4th floor levels;
- Installation of balconies to rear of Bloomsbury Street at 2nd-4th floor levels;
- New fenestration including rooflights to courtyard building at rear;
- Remodelling of mansard roof including insertion of new dormer windows;
- Plant access terrace proposed at roof level.

Please refer to the submitted **Design & Access Statement** for further information on the proposed design scheme and materials.

Planning Policy Considerations

The project team has carefully reviewed the form of the alterations and the accompanying drawings and illustrative material shows the proposals for the façade alterations and proposed remodelling of the mansard roof storey. The proposals should be considered in the light of the fact that the existing buildings are a 1980's pastiche of Victorian/Georgian architecture, and have no historical merit. The design scheme being proposed with this application is considered to be an appropriate design response and solution. The proposals are considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the host building and will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

We believe that the proposed remodelled roof, the reconfiguration of uses at ground floor level and the other alterations proposed will create additional accommodation fit for purpose and fully in accordance with Camden's Development Plan policies as detailed below:

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Land use

The proposal provides additional office accommodation which is in line with Core Strategy policies CS1, CS3 and CS8 which supports new office development within the CAZ, and Development Plan policy DP13.

The proposals will give rise to an additional 4sqm of additional office floorspace. The proposals therefore do not trigger the requirement for associated residential floor space as required by Development Plan policy DP1.

As agreed at pre-application, the small loss of retail floorspace within the passageway is considered to be offset by the provision of upgraded office facilities (secure cycle parking and showers) and the retention and enhancement of the retail units along the principal shopping frontage of New Oxford Street. As such, an exception to the aims of policy DP12 can be made in this instance.

Design

Development Plan Policy DP24 states the principles enshrined within Core Strategy policy CS14 – *Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage* will ensure that all parts of Camden's environment are designed to the highest possible standards and contribute to providing a healthy, safe and attractive environment.

In accordance with Policy DP24:

- The proposals have been formulated with local character, context, form and scale all taken into consideration.
- The proposals will enhance the ground floor facades along both Bloomsbury Street and New Oxford Street, creating visually interesting frontages using high quality materials.
- The proposals will improve the local skyline and will not be intrusive upon longer public views.

As an overall package it is considered that the proposals are in line with CS14 and DP24 and will therefore enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting.

Amenity

Daylight /Sunlight

The proposals do not result in any material change in bulking or massing on site and therefore it is not considered that the proposal would raise any impact in daylight and sunlight for the neighbouring properties.

Noise

The proposals include balconies to the rear and a plant access terrace at roof level. The scheme has been designed to ensure that the amenity of the adjoining properties is preserved; as such the applicant is agreeable to conditions being imposed to limit the use of these areas to ensure there is no noise impact on the neighbouring properties.

Privacy

In terms of overlooking the existing properties to the rear of the application site are already overlooked by the existing office accommodation, and as such the proposed rear balconies will not

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bring about any material change in circumstances with regards to overlooking. At roof level the terrace is primarily envisaged as an access deck to service the plant room. Notwithstanding this, in order to mitigate any possible impact against overlooking the terrace has been well set back from the edges of the roof on both sides.

Conclusion

Planning permission is sought for the alterations and reordering of uses at the existing property to provide new and improved office accommodation, along with enhanced retail frontages along New Oxford Street. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the Council's policies and are considered to be acceptable in terms of land use, design and amenity. Overall the proposals will accord with the relevant policies within the adopted plans.

Having regard to the above and the enclosed material, we trust the council will agree that the proposals are acceptable and look forward to receiving a speedy and positive decision. However should you require any further information or wish to discuss any of the enclosures please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully



John Osborn
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited

Encl Planning portal application package

Cc Simon McIntosh : F & C REIT Asset Management
 Paul White : Buckley Gray Yeoman