Rolfe Judd
Planning

RW/P6354
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John Diver
London Borough of Camden
Regeneration and Planning
5 Pancras Square
London
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Dear John

Applications at 10-12A St George's Mews and 136 Gloucester Avenue, NW1

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to address your Economic Development Team's queries about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two sites at 136 Gloucester Avenue and St George's Mews.

We have commissioned two local agents – BDG Sparkes Porter and Dutch & Dutch - to appraise both sites from an experienced market perspective. Both agents have first-hand knowledge of the wider London office market, the office market in Camden and, crucially, the market in Primrose Hill.

Firstly, it is prudent to put one issue to bed completely, namely the issue that we previously argued (with success) that 136 Gloucester Avenue was unsuited to continued office use. We were entirely correct in arguing in 2012 that this was indeed the case. At the time the buildings were rotten to the core and required a level of investment that the applicant simply could not have recouped in rental income over the following years. Since 2012 (and the subsequent permissions) 136 Gloucester Avenue has been virtually rebuilt. The result is that the baseline position in 2016 is a building of exceptional design quality that requires very little further investment for it to be used as offices. This is wholly different to the baseline position in 2012. We also politely remind you of the oft-recited planning mantra of 'each case on its own merits' which suggests that the Council should be looking at the merits of the case as it is now, rather than as it was four years ago.

Turning to the matter in hand, the Economic Development Team's comments can be distilled into one fundamental question: *Which site will provide the better offices?*

The Council has noted the objectors' comments that St George's Mews provides purpose-built office space with a range of unit sizes, which are currently occupied; demonstrating a suitability of the space for office use and highlighting the demand for the existing space.

With respect, it is pure conjecture to state that 10-12A St George's Mews was purpose built as offices. The absence of a stair-core and lift is strong indicator that the building was not purpose built for office use. The accompanying report from BDG Sparkes Porter notes that the likely original use was for light industrial purposes, not offices.

In addition, the fact that the building is currently occupied provides no quality indicator of the building's suitability as offices. Again, both the Dutch & Dutch and BDG reports come to the firm conclusion that in a side-by-side comparison 136 Gloucester Avenue wins on every quality indicator. These indicators are as set out in the reports and in both Camden Planning Guidance 5 and paragraphs 13.3 and 13.4 of the adopted Development Policies.

The two accompanying reports demonstrate that the proposed B1 floorspace at 136 Gloucester Avenue would be flexible, affordable and not just suitable for SMEs but actually perfect for them in a market where such modern offices are at a premium.

We trust that the reports will be circulated to your colleagues in the Economic Development Team and given due weight in the determination of the two planning applications.

Yours sincerely

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For and on behalf of
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited

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