

37 Grays Inn Road- Comments

Loss of office space:

The Economic Development Officer would like some further information about the current condition of the office space. Are you able to provide photos of the current state of the premises (I mostly took photos of the outside). He has also queried the asking rent (£35/sqft) and has asked whether the applicant offered a rent free period or any other incentives to attract tenants?

RJP Comment: Please find attached the supporting statement from agents Fresson and Tee which provides additional information on i. the current condition of the office space; ii. photographs of the current state of the premises; iii. a response on the marketing price of £35 per sqft; and iv. Details of those marketing incentives/ rent free periods offered.

I trust the information is sufficient, however please don't hesitate to contact should you need further details from Fresson and Tee.

Change of use of retail to mix of A1, A2, A3:

Policy TC3 generally resists the loss of shops outside of centres, unless:

- a. alternative provision is available within 5-10 minutes' walking distance; **Yes**
- b. there is clear evidence that the current use is not viable; **No evidence provided**
- c. within the Central London Area, the development positively contributes to local character, function, viability and amenity. **Food, drink and entertainment uses can affect the overall viability and vitality of a centre by eroding the retail offer**

Please can you provide greater clarity on the envisaged use, as a mix of A1, A2, A3 is very open ended. Can you provide a comment on the potential impact on local character, function, viability and amenity? Also, if you propose an A3 use, have you considered what plant would be required and where it would be placed etc? As it is in a CA, this needs to be considered upfront.

RJP Comment: The proposed ground and basement floor unit includes a mixture of flexible uses (A1, A2, A3) to provide the applicant with greater flexibility in the letting of the unit. To confirm, the proposal does not seek a single combined use of A1, A2, A3 (thus being sui-generis), but rather either A1 or A2, or A3 as a single use. This flexibility is permitted under Class V (changes of use permitted under a permission granted on an application) of the General Permitted Development Order (2015) (as amended) which states:

"Development consisting of a change of use of a building or other land from a use permitted by planning permission granted on an application, to another use which that permission would have specifically authorised when it was granted".

Following the grant of permission, the applicant would have 10 years flexibility. The use of flexible permissions is quite common and something which we have regularly sought on other buildings in Camden, for example in Seven Dials. If sought, we can provide you with example permissions.

Having regards to Policy TC3, you already note that part a is met:

- a. alternative provision is available within 5-10 minutes' walking distance;

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- i. Yes, there is alternative provision within close proximity, most notable is the adjoining co-op.
- b.** there is clear evidence that the current use is not viable;
 - i. The existing A1 shop measures circa 43 sqm. Given its limited sized, the existing unit is not attractive to alternative tenants and restricts future alternative uses. Hence as part of this application, it is proposed to provide a good sized basement and ground floor unit which would be attractive to a number of tenants and provides flexibility in the future layout of the unit. The proposal would therefore remove a small compromised and unviable retail unit and replace it would a larger more competitive unit.
 - ii. In addition, the previous tenant sought to vacate in the end due to the struggle following the opening of the co-op in 2016/17.
 - iii. Notwithstanding this, the proposal seeks to retain the A1 Use as part of the future flexible permission – as such there would be no ‘loss’ in A1 retail provision.
- c.** within the Central London Area, the development positively contributes to local character, function, viability and amenity.
 - i. The development would contribute positively to the local character, function, viability and amenity of Grays Inn Road. The existing unit is very small and offers limited alternative use a part from that of the newsagents / corner shop which cannot compete against the likes of the Co-op immediately adjacent to the application site. Instead, the development will create a new flexible unit which can be used for either Class A1, Class A2 or Class A3 – all three uses would provide the unit with the ability to react to the local market and provide opportunities for innovative and exciting new businesses. The new floor space and size would allow a tenant to fit out the unit as appropriate with space for back of house, toilets and dedicates retail provision and a new meaningful shopfront. In addition, the development would allow for an attractive roof light to the rear of the unit allowing for natural light and improving the desirability of the floor space for prospective tenants.
 - ii. Additionally, should planning permission be granted for the proposed there would be a new uplift in A1 floorspace provision of 153 sq.m (increasing from 43 sqm to 196 sq.m) – this is considered to be an important and vital contribution to the function and viability of Gray’s Inn Road providing essential services for residents, businesses, workers. This would further support the Local Plan policy objectives of Policy TC1 (Quantity and location of retail development) which states ‘retail floorspace is expected to be supported by a range of other town centre uses, including food, drink and entertainment uses’. In addition, Strategic London Plan Policy 2.10 (Central Activities Zone – Strategic Priorities) should support and improve the retail offer of CAZ for residents, workers and visitors. The proposal would provide for an important improvement in the retail offer in the CAZ and along Gray’s Inn Road, whilst including opportunities to provide for supporting food, drink and entertainment uses.

In regards to the type of plant required for an A3 use we will be issuing further indicative drawings in due course which will detail the location and type of plant, should it be required by a future tenant. As per normal flexible use permission, where such food operators / tenants are not known, details of ventilation and extraction can be secured via condition prior to the commencement of an A3 Use.

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Heritage / design

The mansard roof appears very tall (as it encompasses the lift overrun). Can you provide a visual to show how visible it will be in the street scene? Also, the surrounds on the dormer are overly thick? Please can they be reduced to be more slender / traditional in appearance?

A brick sample will be required for the rebuilt wall at the rear; however, I'm happy to condition this, unless you want to provide it sooner?

RJP Comment: The proposed mansard roof is of traditional double pitch design and detailed so to complement the previously consent roof at 39 Gray's Inn Road. The proposal will provide for a gentle stepped approach within the wider terrace, being lower than 35 Grays Inn Road and slightly higher than 39 Grays Inn Road- therefore bridging the variation in height and avoiding one continuous linear roofscape. The proposed will infill a significant gap which at present looks uncomfortable across the terrace and has been designed to provide a positive contribution to the wider street scene and conservation area (please refer to image 1 within Appendix A).

The roof line will be of traditional design, matching the style of the adjacent 39-49 Grays Inn Road mansard roof. In terms of the impact on the street scene the mansard roof will be set back as per existing mansards along Grays Inn Road and will be congruent with the surrounding mansard extensions which are designed to not over-dominate the host building.

In relation to the surroundings of the dormers the dormers and their surroundings have been designed to complement the neighbouring mansard roof, but importantly, to complement those existing boxed sash windows at lower floors (see image 2 Appendix A). This has been done so to ensure a cohesive and positive contribution to the Bloomsbury CA. We trust the windows can remain as existing to provide for the best / optimal residential layout.

We are happy to accept a brick sample via condition – the architect has not yet sought to obtain matches in the brick and will be undertaken once a contractor has been appointed.

Cycle parking

No cycle parking is proposed. The Planning Statement refers to cycle parking within each unit, accessible by the lift; however, no cycle storage is illustrated on the plans and can you confirm whether the lift is large enough to accommodate a bike?

RJP Comment: Cycle parking is proposed and is provided in each unit- with storage space via 2x 'Etsy' bike wall mounts per flat- providing storage for 2 bicycles per flat. Please refer to drawings P01, P02 and P06 for further details.

The lift can accommodate a cycle when stood upright or angled in- should a larger lift be sought, the size of the roof will need to increase to accommodate this, which is not considered desirable to the Council having acknowledged those previous comments.

Appendix A

Image 1: View from junction at Clerkenwell Road and Grays Inn Road



Image 2: Existing boxed sash windows at front elevation

