

## **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, rising employee expectations, upgrading, letting or selling the existing building and future rent levels. Her response to the issues follows Camden Planning Guidance 5, Retail and Employment, section 6, Employment sites and business premises.

### **Criteria in paragraph 13.3 of Camden Development Policy DP13: potential for a business use to continue in its current location.**

- Relation to nearby land uses:

The building at 80 Lambles Street is the only office use within a large 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.

- Condition to allow the use to continue:

80 Lambles 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.

As part of the conversion a warm air heating / air movement system was installed that, because it operates intermittently and must heat or ventilate two levels, the warm air system 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.

- Provides a range of unit sizes, particularly those suitable for small businesses: under 100m<sup>2</sup>.

The total gross internal area of the existing building is 144m<sup>2</sup>. The single entrance, location of steps to the two mezzanines, the kitchen location and an open plan structure with the warm air heating system related to the single open plan space would make division of the interior into spaces for smaller businesses very difficult.

## **Criteria in Camden Planning Guidance 5: Town Centres, Retail and Employment / Employment Sites**

- **Age of the premises**

80 Lambie Street was built 65 years ago as an Express Dairy depot for electric milk delivery vehicles.

- **Whether the premises include features required by tenants seeking modern office accommodation**

When the existing building was built, there was then no requirement for sustainable construction or for occupants daily environmental comfort. A 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 industrial buildings.

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

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

- **The quality of the premises and investment to bring the building to modern standards**

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 for a building in the Gospel Oak residential area.

- **Intention to relocate**

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.

- **Location of the premises and demand for office space**

Gospel Oak Overground station is five minutes' walk from 80 Lambale 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 in Gospel Oak. We understand Camden's policy for limiting vehicle movements but the distance from the underground stations does often result in requests for car parking at the very few locations in the residential neighbourhood where pay parking is available.

Gospel Oak is not a local centre. Local centres with amenity shopping, coffee houses and restaurants are South End Green, .7 miles from 80 Lambale Street, Belsize Park, .9 miles and Kentish Town, .8 miles.

There may always be a demand for low cost office space but the rent level advised for office space in the existing building by a very experienced local estate agent is too low to meet the owner's mortgage loan payments.

- **Accommodation for small and medium businesses**

The building is currently used by a medium size business.