



However, the change of function for the site (from industrial/small workshop/crafts/studios to modern office space/some residential) did throw up issues (mainly social) which caused us concern. These are listed below.

### **Detailed Concerns.**

#### **1. Housing.**

We understand that Dukelease (the developers) originally intended to develop the whole site for modern offices and shops; Camden Council however insisted on inclusion of a residential element. The outline plans were redrawn to include a minimal housing in-put. The proposed housing allocation of 12 units avoids the legal necessity for the developer to provide any "affordable" housing. We are surprised Camden Council does not insist on a larger housing component in order to gain some subsidised housing from this site. Why did Camden not ask for 50% affordable housing in this development? This is Camden's stated policy, so was there a planning or political reason for ignoring policy in this case?

#### **2. Section 26/CiL payments.**

In the absence of 50% potential affordable housing provision, what recompense will Camden be asking from the developers? The application is not clear on this point. We would expect Camden Council to demand a market rent payment for the full amount of social housing which could (if asked for) have been provided on this site.

#### **3. Viability Report.**

If the lack of affordable housing provision has been arrived at as a result of a viability report from the developer, can you assure us that the elected members have seen (or will see) this full un-redacted report and that the Council officers have taken appropriate professional advice in analyzing such a report? It is important that developers' cost-accounting is not hidden by the cloak of "commercial sensitivity" (which prevents elected members from seeing the financial breakdown and thus subverts the democratic decision-making process). There is no legal requirement for "commercial sensitivity" over these figures, just received practice; a practice which is already being challenged by national politicians, local councillors and local communities. We would be grateful for information on this subject.

#### **4. Workshop Usage.**

Panther House, in particular, has been the home to many workshops and studios (as have some of the existing premises above the row of shops on Gray's Inn Road). This traditional use echoes the history of the Mount Pleasant area as the home of small leather, craft, printing, metal and mechanical workshops over the last 200 years.

The developer made it clear that the prime motive of the development was to provide modern office space at commercial rents and that no such workshop/craft/start-up areas were envisaged in the original plans. After listening to local representation the developer did amend the plans to include some more "flexible use" spaces which could in theory be let out for workshop/studio/craft/start-up purposes.

The developer was clear, however, that the actual lettings policy might well depend on who-ever took on the head lease (or bought the space), and therefore the developers could not guarantee any actual workshop use, even though a few such potential spaces had been incorporated into the redesigned development. The developer was also clear that market commercial rents would be charged on all office and retail units.

This begs the question of whether local workshop users could afford the new commercial rents once the renovated premises come back on the commercial market. The present workshop tenants say they cannot afford the anticipated charges, they will be priced out of the market.

We would suggest that Camden Council, who have a general policy of supporting local workshops in this area, make a planning condition on this development that some agreed percentage of the new commercial units are reserved at favourable rents for workshop tenants. We would be interested to hear your constructive proposals.

**5. Retail Tenancies, 156-164 Gray's Inn Road – the convenience store, Adana Printers and Andrew's Café.**

This is a neighbourhood problem which is probably outside the remit of Camden Council Planning Authority.

We understand the developers have given these retail traders the required statutory notice to quit and that their premises will be gutted, rebuilt and put back on the commercial lettings market when the redevelopment is completed.

These traders are well-known locally, well supported and have a wide following of customers, fans and suppliers. They are upset about having to move. There is a local campaign posted in local newspapers and on Facebook to "keep their businesses in-situ". ITV journalists (amongst others) have signed their petitions. We support these local traders, we will miss them when they move out, but we can see no constructive way to help them.

The developers are within their legal rights to purchase land and to develop it. The developers appear to have behaved correctly, both legally and professionally, towards their tenants.

We can only draw your attention to this problem and ask you if you see any way to ameliorate this issue? Preferential rents and first refusal on their rehabilitated premises once the development is complete? Some financial recompense for losing their established trade? We have no idea what you think is possible in these cases, or what you can do.

**6. Local Neighbourhood Concerns.** These issues have been raised by local people living in the close vicinity to the development site. The site is surrounded by blocks of residential flats (the mansion blocks on Grays Inn Road, Holdsworthy Square, Grays Inn Buildings, Mullen Tower and the newly refurbished Studio hostel amongst others). Residents think the developers should make some concessions to accommodate their requirements for safety, privacy and quiet domestic life. There is also a primary school adjacent to the new building whose needs should be taken into account.

**6.1 Right to Light.** MPA has discussed this with local residents, the developer and one of the local landlords (a housing association), all of whom are, apparently, in touch with each other. We would ask Camden Council to make sure that local residents' statutory rights are upheld.

**6.2 Noise and Light Pollution from new flats and offices.** Because of the proposed increased occupancy (both residential and commercial) existing residents have concerns. They would ask that some letting conditions are imposed, forbidding loud music, flashing lights or large social gatherings after 10pm during weekdays, and after 8pm at weekends.

**6.3 Night-time access to the proposed small access walk-way through Brain Yard to Gough Street – crime prevention.** There is an observable, but low-level and fluctuating amount of street crime (including drug-dealing) in the locality. Residents (and MPA) would ask that a planning condition is imposed; that the new walkway has electronic gates at both ends of the alleyway, to be closed at sun-down and opened when the working morning begins. Secure after-hours access for flat dwellers, cleaners and office workers to be effected by some sort of electronic card or code system.

**6.4 Vehicular Access to proposed walkway from Brain Yard to Gough Street – pedestrian safety.** It is proposed that this new walkway allows access for street cleaning vehicles, rubbish collection and goods deliveries to the new flats and offices.

However, parents, child-minders, teachers and young children regularly walk through Gough Street, Laystall Street and Mount Pleasant to the primary school (Christopher Hatton Primary School). Most of these streets are narrow and difficult for use by traffic and pedestrians at the moment. Pedestrian and child safety is an on-going issue.

Camden should also note that ITN has a delivery and collection access point on Gough Street, and that all the surrounding blocks of flats (and the school) have needs for rubbish removal and goods deliveries. Therefore, the immediate area is already extremely well used by pedestrians, goods and service vehicles and passing traffic.

The developers have addressed this issue in their present plans. Residents (and MPA) would ask that some traffic-calming elements are made a planning condition, in order to prevent creation of a new traffic rat-run and to ensure pedestrian safety.

## **7. Conclusion**

This is the detailed response from Mount Pleasant Association.

We like the look, sympathetic design and restoration elements of the proposal but question some details, particularly with reference to local residential well-being.

We are concerned by many of the social issues caused by this proposed change of use to a predominantly commercial office and retail hub. We are particularly worried by the lack of affordable housing and lack of affordable workshop provision.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Bennett, Ed Denison, Graeme Weston, Judy Dainton

(on behalf of MPA).

Replies to:

