

CC/P7178
28 February 2019

London Borough of Camden
Development Management
Camden Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8EQ

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
70 Gray's Inn Road, WC1X 8NH

Full planning application for the change of use of part of the ground floor from office (B1) to flexible café (A1/A3) use, works to the façade of the building and the installation of new entrances.

On behalf of the applicant, M J Mapp, we submit a full planning application for change of use of part of the ground floor from office (B1a) to café (A1/A3) use alongside works to the façade and entrances of the building. All necessary planning documents and forms have been submitted online via iApply. The requisite planning fee of £462 has been paid online.

In order to assist the Council in their consideration of the proposed change of use and associated works, please find enclosed the following information which has been submitted electronically online via iApply.

- Application Form;
- Site Location Plan;
- Drawings prepared by Rolfe Judd Architecture;
 - *T(10) P00, Existing Ground Floor Plan*
 - *T(10) P01, Existing First Floor Plan*
 - *T(10) E01, Existing Elevations*
 - *T(10) E02, Existing Elevations Sheet 2*
 - *T(20) P00, Proposed Ground Floor Plan*
 - *T(20) P01, Proposed First Floor Plan*
 - *T(20) E01, Proposed Elevations*
 - *T(20) E02, Proposed Elevations Sheet 2*
- Design & Access Statement prepared by Rolfe Judd Architecture.

Architecture Planning Interiors

Old Church Court, Claylands Road, The Oval, London SW8 1NZ

T 020 7556 1500

www.rolfe-judd.co.uk

DD 020 7556 1544

E caseyc@rolfe-judd.co.uk

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Site Description and Location

The application site is located on the east side of Gray's Inn Road, bound by Portpool Lane to the north and Verulam Street to the south. The building is a large six storey office building fronting Gray's Inn Road, and comprises of office use (Class B1) at lower ground – fifth floor levels. The property is centrally located and holds a PTAL rating of 6b. Chancery Lane underground station is within 400 metres and Farringdon station around 800 metres from the site. The building is not listed nor is it located within a conservation area. The site is located adjacent to both the Bloomsbury and Hatton Garden conservation areas.

Relevant Planning History

The site was originally granted permission on 20th March 1991 for the redevelopment and erection of a 6 storey and basement building for use as offices (Class B1). This was implemented and comprises the current building on the site.

Full planning permission was granted on 3rd July 2006 for alterations to the entrance of the office building involving the installation of a new entrance door, alterations to the façade above the entrance and the installation of two external light fittings (LPA ref: 2006/2137/P).

The Proposal

The proposal comprises two main elements. These are the change of use to an A1/A3 café and associated works, and alterations to the façade and office entrance and associated works.

Change of Use/New Cafe

- The existing ground floor of the building currently comprises office space which is largely unused due to its inaccessible location and layout. The southern half of the ground floor has been vacant due to the layout being unsuitable for office tenants; it is therefore currently used as storage space.
- The proposal therefore seeks the change of use of part of the existing ground floor from office (B1a use) to café (A1/A3 use). This will include removing the existing stonework mullions and installing a new entrance to provide direct access to the café from Gray's Inn Road and internal works to improve the layout and function of the ground floor offices. An internal link from the café to the office entrance reception will also be provided.
- The function of this café use is twofold. Firstly it provides an active frontage to Gray's Inn Road and an additional commercial use to the street. Secondly it supports the office function of the building and would be used as informal meeting areas for occupiers and guests.

Façade Alterations and Office Entrances

- To increase the flexibility of the ground floor office space, a new entrance is also proposed on the northern corner of Gray's Inn Road and Portpool Lane.

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- The façade of the building is currently outdated, and does not positively contribute to the street scene. The windows only allow for minimal light into the ground floor premises. Works to the façade of the ground and first floors are therefore also proposed. This includes the replacement of the ground and first floor windows fronting Gray's Inn Road, Portpool Lane and Verulam Street with full length windows in a dark bronze finish. All windows, doors and canopies will all be formed from matching dark bronze framing to bring a cohesive quality to the whole building when viewed from street level.
- The main office entrance will also be refurbished and a canopy will be installed to give the entrance greater visibility from street level.
- A cycle storage facility will be provided in Verulam Street and a new dedicated cyclists' entrance will be created alongside separate refuse storage access.
- No works to the façade above the first floor are proposed and this will remain as existing.

Planning Policy Consideration

It is considered the proposed application is supportive and in accordance with the Camden's adopted Local Plan and Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) for those reasons detailed below.

Under Policy E1 (economic development) of Camden's Local Plan the council will secure a successful and inclusive economy in Camden by creating conditions for economic growth. The council will support businesses of all sizes and maintain a stock of premises that are suitable for a variety of business activities. The importance of employment generating uses outside of offices such as retail is recognised as playing a crucial supporting role.

Policy E2 (employment premises and sites) seeks to protect premises that are suitable for continued business use. Development of business premises for non-business use will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the building is no longer suitable for its existing business use; and that the possibility of retaining, reusing or redeveloping the building for a similar type business use has been explored.

The proposal will involve the change of use of approximately 90sqm of office floorspace, which comprises only a small proportion of the overall building. The change of use to a café will provide a crucial service for the remaining office floorspace in the building and support the function of the remaining employment uses. The function of the space will support office use within the building, providing informal meeting space for both occupiers and guests and will greatly improve the overall function and offer of the building. This is similar to many modern office buildings particularly in central London – including examples such as WeWork. The café itself will also act as an employment generating use within the building and the wider surrounding area.

As the space is currently underutilised as it is unsuitable for tenants and is therefore currently used for ad hoc storage. As such it is currently 'dead space' which is not contributing to the overall function of the building. The replacement of the outdated office windows with a modern alternative will improve the attractiveness and overall quality of the office accommodation, and thus also support the above policy.

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Policy D1 (Design) seeks to secure high quality design in development. The Council will require that development respects local context and character and comprises details and materials that are of high quality and complement the local character. Development should also integrate well with the surrounding streets and open spaces, improving movement through the site and wider area with direct, accessible and easily recognisable routes and contributes positively to the street frontage.

Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) seeks to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. Within conservation areas, the Council will take into consideration those adopted conservation area statements and require that development makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of that conservation area.

Having regards to Policy D1 and D2 and the wider conservation area guidance, it is considered that the use of dark bronze framing is considered to be an improvement on the existing windows of the building and will positively contribute to the character and appearance of the building. Both the external and internal alterations will aid in the improved movement through the building, allowing the ground floor office space and café to both be fully utilised. The new entrances and replacement windows will also improve the overall quality of the street frontage of Gray's Inn Road, in accordance with the above guidance.

Conclusion

This application seeks planning consent for the change of use of part of the ground floor from office (B1 use) to café (flexible A1/A3 use), alongside the installation of new entrances to the café and ground floor office accommodation and facade alterations at 70 Gray's Inn Road. The replacement windows and new entrances are of a modern design incorporating traditional detailing and high quality materials which will complement the host building. It is concluded that the proposal will have a positive impact upon the character and appearance of the building, street scene and the adjacent conservation areas, and will not detrimentally impact upon the amenity of adjacent residents or commercial tenants. The proposal will also improve the quality and function of the existing office building through the supporting café use and improved internal layout.

We trust the submitted information and documents is sufficient for the Council to validate our client's application and we look forward to a swift and positive outcome. However, should you have any further queries or would like to arrange a site visit, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

Casey Conduct

For and on behalf of
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited

cc

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