

80 LAMBLE STREET, NW5 4AB PLANNING APPLICATION: STATEMENT SUPPORTING CHANGE OF USE

Overview

The building's owner, Sarah Curl, has considered key issues related to continuing office use and has come to the conclusion that the best future use for the building is conversion to a single family house. Issues include: location, transportation, the building's existing construction, servicing systems and security, raising employee expectations, upgrading, letting or selling the existing building and future rent levels.

Location

The building at 80 Lambie Street is the only office use within a mixed tenure residential neighbourhood. The office is not supported by the near-by business centre amenities - restaurants, coffee bars and local shops – that contribute to an enjoyable local business environment.

Transportation

Gospel Oak Overground station is five minutes' walk from 80 Lambie Street, but the underground stations at Belsize Park and Kentish Town are some distance away. The Overground is a useful route for crossing London's northern boroughs but it does not give direct access to the underground system with its connection across London and to major rail stations.

Parking is an unresolvable problem. We understand Camden's policy for limiting vehicle movements but the distance from the underground stations does result in requests for car parking at the very few locations in the residential neighbourhood where pay parking is available.

Existing construction, servicing systems and security

80 Lambie Street was built about 65 years ago as an Express Dairy depot for electric milk delivery vehicles. There was then no requirement for sustainable construction or for occupants daily environmental comfort. A simple concrete and steel frame with solid brickwork infill walls, concrete beam flat roof structure, a steel truss gable roof structure and corrugated asbestos-cement gable roof covering with large skylights is typical of many simple industrial buildings.

A very "rough and ready" approach was taken to the conversion of the depot to an office in the 80's. No attempt was made to limit draughts through the existing roof construction, walls were not lined and insulated, and adequate light and ventilation was not considered.

An air heating / air movement system was installed that, because it operates intermittently and must heat or ventilate two levels, can never provide adequate temperature control. There are opening windows for daytime ventilation but security requirements prevent the windows' use for critical night purge ventilation. A significant part of the interior does not have adequate natural light. Sanitary provision now needs a complete renewal.

In summary: the building has a modern interior appearance but the environment and amenities it provides do not reach today's business tenants' expectations.

Employee expectations

During the twenty years that Sarah Curl's architectural practice has occupied 80 Lamble Street, there has been continuously rising employees' expectations for a comfortable environment. Those expectations now include an internal environment created either by a naturally sustainable structure and servicing systems or by air-conditioning, and good sanitary facilities, including showers.

Upgrading, letting or selling the existing building and future rent levels

The building's owner has investigated the potential for upgrading, letting or selling the existing building compared with future rent level or sale price expectations. She has engaged a local estate agent familiar with local business rent and sales levels to advise on the comparison.

Renting or selling the building in its present condition for office use does not generate income or capital consistent with the owner's long term investment. The amount of work required to make a significant difference to the existing building's interior environment, including removing and replacing the existing asbestos-cement roof covering, is not supported by future commercial rent levels in this residential area.

Business plan

The current occupant, Curl la Tourelle Head Architecture, is expanding and wishes to move office to an area that is more accessible for public transport and offers more amenities to attract and retain staff. The first choice for the location of a new premises is Camden. Long term commitments have been made that would be continued with a move, if possible, to a Camden office.