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RECORDED DELIVERY

17th July 2015

Head of Planning
Camden Council
Development Management
Regeneration and Planning
LB Of Camden
Judd Street
LONDON
WC1H 8ND

Dear Sir/Madam,

APPLICATION (OUTLINE) FOR OFFICE SCHEME AT 128-130 GRAFTON ROAD, NW5 4BA

Introduction

We are instructed by our client, Redrock Development Group, to submit an outline application for development described as follows:

“Demolition of existing building at 128-130 Grafton Road and erection of 6 storey (with basement) storey office building (outline application with means of access and scale to be determined)”.

Accordingly, we enclose requisite copies of each of the following:

- This covering letter dated 17th July 2015;
- Planning application form;
- CIL form;
- Plans (all on disc) prepared by APS Design Associates Ltd. to include red line site plan, existing site plans and proposed plan (in respect of means of access and scale);
- Statutory planning fee in the sum of £385 based on a site area of 258 square metres.

We therefore confirm as follows:

- Access is to be determined;
- Appearance is not for determination and the detail shown is illustrative;
- Landscaping is not for determination and is unlikely to be a relevant matter at AORM stage in any event;
- Layout is not for determination and the detail shown is illustrative; and,
- Scale is for determination.

Commentary

Introduction

The property is a single-storey industrial building with forecourt parking. It adjoins a much larger residential scheme on its eastern side (no. 126) which has no windows on the flank elevation overlooking the application site: see screen shot below.



There is a single-storey industrial building on its western side (132-134) and the properties back onto a significantly larger building fronting Spring Place which is in residential use (again shown above).

The area is generally of a mixed residential and commercial character.

It is also located in a sustainable area being a short walk from Kentish Town West mainline train station as well as Chalk Farm tube station and Kentish Town mainline and tube station.

In respect of planning history there are a number of early consents for storage of materials for various temporary periods which were permitted pursuant to TP/40874/1950 and TP/40874/1677/1951.

The more recent history is defined by two appeal decisions.

The first was that pursuant to local planning authority's reference PL/8903721 which was refused by the Secretary of State on 22nd August 1990.

The description of development is set out in paragraph 1 of this appeal decision and is as follows:

“For the rebuilding of existing roofing contractor’s yard and offices with additional office accommodation over at 128-130 Grafton Road, NW5”.

The second paragraph of this appeal decision reads as follows:

“The proposal is to redevelop the existing roofing contractor’s yard by the construction of the building which retains a yard at ground floor level with three floors offices above.

Accordingly from my inspection of the site and its surroundings and the representations received I consider the main issue in this case is whether the scale of the proposed development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area having regard to the Council’s policies and the intended plot ratio”.

This appeal was subsequently refused primarily due to the bulk and mass of the proposed scheme. There are no plans online and consequently we are unable to provide any commentary in relation to the height of the proposal.

In any event we would note that this appeal decision is now dated and certainly pre-dates the erection of the adjoining residential scheme which is significantly higher than the application site. Consequently there has been a clear and material change in planning circumstances in the 25 years since this refusal.

More recently an appeal was allowed on 4th March 2003, pursuant to local planning authority reference PEX 0200219 (PINS APP/X5210/A/1095059) for the residential development of 7 flats.

As set out at paragraph 1 of this appeal decision the Inspector notes that the decision notice and appeal form refer to the demolition of an existing storage building, class B8 and the erection of a five-storey building to provide 7 residential units and 5 car parking spaces. The inspector concluded that this description more accurately reflected the nature of the proposed development and the decision was made on this basis.

At paragraph 3 the inspector noted that the local planning authority had no issue in terms of the impact of the development on the street scene and consequently the inspector defined the main issue being the loss of what was an employment site. The analysis as set out in the appeal decision led to the inspector’s conclusion that there was no issue in terms of the loss of the site as one providing an employment opportunity and consequently the appeal was allowed, albeit the scheme was not implemented and is now time expired.

Policy

In respect of planning policy we are reliant upon the Camden Core Strategy as representing the most up to date expression of local planning policy.

Policy CS1 concerns the distribution of growth across Camden and there is a very clear focus upon making the best use of land and buildings.

Policy CS8 concerns the promotion of a successful and inclusive Camden economy. It confirms that the Council will secure a strong economy and will seek to ensure that no one is excluded from its success. In respect of office development criterion (a) sets a focus for a significant amount of office floor space at Kings Cross and Euston, however, there is also reference to Central London to meet the forecast demand for 615 square metres to 2026. Locationally these matters are taken further in the explanatory text and it is noted that significant office floor space will be directed to certain stipulated growth areas as well as “elsewhere in Central London”.

Paragraph 8.7 confirms that smaller-scale office development will also occur at other sites across Central London with some provision in Camden Town.

The text goes on to confirm that this will ensure that the remainder for the projected demand for offices is met.

Analysis

In terms of the principle we confirm that there is no issue with the loss of light industrial use.

The Core Strategy is specific in terms of the location of 80% of the District's new office accommodation, however, as per paragraph 8.7 the application proposal is clearly one of the smaller-scale office developments which will also occur at other sites across Central London.

In addition the office is a far preferable neighbour to the adjoining residential scheme as opposed to the more historical scaffolding use which has been on site for a number of years. The site is now used for B8 purposes.

It seems from the Statutory Register that this pre-dates the planning system and consequently there is little control over hours of operation or suchlike. Whilst it is our understanding that the use is not problematic, uses change and evolve (in the significant majority of cases without the need for planning permission) and so do occupiers and there are no controls to govern the use of an industrial site next door to a large residential scheme.

The site is in a sustainable location being a short walk from the cited public transport infrastructure. The office itself is appropriately described as medium scale and having regard to the requirements of the Core Strategy there is flexibility for the location of such offices in more peripheral locations such as Grafton Road.

In terms of the bulk and mass we confirm that the scale is a matter for determination at outline stage. Whilst we have submitted detail in respect of external treatment this is likely to be amended once the final occupier is found. Redrock Development Group is an Indonesian based company wishing to build their new UK head office in Grafton Road and will take the design further once the principle has been established.

We are a storey higher than the adjoining residential scheme, however, still significantly lower than the residential scheme to the rear fronting onto Spring Place. There is a mixed character and variation in building heights along Grafton Road such that the additional accommodation sought on the application site is able to be sensibly absorbed with no adverse impact on the street scene.

The site does not lie within the conservation area and in the interest of making the best use of urban land, being a particular policy aim under CS1 there is support for a scheme of this nature.

Development policy 24 is the most appropriate policy for addressing the implications of this proposal: it is entitled "securing high quality design" and whilst acknowledging that external appearance is a matter for future determination a level of illustrative material has been submitted and scale is a matter for determination at outline stage.

a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;

The context, form and scale are relevant matters to the determination of scale at outline stage.

The proposal has regard to the scale of adjoin buildings: it is higher than its immediate neighbours but much lower than the Spring Place property which has a presence in Grafton Road. There is nothing in the policy which requires complete consistency of building heights and of course this is not likely to be possible in the majority of cases and does not lead to making the best use of urban land.

b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;

The illustrative material provides one example of how this policy aim could be achieved. Whatever the final scheme which is approved it is will be clear improvement on the current position.

c) the quality of materials to be used;

These will be appropriately controlled at AORM stage.

d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;

Again a matter for AORM but either way an improvement of what is on site currently.

e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;

Matters (e) to (i) are less relevant to this proposal on this site.

f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;

g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;

h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and

i) accessibility.

The design has illustrated how the office scheme will be an appropriate neighbour to the residential scheme fronting Spring Place.

There may be issues of inter-visibility between the proposed office scheme and this established residential scheme however as shown on the illustrative plans this can be appropriately addressed by a privacy screen which is a matter to be fixed at approval of reserved matter stage.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion the site has a history of appeals with permission being granted in 2003.

It is a shame that the site has not been positively developed in the intervening period and this application seeks to establish a new chapter in the site's planning history and presents a development which is sustainable and which makes the best use of this urban land.

For these reasons the application accords with the material provisions of the Development Plan and the sustainability credentials of the Framework.

Ian Coward from these offices is dealing with this matter.

Yours faithfully

**Collins & Coward
encs**