

Marketing evidence and use viability assessment

For **93 Agar Grove, London, NW1 9UE**

Project **Change of use of a part of the ground floor from minicab command center (Class B1) to a one bedroom flat (Class C3) and subsequent internal and external alterations.**



London Borough of Camden

Revision (→) May 2021

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1.0 Introduction

We apply on behalf of our client to seek planning permission from Camden Council to change the use of the ground floor (former) minicab office at 93 Agar Grove into a one bedroom flat (Class C3)

The site is located at an end-of-terrace plot on Agar Grove. The existing mixed use building (office use at the lower ground and ground floors and residential above) is a detached Georgian property within Camden Square Conservation Area.

Since the closure of the previous business, the commercial unit at the ground floor has been vacant for more than 5 years which led to the natural deterioration of finishes and the existing fascias and shop front are worn and dilapidated.

2.0 Planning Policy

Camden's Local Plan (2017), Policy E2 states that the following should be submitted to support a planning application involving loss of employment space:

- *“evidence of marketing over two years,*
- *a viability assessment which considers the ability of the current or alternative employment use to continue.”*

Further, Camden's planning guidance adds the following detail to the evidence of marketing in relation to loss of employment:

The Council will require evidence of a marketing exercise to support an application involving the loss of employment uses, in line with Local Plan policy E2. As a minimum, we will expect marketing exercises to include the following:

- *Use of a reputable local or national agent with a track record of letting employment space in the borough;*
- *A visible letting board on the property (constant throughout the marketing period);*
- *Marketing material should be published on the internet, including popular online property databases such as Focus and should include local or specialist channels where appropriate –*

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e.g. jewellery-specific press in Hatton Garden, through Business Improvement Districts, the GLA's Open Workspace Group or other workspace providers;

- *Existing lawful use of the advertised premises should be included in the marketing materials;*
- *Continuous marketing over at least 2 years from when the letting board is erected and the property is advertised online (i.e. not simply from when agents were appointed) to the date of the submission of the planning application;*
- *Advertised rents should be reasonable, reflecting market rents in the local area and the condition of the property;*
- *Lease terms should be attractive to the market: be for at least three years, with longer terms, up to five years or longer, if the occupier needs to undertake some works and/or include short term flexible leases for smaller premises which are appropriate for SMEs; appropriate rent-free periods should be offered to cover necessary fit out or refurbishment costs.*
- *A commentary on the number and details of enquiries received, such as the number of viewings and the advertised rent at the time, including any details of why the interest was not pursued; and*
- *Where there is an existing employment use then we will require evidence that the tenant intends to move out."*

3.0 Marketing evidence

The existing office unit has been continuously advertised since 15.10.2016 at a price of £14,000 p/a and there has been minimal interest in the property.

The first 2 pages of **appendix B** include letters from the real estate agent addressed to the applicant (freeholder) and which constitute evidence of the continuous marketing exercise complying with the Council Policy.

Additionally the street view photograph within **appendix B** shows the most current letting board, as installed following the estate agent's name change in Nov. 2019.

Lastly, the end page of **appendix B** constitutes a letter from the estate agent which indicates the asking price, adds detail regarding the interest in the property and re-iterates the start date (year) of the marketing exercise.

Additionally, the Council's Policy Guidance adds:

"The Council will consider shorter marketing periods in the following circumstances:

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- *where the premises have been completely vacant for at least three continuous years up to the date of the submission of the planning application"*

Consequently, should the Council consider that the evidence of marketing provided is insufficient, it should be regarded that the property is completely vacant since early 2016 (**more than 5 years**) to date.

4.0 Conclusions

We've shown that the property has been marketed for a period longer than the minimum required by Camden's planning policy, by a reputable agent with 25 years of experience locally and attached evidence of the letting board as displayed.

We append evidence to clarify that the property has been marketed at the market price and the attached commentary on the public interest in the premises which has been minimal.

Additionally, we establish that should the Council find any of the marketing evidence to be insufficient or inconclusive, it should be taken into consideration that the premises has been completely vacant for more than 3 years.

In view of the issues raised the Council is respectfully recommended to grant planning permission for the development as proposed.