

9-13 Grape Street

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



Front (west) elevation of 9-13 Grape Street

March 2016

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) summarises the pre-application consultation activity undertaken on behalf of Paragon (the Applicant), to create high quality office space on the 9-13 Grape Street site. The proposal comprises the change of use from Sui Generis Use to office use, and the construction of an additional storey.
- 1.2 This document highlights the consultation activities undertaken to inform local residents about the proposals and seek their feedback about the plans. It also documents the feedback received from those who participated in the consultation and provides details on how the Applicant has developed their final proposals with the comments and suggestions of local residents in mind.
- 1.3 This SCI and the Applicant's local consultation programme were undertaken using the principles set out in Camden Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.4 The aims of the consultation and engagement process were:
- To be inclusive and accessible;
 - To raise awareness of the proposed development and planning application; and
 - To clearly communicate the feedback from the local community to the design team.
- 1.5 A letter was distributed to residents and businesses on Grape Street, ward Councillors and local groups, outlining the proposals and asking for their feedback (*please see Appendix 1*). Five written responses were received by either post or electronically.
- 1.6 Overall, the majority of the feedback was positive. There was majority support for the use of the site for office purposes, and there was also support that the space will be flexible which would benefit small businesses.

2. APPLICATION CONTEXT

Site Context

- 2.1 9-13 Grape Street is not listed but lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and is identified as making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal. There are listed buildings within the vicinity of the site, including the Grade II listed Shaftesbury Theatre immediately to the south of the site.
- 2.2 Grape Street itself is a narrow period street, enclosed by buildings on both sides.
- 2.3 The existing building has been vacant since 2013, despite previous unsuccessful attempts to market it. As a result of this continuing vacancy, planning permission was granted in March 2015 to change the use of the upper floors to residential use, retaining B1/A1 commercial floorspace at lower ground and ground floor level. This planning consent established the principle of the change of use of the building to its current Sui Generis Use, and the construction of a roof extension to the property.
- 2.4 The site has subsequently changed ownership in the interim, and the London office market has experienced an increase in demand for high quality, bespoke office accommodation.
- 2.5 This proposal seeks to retain the existing commercial floorspace within the building, providing new modern office accommodation throughout.

Application Proposals

- 2.6 The proposals are a sensitive and well-crafted response to the site's context as well as to the feedback received from the local consultation.
- 2.7 The proposal comprises the change of use from Sui Generis Use – comprising office and photographic studios (Class B1), gymnasium (Class D2) and gallery (Class D1) – to offices (Class B1a).
- 2.8 A mansard roof extension is proposed at fourth floor level which sits behind the retained parapet of the building, providing 118sqm (GIA) of additional office accommodation. 1142sqm (GIA) of new B1 office floorspace is proposed in total.
- 2.9 An internal bicycle store for 16 spaces is located at ground floor level at the south of the site, accessed directly from the street.
- 2.10 The Applicant has commissioned a high quality design for the site. Further details on the proposals are found in the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement, submitted as part of this planning application.

3. CONSULTATION POLICY CONTEXT

The Localism Act

- 3.1 Consultation is an essential requirement for major development projects and is encouraged by both national and local Government. Indeed, the Government has put community consultation at the heart of **The Localism Act (2011)**:

"Alongside neighbourhood planning proposals, a new requirement for compulsory community engagement at the pre-application stage is one way through which this can be achieved, particularly for larger applications which are likely to fall outside the neighbourhood planning process. By giving local people a stronger say in the planning process, and making developers aware of issues of importance to the community that will need to be resolved through the design process, we expect that issues will be raised (and resolved) sooner, and planning permission granted more swiftly and in more cases."

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2 The **National Planning Policy Framework** (March 2012) (NPPF) is a key part of the previous Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. The framework acts as statutory guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications. The NPPF encourages early and proactive community engagement. Paragraph 66 of this document states that:

"Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favorably."

London Borough of Camden

- 3.3 At the local level the London Borough of Camden has an adopted **Statement of Community Involvement** (adopted 2006, revised version updated in July 2011), which sets out Camden's policy for involving communities in the preparation and revision of planning documents and the consideration of planning applications:

"We strongly encourage pre-application advice and pre-application consultation for major, or potentially controversial, proposals. Pre-application consultation provides an opportunity for local communities and stakeholders to raise any issues directly with the applicant and influence their proposals."

4. CONSULTATION STRATEGY & ACTIVITIES

Strategy

- 4.1 The Applicant's consultation strategy aimed to achieve a comprehensive community consultation in advance of the submission of the full planning application. As part of the consultation strategy, the Applicant will continue to engage with and be available to inform local residents about the progress of the application post-submission through to determination.
- 4.2 The strategy seeks to use various methods of consultation to fit the situation and purpose (namely, to engage with stakeholders and the wider public). The strategy is based on providing information and ensuring participation and engagement through consultation.

Activities

- 4.3 In order to secure the views of local people and key stakeholders, the Applicant has taken the following actions:
- Sent a letter to residents in Grape Street, Holborn and Covent Garden ward Councillors, and the Covent Garden Community Association informing them of the plans and provided a comments form, encouraging any feedback. *(Please see Appendix 2).*
 - In response to the letter, we were invited to present the plans to the Covent Garden Community Association's Planning Committee.
 - Provided a Freepost address for the use of local residents.

5. LOCAL CONSULTATION

Consultation Overview

- 5.1 A letter which outlined the proposals was distributed to all households and businesses on Grape Street, Cllrs Sue Vincent, Julian Fulbrook and Awale Olad, and the Covent Garden Community Association.
- 5.2 The letter included an attached comments form which encouraged residents to register their opinions about the proposals via a Freepost address or by email. **4 local residents** gave feedback by Freepost or via the project's email address, and a response was also received from Cllr Vincent.
- 5.3 Following a letter to the Covent Garden Community Association, a meeting was arranged for the Applicant to present the proposals to the Association's Planning Committee.

6. FEEDBACK & RESPONSE

Local Residents – Feedback

- 6.1 A total of 4 written responses were received from local residents following the distribution of the letter and the comments form. Respondents were positive but noted concerns about the construction programme, if loss of light would be an issue, and overlooking/privacy.

Local Residents - Response

- 6.2 An additional storey has been approved, and we are simply replicating that which Camden have previously considered to be acceptable and reasonable for this site, in this location. We are not introducing new works beyond that previously seen by (and agreed with) Camden. We therefore, along with the Council, do not envisage there to be any issues regarding loss of light and privacy.
- 6.3 The nature of our office refurbishment scheme will require less construction time and less disruption than the approved residential scheme. Furthermore, we will be preparing a robust Construction Traffic Management Plan – submitted in draft and to be agreed with the local authority – to ensure the development can be carried out sensitively, and with minimal disruption to residents.

Councillor Sue Vincent – Feedback

- 6.4 Councillor Vincent responded to the letter and had no concerns or objections over the plans, and did not feel it necessary to arrange a briefing with the Applicant to go through the plans.

Covent Garden Community Association - Feedback

- 6.5 On the 14th March 2016, a presentation was given to the Covent Garden Community Association's Planning Committee about the plans as they noted their interest in the site; the plans were warmly welcomed. The Committee didn't raise any concerns with the plans and were pleased that the site will be used for office space rather than residential accommodation. The Committee mentioned that the flexibility of the office space will be good for small businesses who have been hit badly recently, which has been a concern for the Association.

The Committee were also appreciative of the opportunity to be presented the plans.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This SCI shows the consultation undertaken by the Applicant with local residents regarding the proposal for 9-13 Grape Street, fulfils the requirements laid out in both the Council's SCI and The Localism Act 2011. The Applicant is committed to consulting with all local communities regarding its plans for redevelopment of the site.
- 7.2 Generally, the response from those who responded to the local consultation was positive, particularly because the site would be well utilized by providing office space as many felt this would be a better option for the site than for residential accommodation. Furthermore, the Covent Garden Community Association welcomed that the development would help small businesses, which is an important local issue.
- 7.3 Some residents living in the immediate vicinity raised concerns regarding the construction programme and loss of light and privacy. However, we consider that these concerns have been addressed positively by the design team and appropriate conditions will be secured to ensure that the development does not have any harmful effects on local residents.
- 7.4 The Applicant will continue discussions and engagement with local residents following submission of the planning application. It is hoped that by continuing a dialogue with the local community we can work together to deliver a high quality development to meet the housing needs of the area.

APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL CONSULTATION LETTER

9-13 Grape Street, WC2H 8ED

As you may know, the building at 9-13 Grape Street has a new owner who is preparing plans to refurbish the building for office use.

Although the building has been vacant since 2013, the local office market has experienced an increase in demand for high quality bespoke office accommodation, hence the new proposals which comprise:

- New modern office accommodation providing a qualitative improvement to the existing vacant and out-dated commercial space
- A new single entrance and concierge at ground floor level
- The retention of the existing façade
- A new active use at ground floor level
- A new fourth floor which adopts the dimensions of the previously approved roof extension
- An internal ground floor bicycle store with 16 spaces, directly accessed from the street
- Dedicated refuse and recycling space at lower ground floor level

A Construction Management Plan will be submitted with the planning application.

Before we submit a planning application we would welcome any comments that you might have on the proposals.

I enclose a Comments Form for your use which you can return either by Freepost or email.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like further information, please call me on 020 7566 7960 or email me at pdimoldenberg@quatro-pr.co.uk

Yours sincerely

Paul Dimoldenberg

APPENDIX 2 – LOCAL CONSULTATION COMMENTS FORM

NEW OFFICE PROPOSALS FOR 9-13 GRAPE STREET

Please let us know your comments

Your Comments

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

You can post your comments to:

Grape Street Consultation
FREEPOST RRTG-GGZK-ESHH
20-24 Old Street
London
EC1V 9AB

Or email to pdimoldenberg@quatro-pr.co.uk

