

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Case reference number

2017/5691/P

Case Officer:

John Diver

Application Address:

47 - 49 Goodge Street
London
W1T 1TD

Proposal:

Lateral conversion to link both properties at first, second and third floor level to create office (Class B1) floorspace at first floor and residential (Class C3) use on the second and third floors. Infill of ground floor rear lightwell to provide retail (Class A1) floorspace. External alterations to both shopfronts, including awnings, and installation of timber sash windows at front and rear of both properties.

Representations

Consultations:	No. of responses	1	No. of objections	1
			No of comments	0
			No of support	0
Summary of representations:	<p>The business occupier of No.49 Goodge Street have objected to the application on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Existing office accommodation well suited for current business needs</i> 2. <i>Development would lead to a reduction in office floorspace</i> 3. <i>Development would lead to a reduction in desk-spaces</i> 4. <i>Current business actually employs 19 freelancers</i> 5. <i>Development would cause severe disruption to existing business</i> <p><u>Officer's Response:</u></p> <p>(1): During the site visit, it was noted that no.49 was fully occupied and in use by the existing tenants, a visual effects company. The claim that the existing buildings meets the business needs of this specific occupier is not disputed.</p> <p>(2): The resubmitted scheme (including, amongst other things, the retention of the basement office floorspace @no.49) <u>would</u> result in a net loss of approximately 30sqm (GIA – Gross Internal Area) of office floorspace. However, due to the low efficiency of the existing floorplates (i.e. high level of circulation space to usable floor space), this would only result in a small loss of usable employment floorspace (approx.10sqm NIA – Net Internal Area). The proposed scheme was reviewed by the Council's Economic Development team officers who have concluded that the proposed office provision would be considered as an improvement above the existing situation. Although the Council would still consider the slight reduction in office floorspace to be harmful, this harm is limited. The National Planning</p>			

Policy Framework (2012) stipulated that where a development may result in some level of harm, permission should still be granted unless *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”* (para.15). In this instance, when the harm from the slight loss of office floorspace is weighed against the public benefits secured as part of the scheme (3x resi units; shopfront and fenestrations improvements with a CA; enlarged retail provision within neighbourhood centre; affordable housing contribution, etc.) these benefits are considered to outweigh the harm caused.

(3-4): Although submitted statements have made a comparison of the existing and proposed office provision in terms of desk spaces and employee numbers for the purposes of justification/illustration, it should be noted that internal fit out works remains outside the remit of planning controls and are therefore not a sound basis/consideration for the assessment. Planning controls are primarily limited to the quantum of permitted land use only (i.e. sqm by GEA / GIA) and so illustrations of desk spaces are not a material consideration. Notwithstanding the above it is noted that the applicant has submitted internal layout in line with Building Control / London Plan guidelines for level of occupancy and desk space per employee. It is noted that (as with the existing occupiers) office tenants may elect to apportion small desk spaces than as shown on submitted plans or fit out with an entirely different layout.

(5): While the Council would always seek to protect existing businesses, planning determinations must be made objectively as permissions lie with the land rather than with the owner/occupier. In this instance, when assessed objectively the benefits of the scheme were deemed to outweigh the harm from the loss of office space and disruption to existing business tenants (see response to point 2).

Recommendation:-

Grant conditional planning permission subject to S106 agreement