

Date: 20 April 2020

our ref: 380-1/02

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**For
UPPER FLAT
5 BRECKNOCK ROAD
LONDON - N7 0BL**



This Design and Access Statement has been developed in accordance with the guidance and requirements of Camden Council for validation of the planning application. The document has been prepared following a viewing of the site and surroundings. The proposals for the site are considered in the following text and the accompanying drawings.

SUMMARY PROPOSALS

This Design and Access Statement supports a retrospective Planning Application for a change of use and conversion of 1st and 2nd floor single self-contained residential accommodation, use class C3 into two separate HMO units, within sui generis category.

SETTING

The property is located within the eastern boundary of Camden council, between Kentish Town and Holloway at the south western side of Brecknock Road and west of Camden Road. The site is located in an area that is very urban in character. The immediate surrounding of the site is busy with content of mixed use, mainly residential but with numerous small shops, restaurants and cafes along Brecknock Road. Interestingly, at the southwestern border of the site there are architectural remnants of industrial activities that use to be present in the area. Further away from the road the area appears almost entirely residential in character with green open spaces belonging to the local authority and the large housing estates. The location exhibits very close community spirit with many small businesses being present at ground floor levels and residential accommodation above. It is closely knitted in the network of roads and post war developments which regenerated the area.



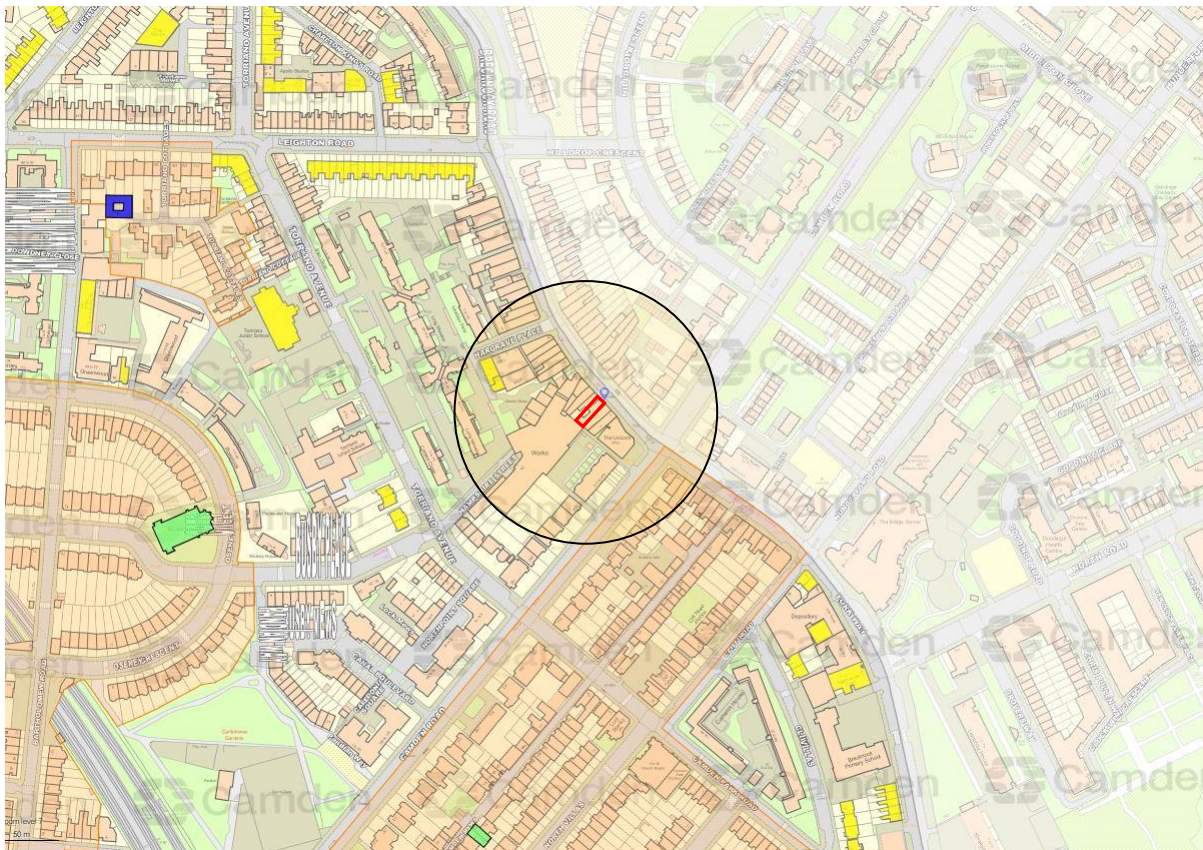
Ariel view of the area

The property belongs to a parade of 5 identical houses which are a part of wider commercial activities at this stretch of Brecknock Road between Camden Road and Leighton Road. The residential accommodation above the shops is predominantly for rental with many buildings being licenced as Houses of Multiple Occupation which is the case with the buildings nos. 3/5/7/9 and 11. Front facades of most of the buildings on either side of the road have kept the original appearance over the colourful advertising and window-shop displays at ground floor level.



Ariel view of the terrace

Brecknock Road belongs to the one-way traffic system (A5200) and it is within controlled car parking zone. Although the road runs through mainly residential areas, it is one of alternative north-south throughways and occasionally becomes congested.



Conservation areas map

HISTORY

Running from Highgate to King's Cross, Brecknock Road was a vital artery into the city for traders and farmers alike from the middle ages until the middle of nineteenth century. The stretch of Brecknock Road, between Camden Road and Leighton Road, consisting of typical three storey houses with projecting ground floor fronts containing commercial use and set back upper residential floors had been established in its present form by 1870. Houses on either side of the road were constructed in various times during the first half of nineteenth century to offer multiple commercial and retail services to the densely populated surrounding residential area and to serve the nearby Metropolitan Cattle Market which opened in 1855. The group of five terrace houses is typical early Victorian mixed-use development. Each house is with fronts projecting 3.0m from the main front façade. The front elevations are in fair faced brick, stucco coin stones and two sash windows at each floor surrounded by mouldings and with 1st floor windows capped by pediments. The rear elevations are of more utilitarian character and are in exposed yellow stock brick with yellow sand mortar pointing. Originally houses were built without upper floors rear projections, but alterations have been constructed over the time to all of them resulting in rear extensions of various forms and shapes. Hipped butterfly roofs are hidden by the parapet walls at the front and exposed at the rear.

Although dating from the middle of 19th century, the property which is the subject of this planning application is not within any designated Conservation area and it is not listed or building of any special architectural or historic interest.



OS map 1870

By the beginning of 19th century the area was clearly defined in its present form with a network of roads, streets and open spaces.

THE PROPERTY

No 5 Brecknock Road, the subject of this planning application, is a mixed-use property consisting of A1 class, retail use at the ground floor and C3 residential accommodation on two upper floors. The shop has direct access from the road through the entrance positioned in the middle of shopfront. The shop occupies the front of the ground floor with the rear being used as ancillary retail use mainly for storage of shop stocks. To the left of the window shop, a door and the corridor lead the access to the 1st and 2nd floor maisonette.

There are no provisions for communal waste bins. The waste bags placed by the residents on the pavement edge are collected regularly by the council. The small rear yard belongs to the shop and it is not accessible from the street or upper accommodation. The property does not benefit from the off-street parking, but being within the parking controlled area, two parking permits are allocated to residential use.

Being in an area with the good transport facilities, not far from couple of tube stations, major transport hubs like King's Cross and St Pancras and metropolitan universities, the flat was supposed to be attractive opportunity for potential tenants in the buoyant rental market. Unfortunately, that was not the case.



Front elevation

Having experienced rental shortfalls for some years, the owners of the property had applied to Camden Council housing department to obtain a license for a House of Multiple Occupation in the hope that the licensed premises would have attracted regular tenants.

The licence no. 053395 (appended to this D&E statement) issued by Camden Council on 15th of August 2017 granted occupation of maximum 5 persons for the accommodation consisting of 4 bedrooms, 1 kitchen/dining, one shared bathroom and one ensuite toilet. The licence also imposed numerous conditions regarding health and safety and living standards that had to be implemented within certain period.

Following the grant of the HMO licence, the property was placed on the rental market and within the first year was not being able to attract enough interest to secure the rental to its full potential. At the time, the local estate agents who were appointed to manage the property rentals suggested that the need for refurbishment of the property was one of probable reasons for the lack of rental demand.

The timing of the comments coincided with the expiry of the period of non-compliance granted by the licence. A decision was made to carry out the well overdue extensive refurbishment of the property and to maximise its commercial potential. The scheme to extend the floor area by creating additional storey to the rear projection was submitted to Camden Council for approval. At the time, the applicant was not aware that change of residential status of the property into HMO required planning permission so the planning application ref no. 2018/4784/P did not include a request for change of use for the upper floor's residential accommodation, C3 use into HMO accommodation, sui generis. The planning permission for the rear extension (appended to this D&E statement) was received on 4th of January 2019.

During the construction period that followed, the estate agents reported that the local market was saturated with large rental accommodation units with most of them not being fully let. A decision was made to take this comment on board and to split the single maisonette into two separate HMO units. The amendments to the scheme were made while still in the construction, in order to improve lettable of the property. A retrospective Planning Application ref no. 2019/6149/P was submitted for the as built scheme. The general lack of the relevant information within the application package resulted into its withdrawal.

THE PROPOSAL

This Planning application is combining and correcting all the omissions of the previous planning applications and seeking to legalise the as built situation by identifying the following needs and reasons for development:

- To improve accommodation layouts in line with the modern standards of living
- To answer requirements of the current Building Regulations
- To satisfy HMO licensing conditions.
- To improve HMO and social housing stock in the area and in the borough.
- To answer the trend and demands of the local rental market
- To offer a smaller HMO accommodation to the local rental market
- To contribute to the current shortfall in the affordable housing
- To contribute to the current shortfall in general housing stock
- To provide an attractive option for potential tenants.
- To enhance letting potential of the property
- To secure viability of the property for the future.

The resulting two units make much better and more efficient use of the available space and fully adhere to the requirements of HMO standards as follows:

- The number of bedrooms is increased from the four bedrooms to six in total.
- Each of the unit contains three bedrooms
- There is one common kitchen/dining/living room of 15 m² in each unit
- There is one bathroom containing WC, wash hand basin, and shower in each unit
- Floor areas of four bedrooms are above 7.1m² making them suitable for occupation of 1 person
- Two bedrooms are larger than 10.2 m² in floor area and suitable for occupation of 2 persons

With the improved floor layouts, the 1st floor unit could accommodate 3 persons and the 2nd floor unit 4 persons, increasing the maximal number of tenants to 7 in total. The ability to house increased number of tenants would positively contribute to the government initiative for the creation of affordable housing and help mitigate, albeit on the small scale, the current shortage of housing in general.

In addition to the increase of the potential to accommodate more persons, the property has been refurbished to the contemporary building standards and to the requirements of Building Regulations and HMO licensing. It is also addressing the needs identified to develop quality of living and insure its pleasant use for the tenants.

Access statement

The proposed main entrance design integrates the needs of disability access, flexibility and adaptability for various requirements and for all ages and circumstances as far as possible within the existing historical context. The access arrangement together with the carried out staircase adjustment during the recent refurbishment and the common entrance corridor arrangement are to remain as existing.

Summary

This retrospective planning application is seeking to mitigate the current situation which is lacking a planning approval for the change of use for the upper floors of this property and which was exacerbated by the creation of two separate HMO units.

The intention to divide the original accommodation to two separate HMO units was driven by the contemporary market requirements where people are not very perceptive to the idea of sharing common facilities with a large number of unrelated or unknown persons. The proposals affect only interior of the part of the building and will not adversely affect the setting of the property in the wider context in general.

The property would benefit from the improvements to deal with those aspects that are presently detrimental to the viability of the building, the immediate area and to the users of the surrounding buildings. These are dealt with, insofar as is possible, by the modifications described in this application. The change of use and alterations that were carried out will meet the applicant's desire to provide good quality accommodation and to enhance and preserve quality of the building stock in the area as well as contribute to the amount of social housing within the borough.

APPENDIX:

- HMO License no. 053395
- Decision notice ref no. 2018/4784/P
- Letter from Estate Agents 01
- Letter from Estate Agents 02