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FAO: David Fowler

1 October 2019

Our ref: LJW/HBR/JSID/J10182C

Your ref: PP-08151727

Dear Sir/Madam

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Application for Full Planning Permission
23-25 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1BA**

We write on behalf of our client, 21-31 New Oxford Street Development Limited, to submit an application for planning permission for the part change of use of ground floor retail space at 23-25 New Oxford Street from a flexible Class A1/A3 use to a Class A2 use and part change of use from a flexible Class A1/A3 use to a Class B1 ancillary use.

As such planning permission is sought for:

“Part change of use from flexible Class A1/A3 use to Class A2 use and part change of use from flexible Class A1/A3 use to ancillary Class B1 use.”

Background

Planning permission (ref. 2014/5946/P) was granted on 30 March 2015 for the remodelling, refurbishment and extension of the existing building at 21-31 New Oxford Street, to provide a new public roof terrace, private terraces, winter gardens, roof top plant and new entrances in connection with the change of use of the building to offices (Class B1), retail/restaurant/doctors' surgery uses (Class A1/A3/D1) and 21 affordable housing units (Class C3) along with associated highway, landscaping and public realm improvements.

Since this time, a number of amendments have been made to the scheme through the submission of non-material amendment applications.

The building is now complete with tenants fitting out and starting to occupy the office spaces. McKinsey & Co (floors part 6 to 11) and Rothesay Life (floors 5 and part 6) have agreed to lease a significant proportion of the building, with Nationwide having recently committed to taking the remaining four office floors. The leasing of the space to Nationwide will result in the office element of the Post Building being fully let, which is considered a huge success for the project having only recently reached practical completion.

Proposals

Change of Use to Ancillary Class B1 Use

Nationwide require up to 48 hours business continuity in the event of a mains power failure. This needs to cover all power, data, lighting and HVAC systems within their demise, but also to support all communal landlord areas such as lift lobbies, bike store and WCs that would support this business continuity. Accordingly, in order to accommodate Nationwide's move, and due to the critical nature of the Nationwide teams and the business they will be operating, additional plant is required.

The Post Building scheme was only designed to deliver sufficient back-up power for life safety systems (which is fairly typical for West End office buildings). The currently installed plant, therefore, cannot support the required business continuity for Nationwide, and additional plant is required.

In order to meet the full Nationwide requirement, three new large capacity generators with associated switch gear and fuel storage are required. Two of these will provide the back up power in the event of a mains power failure and one is to provide additional resilience in case of the two back up generators failing. The generators require a substantial amount of ventilation for cooling and combustion and so require a direct connection to outside. Due to the size and weight of the equipment, they also require direct access for maintenance and replacement.

Both the roof and basement were initially considered as possible locations for the plant. However, both have been discounted. The weight of the proposed plant could not be accommodated by the existing structure. In order to reinforce the structure, substantial works would be required in the space already occupied by McKinsey below. It would also result in an increased roof top plant enclosure which would not only potentially harm townscape views but would also result in the reduction in size of the terracing at upper levels. With regards to the basement, there is insufficient space for the plant required. Even if there was sufficient space, basement generators would require a direct connection to outside / the façade for ventilation purposes.

For the reasons set out above, the ground floor of the development provides the only appropriate location for the plant. The quantum of space available, access to free air, appropriate access for maintenance, and minimising intervention into space already leased to other occupiers, being the reasons for this.

The proposals have sought to retain the flexible Class A1/A3 units on the two corners of the building, as well as retaining as much active frontage as possible, locating the plant as deep as possible within the floorplate. On this basis, the retail unit at the eastern most end of the New Oxford Street elevation is considered to be the most appropriate location for the plant proposed.

The plant room will require sufficient ventilation for cooling the plant and providing air for combustion. This airflow will require a series of new air intake and exhaust louvres in the façade. In terms of the quantum of louvres required, these are as follows:

- Supply air = 7.8m²
- Exhaust air = 6.9m²

In order to meet this requirement, it is proposed that the high-level glazed panels above the retail entrances are used for louvres together with one of the main window bays. All of the louvres will be

concealed with decorative grilles to match those already in existence around the building including above the public roof terrace entrance which is immediately adjacent.

It is therefore proposed that part of the ground floor of the Post Building would be converted from flexible Class A1/A3 use to ancillary Class B1 use to accommodate the plant.

Change of Use to Class A2 Use

As part of Nationwide's agreement to lease the office floors, they require a Class A2 unit at ground floor level from which to operate one of its new generation bank branches.

Nationwide also want to ensure that they provide their members and colleagues with the option to bank with them and the intention is to have a branch presence on New Oxford Street. The proposed branch will follow the 4C design concept that they're currently rolling out across their branch network, as part of a five-year investment programme.

The 4C's relate to different areas in the branch – Convenience, Conversation, Consultation and Community – all of which allow members to transact with Nationwide how they wish. Whether that's doing it themselves on one of the iPads, speaking to a member of the team at the counter, or having a private meeting in one of the meeting rooms.

In order to retain as much active frontage as possible at ground floor level, it is proposed to locate the Class A2 unit in front of and adjacent to the proposed plant room, with the air intake/extract ducts required for the plant oversailing the retail space to meet the façade.

Amendments to Floor Areas

The proposals would result in the following amendments to permitted floor areas:

Land Use	Existing (GIA, sqm)	Proposed (GIA, sqm)	Uplift (GIA, sqm)
Flexible Class A1/A3	640.81	0	0
Class A2 (Bank)	0	282	282
Ancillary Class B1 (Plant)	0	199	199
Total	643	481	- 160.24

Further details of the proposals can be found in the supporting application documents and drawings.

Policy Consideration

The statutory development plan consists of the London Plan Consolidated with Alterations (2016), Camden's Local Plan (2017), the Site Allocations DPD (2013) and Policies Map (2019). Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In terms of planning policy designations, the London Plan identifies that site as being located within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and the Tottenham Court Road Opportunity Area. Within the Camden Local Plan, the site is located within the Central London Area and the Tottenham Court

Road Growth Area but is not located within a Town Centre. The site is not within a Conservation Area, nor is it statutorily or locally listed.

Land Use – Policy

Camden Local Plan Policy E1 sets out the importance of securing a successful and inclusive economy by encouraging economic growth. Policy E2 further emphasises the importance of providing business floorspace within the CAZ; especially for those businesses that support the functioning of the CAZ.

Camden Local Plan Policy TC3 sets out the Council's position in respect of shops outside of Town Centres. The policy states that **“the Council will only grant planning permission for loss of a shop outside a designated centre provided:**

- a) Alternative provision is available within 5-10 minutes' walking distance;**
- b) There is clear evidence that the current use is not viable; and**
- c) Within the Central London Area, the development positively contributes to local character, function, viability and amenity.**

Land Use – Consideration

The conversion of the ground floor space to ancillary Class B1 use, to provide Nationwide's required plant, would result in the creation of an additional 199sqm of ancillary Class B1 floorspace.

The proposals have come about as a result of Nationwide taking the remainder of the office space within the Post Building. As such, the proposals are considered to be critical in Nationwide being able to occupy the building and locate within this part of the Borough.

Nationwide's proposed new Tech Hub will see them recruit hundreds of digital and technology positions which will all work within the new building, they'll be responsible for delivering new customer experiences, ensuring they reflect their mutual brand, whilst developing services and products fit for a digital age. In total Nationwide will be moving / recruiting up to approximately 1,000 people into the building, with initial occupation planned for Q1 2020 and completion within the first 6 months of the year. They will also be consolidating teams from temporary offices across London into the Post Building.

The proposed state of the art fit out is designed to focus on new ways of working and employee wellbeing. One of the key reasons they chose the location is because of the fantastic local amenities, they believe they help provide a quality employer proposition and support their overall offering.

Nationwide want to play a key part in the local community and hope that by providing space for use, they do just that. They'd love to welcome local community groups to meet, local start-ups to knowledge share and co-create, offer local businesses the opportunity to showcase their products / services and as well as partner with local charities for fund raising and volunteering opportunities.

Policy E2 specifically supports those functions that are important to the CAZ; Nationwide's occupation of the Post Building, which is within the Tottenham Court Road Growth Area, will provide a significant economic contribution to the growth area while also providing a significant quantum of jobs.

It is therefore considered that the proposals align with Policy E1 and E2 as both these policies encourage employment uses and job creation within the growth areas and CAZ.

The proposals would result in the loss of 640.81sqm of flexible Class A1/A3 use, albeit that Class A2 uses fall within the wider retail use class and accordingly it is only the floor space proposed to be converted to Nationwide's plant that would be lost as a result of these proposals. Whilst the loss of flexible retail / restaurant use in this location is regrettable, it is considered that the criteria of Policy TC3 are met, as summarised below:

- a) The site is located within the Central London Area. Whilst not located within a Town Centre, the site sits in close proximity to the Central London Frontages of Tottenham Court Road / Charing Cross Road / New Oxford Street, and High Holborn / Kingsway. These areas provide some of the best shopping facilities in London. Similarly, the site will continue to retain flexible retail and restaurant uses at ground floor level around the remainder of the site.
- b) The retail market is extremely tough at the moment. Whilst it may be possible to let the flexible ground floor space over time, the applicant has faced difficulties in letting the existing permitted uses and has previously provided evidence of the challenges associated with letting retail space in this area. This is evidenced by the non-material amendment applications submitted to introduce new flexible uses and increase the attractiveness of the ground floor spaces to potential occupiers.
- c) The proposals will result in the occupation of the upper office floors of the Post Building being occupied by a good quality tenant. The occupation of the office building will positively contribute to local character, function, viability and amenity and bring economic benefits to the borough. The proposals will also introduce a Class A2 use at ground floor level. The provision of a Class A2 use would be beneficial to those living and working in the area, providing a neighbourhood bank, at a time where banks are closing many of their branches. The differentiation in uses would assist in creating an occupied and vibrant development in accordance with criterion (c).

Design – Policy

Local Plan Policy D1 encourages developments to be of the highest quality in design terms. Ensuring developments respect the local character, use high quality materials and integrate well with their surroundings. Policy D3 of the plan also expects a high standard of design in frontages and shopfronts.

Design – Consideration

The design and proposed finish for the grilles is the same as those that already exist in other areas across the retail ground floor façade, to provide visual continuity and a consistent quality of detail and finish.

In order to provide for access for maintenance, secondary escape and future plant replacement, a circa 1.6m deep lobby is proposed between the external façade and the proposed plant area. To maintain a level access, a small ramped area is proposed within this lobby.

An active frontage has been maintained as far as possible to ensure as much activity as possible, at street level, is retained.

Air Quality – Policy

Policy CC4 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that the impact of developments on air quality is mitigated to ensure that exposure to poor air quality is reduced in the borough.

Air Quality – Consideration

The impact on air quality is within the limits set out in the Local Plan. The generators are to be used infrequently and the emission limits at the point of discharge louvres would not exceed more than the stated amount for NO₂ and PM. CO emission are also below the limits set out in policy.

The exhaust louvres are not considered to affect pedestrians or adjacent properties as they will be located 4 metres above street level and any adjacent windows will be closed; reducing exposure to these emissions. As such, the proposals align with policy and should be supported by Camden.

Noise – Policy

Policy A4 of Camden's Local Plan seeks to ensure that noise and vibration is controlled and managed and developments should have regard to Camden's Noise and Vibration Thresholds. The Council do not accept development that will generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts. The Council will only grant permission for noise generating development, including any plant and machinery, if it can be operated without causing harm to amenity.

Noise – Consideration

The Acoustic Report, prepared by Arup and Hann Tucker Associates, highlights 10 Bloomsbury Way as the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

The report found that the additional plant proposed would not breach the Council's noise emission limits during the day and evening but has the potential to, should the plant be operated during the night (23:00-07:00).

The proposed generators will only be operational during a power outage, plus during occasional testing, which would take place in the daytime and/or evening. The night-time breach, therefore, will be an extremely rare occurrence and only in the event of an overnight power outage. Even in the unlikely event that the plant is required to operate overnight, 10 Bloomsbury Way is a commercial building, which would be unlikely to be occupied between the hours of 23:00 and 07:00. The nearest residential units are unaffected by the additional plant.

The additional plant is necessary for Nationwide to occupy the building. This small technical breach in noise limits during the night period is considered insignificant when compared to the many benefits Nationwide will bring to the borough in terms of job creation and economic growth.

The intention is for the Post Building to become the strategic London location for Nationwide. In order to ensure this, it is vital that the critical business units have an appropriate level of resilience to operate. They require additional space in order to house the appropriate resilience infrastructure.

Application Documentation

In accordance with the requirements of Camden Council we enclose the following:

- Completed application form and certificate;
- CIL forms;
- Site location plan, prepared by AHMM;
- Site plan, prepared by AHMM;
- Existing and proposed plans, sections and elevations, prepared by AHMM;
- Design and access statement, prepared by AHMM; and
- Air quality note, prepared by Arup.

The requisite planning application fee of £462 (+ £25.00 payment processing fee) has been paid to Camden Council via the Planning Portal (PP-08151727) using the relevant payment reference number.

Should Officers have any queries, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Hannah Bryant (0207 333 6427) or Jai Sidhu (0203 486 3666) of this office.

Yours faithfully,



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