

## Workshops at 36 – 52 Fortess Road, NW5

Planning Statement

**Firstplan Ref:** 17149

**Date:** November 2017

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# Section 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Firstplan on behalf of our clients Alephco Development Ltd in support of a planning application for works to depot building (Studio B) comprising increasing height of existing parapet, erection of a single storey roof extension, rear infill extension, external alterations and landscaping of courtyard at 36-52 Fortess Grove.
- 1.2 The application follows recent consents including a certificate of lawfulness for office use and erection of mezzanines and a planning application for upgrading the roof and windows of the long building labelled as Workshop A on the application plans.
- 1.3 The application proposals now put forward focus on the depot building labelled as 'Studio B' on the application plans. This building has previously received approval for a roof extension, infill extension and external alterations for office use. However, there are issues with the viability of the approved scheme. A revised design is therefore proposed to enhance the quality of the office accommodation.
- 1.4 The design has considered the buildings location within the Kentish Town Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings. A Heritage Statement which assesses the impact in detail is submitted in support of the application.
- 1.5 the design has also had regard to the amenity of surrounding residential properties and a Daylight and Sunlight Assessment is submitted in support of the application. Windows have been positioned to protect privacy.
- 1.6 Background information on the proposal, including a description of the site and relevant planning history is outlined in Section 2. Section 3 provides a description of the application proposals. Section 4 details the relevant policies to the scheme, with Section 5 providing an analysis of the planning and heritage considerations. Our conclusions are drawn in Section 6.

## Section 2 Planning Background

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### a) Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site is located to the north of Fortess Grove, to the west of Railey Mews and to the east of Fortess Road in Kentish Town. The main access to the site is via Fortess Grove with a secondary access onto Railey Mews.
- 2.2 The larger site comprises two buildings, a long workshop building and a smaller depot building. The buildings are linked internally through a single door and are both constructed from brick. They date from 1930s with roofs which were replaced in 1970s/1980s. The buildings both front onto a hardstanding courtyard area.
- 2.3 The buildings were previously utilised as a workshop and depot/garage for vehicle repairs. The previous tenants, M&A Coachworks, vacated the buildings in October 2015. Our clients purchased the site in March 2017 and have since been carrying out internal works including installing mezzanines. Works have also commenced on replacing the roof of the long workshop building as recently permitted.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is characterised by primarily residential dwellings with ground floor commercial use along Fortess Grove.
- 2.5 The buildings within the site are not listed. However, the former depot building (studio B) and courtyard are located within the Kentish Town Conservation Area. The Pineapple public house on Leverton Street is Grade II Listed; as are Nos.42-94 Fortess Road. No.28-34 Fortess Road are locally listed.

### b) Planning History

- 2.6 Planning permission for change of use from vehicle repair workshop (Class B2) within re-developed buildings to provide business floorspace (Class B1) within retained shell, 1 x 2-bed dwelling on Railey Mews, 8 x 3-bed dwellings within retained shell (Class C3) and 1 x 2-bed social rent dwelling was granted in March 2017 (ref: 2015/4501/P).

- 2.7 This planning consent involved three buildings: a vehicle repair workshop known as Nos. 36 to 52 Fortess Road; a 'depot' garage which fronts both Fortess Grove and Railey Mews; and a dwelling at No. 20 Fortess Grove.
- 2.8 The existing planning permission includes a roof extension to the former depot building 'studio B'. However, the design is not workable as it results in a head height of only 2 metres, as detailed in the submitted in the Design and Access Statement by Buckley Gray Yeoman.
- 2.9 A certificate of lawfulness was granted in September 2017 in relation to proposed change of use of the building to B1 and insertion of mezzanine floors (2017/4184/P).
- 2.10 Planning permission was granted in October 2017 for replacement roof to workshop A building, alterations to entrance and replacement fenestration (2017/4731/P).
- 2.11 There is a current planning application for Replacement of existing roof with acoustic louvred roof, and installation of louvres to Railey Mews elevation; replacement of existing single access door with double doors, and installation of internal electricity substation with associated access (2017/6027/P).

## Section 3      Application Proposal

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- 3.1      The scheme proposes alterations to existing building including a roof extension, rear infill extension, external alterations and landscaping of courtyard.
- 3.2      It is proposed to raise the parapet height of the existing building by 1.3 metres to improve the head height at first floor level.
- 3.3      The proposed roof extension will provide an additional 367sqm of office floor space at second floor level. It will be clad with corten steel and have a contemporary glazing design. The extension has been set back from the existing building lines and away from the gable end of the adjoining workshop A building. It will have a flat roof design and will incorporate a green roof.
- 3.4      The proposed infill extension to the rear will roof over an existing yard space, to provide an additional 15.4 sqm of additional floorspace at ground level.
- 3.5      It is also proposed that the windows facing Fortess Road will be replaced including increasing their height and lowering one of the cils. The replacement windows will be in a crittal style to replicate the style of the existing ones.
- 3.6      The existing roller shutter facing the courtyard on the west elevation will be replaced with curtain walling. It is also proposed to introduce a new double height window on this level.
- 3.7      The courtyard will be landscaped to provide an attractive entrance to the offices.
- 3.8      The main access into the building will be via the entrance to the long workshop A building, which has previously been approved. Cycle and refuse storage will be at ground floor level as shown on the submitted plans.

## Section 4 Planning Policy Considerations

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4.1 The statutory development plan consists of the Camden Local Plan (2017), the London Plan (2016 with revised alterations) and the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan (2016). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Camden Supplementary Planning Documents are also material considerations.

4.2 The proposed works are located within the Kentish Town Conservation Area, just outside of the designated town centre. The policies relevant to the application are set out below.

**a) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

4.3 The NPPF was adopted in March 2012 and provides overarching planning policy guidance for development across England. It states that at the heart of the planning system there is a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, which should be seen as a ‘golden thread’ running through both plan-making and decision taking. The document highlights in paragraph 14 that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

4.4 The NPPF contains a number of core planning principles that should underpin decision taking. This includes: encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is also crucial, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

4.5 Paragraph 56 highlights that the Government considers the design of the built environment as being of great importance and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

4.6 Paragraph 58 specifically stipulates that decisions should aim to ensure that developments optimise the potential of a site to accommodate development, respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Paragraph 60 reinforces this, specifically stating that planning policies and



decisions should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.

4.7 With regard to heritage assets, paragraph 131 specifically states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and;
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

**b) London Plan**

4.8 The London Plan provides the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital.

4.9 In terms of design, Policy 7.2 all new development in London to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design. Policy 7.4 sets out that development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. It should improve an area's visual or physical connection with natural features. In areas of poor or ill-defined character, development should build on the positive elements that can contribute to establishing an enhanced character for the future function of the area.

4.10 Policy 7.6 states that architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context.

**c) Local Plan**

4.11 In July 2017 the Council adopted the new Local Plan providing NPPF-compliant policies directing development in the Borough. Within the Local Plan, Policy G1 sets out that Camden will support development that makes best use of its site, taking into account quality of design, its surroundings, sustainability, amenity, heritage, transport accessibility and any other considerations relevant to the site.

- 4.12 Design requirements are set out in Policy D1, highlighting the need for high quality development that responds positively to the local area, specifically referencing high quality design in alterations and extensions. Policy D2 relates to heritage and the need to protect the historic environment.
- 4.13 Economic development in the borough is considered in Policy E1 which highlights that support will be given for businesses of all sizes and seeks to create conditions for economic growth. It identifies that there is a need for more office development. Policy E2 further expands on this, stating that the Council will encourage the provision of employment premises and sites in the borough.
- 4.14 Policy A1 requires applications to protect the quality of life for occupiers and neighbours and sets out that the Council will seek to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of local areas and communities.
- 4.15 Policies CC1 and CC2 concern sustainability. Policy CC1 sets out that all developments need to meet the highest possible environmental standards, but Policy CC2 sets out that Sustainability Statements are only required for development for 5 or more residential units or over 500sqm additional floorspace.
- 4.16 Policies T1 and T2 relate to prioritising sustainable transport in the borough. Policy T2 specifically seeks to limit the availability of parking and requires all new development to be car-free. Only disabled spaces or those essential for operational or servicing needs will be considered appropriate, with no on-street permits to be issued. Cycle parking facilities are expected to exceed the minimum standards outlined within the London Plan and the Transport SPG.

**d) Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan (2016)**

- 4.17 Policy D3 sets out design principles for development in the area. It explains that proposals must be based on a comprehensive understanding of the site and its context and well integrated into their surroundings. Design innovation will be encouraged and supported where appropriate and proposals must be of the highest quality and sustainable, using materials that complement the existing palette of materials in the surrounding buildings. Proposals must enhance accessibility in buildings.

e) **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

- 4.18 The Town Centres, Retail and Employment CPG identifies three different categories of employment site. The site has previously been considered to fall within category 2 as it is afforded good access for delivery and servicing vehicles. However, it also has characteristics of category 3 as it is in need of significant investment.
- 4.19 The Design CPG 2011 provides specific design guidance, including for roof extensions. The document states that on some contemporary buildings a less traditional form of roof addition may be more appropriate. In such cases, proposals should still have regard for the following general principles:
- The visual prominence, scale and bulk of the extension;
  - Use of high quality materials and details;
  - Impact on adjoining properties both in terms of bulk and design and amenity of neighbours, e.g. loss of light due to additional height;
  - Sympathetic design and relationship to the main building.
- 4.20 The Sustainability CPG (2015) provides details on how to meet the sustainability targets pursued by the Council, and confirms that the threshold for the requirement of an energy statement is over 500sqm floorspace.
- 4.21 The Kentish Town Conservation Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011) provides relevant background information and advice on the Conservation Area.

## Section 5 Planning Considerations

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5.1 The key planning considerations in this case relate to the principle of the development, the impact of the proposed building on the character and appearance of the Fortress Grove and wider Kentish Town Conservation Area, the impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, the impact on the local highway network and sustainability. These issues are considered in turn below.

**a) Principle of the development**

5.2 The site is an employment site which was previously in B2 use and has obtained a certificate for B1 (office) use. The proposals are for an additional 367 sqm of office floor space.

5.3 Planning permission 2015/4501/P has previously established the acceptability for the principle of roof and infill extensions to accommodate B1 use.

5.4 The principle of the development is in accordance with the NPPF and Policies E1 and E2 as it will enhance an existing employment site and make efficient use of land.

**b) Design and Impact on the Heritage Assets**

5.5 The scheme has been carefully considered in terms of its scale, massing and appearance and its potential impacts upon the form and appearance of the existing building, and on that of the wider Kentish Town Conservation Area setting. It is appreciated that the scheme must respect the character of the conservation area setting, especially given that Fortress Grove and Railey Mews are positive contributors to the area. The high-quality design of the scheme has therefore been tailored to ensure that the building can be extended to meet the needs of the intended occupiers, whilst ensuring that it preserves and enhances the character and aesthetic of the conservation area setting.

5.6 The roofline of the proposed roof extension is lower than that of the ridge height of the existing roof, and indeed that of the approved scheme. Whilst it is appreciated that the revised design of the scheme may serve to increase to some extent the sense of massing to some extent, the proposed setback of the extension from the edges of the roof will mitigate this effect. The setback will reduce the overall visual impact of the extension, especially when viewed from street level, and will ensure that the new structure will remain subordinate to the existing building.

- 5.7 With regard to the other alterations, the infill extension has previously been approved. The alterations to the fenestration on Fortress Grove respect the style of the existing windows whilst ensuring that current building standards are met. The contemporary glazing facing the courtyard predominantly utilises the existing rollershutter opening to respect the existing building.
- 5.8 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement and a Heritage Statement which set out the design rationale and explain that the proposals will have a positive impact on the surrounding townscape and the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of the nearby listed buildings by removing the existing roof which detracts from the area and introducing high quality and carefully considered additions. It should be noted that the submitted scheme responds to pre-application discussions and has sought to take on board officers comments.
- 5.9 The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF, London Plan, Policies D1 and D2 of the Local Plan and Policy D3 of the Neighbourhood Plan as the extensions and alterations comprise high quality design whilst respecting the existing building and its setting.

**e) Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties**

- 5.10 The site is surrounded by residential properties including mews houses on Railey Mews and Fortress Grove, houses on Leverton Street and flats and houses on Fortress Road.
- 5.11 A Daylight and Sunlight Assessment by GIA is submitted in support of the application. This concludes that the vast majority of windows comply with the BRE standards and the proposals are not considered to be likely to cause an adverse impact to the overall daylight amenity.
- 5.12 In respect of privacy, the proposed windows facing towards Leverton Street are set back from the boundary of the building and are at an angle to the rear gardens to ensure that there is no undue overlooking.
- 5.13 Potential for lightspill has also been considered and it is proposed that light sensor technology will be used to ensure that the lights are switched off when no one is in the building.
- 5.14 With regard to potential disturbance, the proposed additional office floor space of 367sqm is expected to accommodate an extra 35 workers. The total development can accommodate 300 workers. The main entrance will be via the existing courtyard off Fortress Grove. As Fortress Grove is a no through road it is expected that workers will take a direct route to Fortress Road where bus stops and stations are accessible from and are highly unlikely to hang around the street.

5.15 The applicant is happy to enter into a legal agreement requiring a service management plan to be agreed prior to occupation.

**f) The local highway network**

5.15 It is proposed that the development will be car free in accordance with Local Plan Policy T2. This should be welcomed given the sites location in a highly accessible location which has PTAL of 5 (excellent). It follows the previous scheme which was proposed to be car free and bollards shall be located in the courtyard to prevent off-street parking.

5.16 However, there is an opportunity to allow servicing vehicles to make deliveries to the offices, to minimise the impact on other users of Fortress Grove. Again this was allowed in the previous scheme.

5.16 Cycle parking will be provided in accordance with the London Plan standards which requires 1 space per 90sqm in inner London with 1 visitor space per 500sqm. A total of 36 spaces are proposed including four for the additional floor space.

**h) Landscaping and Ecology**

5.17 A bat survey assessment has been submitted in support of the application. This found that the building has a negligible likelihood of supporting roosting bats based on the evidence gathered in the desk study and field survey. To enhance the environment for bats it is proposed that two bat boxes will be installed as part of the development.

5.18 With regard to landscaping, the proposed courtyard will enhance the biodiversity of the site by including a mix of hard and soft landscaping.

**i) Sustainability**

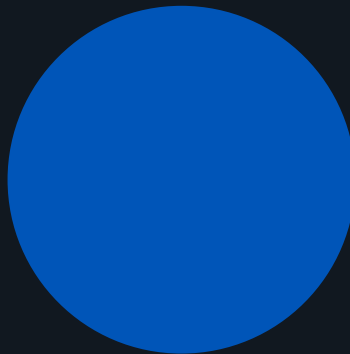
5.19 The proposed building is less than 500sqm and therefore many of the policy requirements do not apply. However, sustainable design has still been a key consideration as set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement.

5.20 This includes provision of a green roof which will provide SUDs and biodiversity benefits, as well as ensuring that the building is energy efficient.

## Section 6      Conclusions

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- 6.1      This Planning Statement has been prepared by Firstplan in support of a planning application for works to depot building (Studio B) comprising increasing height of existing parapet, erection of a single storey roof extension, rear infill extension, external alterations and landscaping of courtyard at 36-52 Fortress Grove.
  
- 6.2      The application seeks to optimise the use of space within the development site, to facilitate the use of the building as high-quality office accommodation, whilst ensuring that the proposals maintain and enhance the character of the building and it's conservation area setting.
  
- 6.3      The proposals have been designed to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers and the application is supported by a Daylight and Sunlight report.
  
- 6.4      In light of the above, the application proposal should be considered acceptable in all respects, and we therefore respectfully request that consent is granted.



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