

21st January 2022

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Dilke House, 1 Malet Street - 2021/5145/P

Dear Josh,

We write in response to your email of January 5th which requested further information about the most recent uses of the property, and details of when the property was vacated.

Until the end of July 2020, the property was occupied by a combination of tenants from the University of London's Member Institutions (IALS, Queen Mary and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)) and third-party commercial office tenants. Similarly, the planning history included within the Planning Statement demonstrates that the building has been used by tenants both as offices and for university and education purposes as a result of its location within the Bloomsbury Campus area.

Following the vacation of tenants, the applicant was advised by Knight Frank that new tenants could not be found if the building was left in its existing poor condition. Consequently, internal refurbishment works have been undertaken to ensure that the building is more attractive to potential tenants. The applicant tendered for letting agency services in 2021 and each tendering agent suggested that Higher Education tenants would be significantly more attracted to the property than commercial tenants as a result of the site's location within the Bloomsbury Campus and Knowledge Quarter.

The character of the area, which is defined by educational rather than commercial uses, is highlighted within the map below. Dilke House is highlighted in red outline:



Following the advice from agents, the applicant approached all of the University of London's member institutions (UCL, Birkbeck, SOAS, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine etc.) but none expressed an interest. Feedback was typically that they would have been interested if they could use the building for teaching and not just office.

No interest was received from commercial tenants and following this, in summer 2021, Glion Institute of Higher Education (<https://www.glion.edu/>) originally approached the applicant with the need for office accommodation as they had intended to move from their City offices (currently offices are in the City and teaching is at Roehampton). Following a site visit they raised the possibility of combining their two existing sites into one realising the benefits to their business and their students of bringing both sides of their business into one area within close proximity of other Higher Education Institutions in the Bloomsbury Knowledge Quarter.

Camden Local Plan describes the Knowledge Quarter as a cluster of academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations large and small, all within a one mile radius of King's Cross, that falls partly in Central London. 2.52 of the Local Plan states that the Council will:

"Support the concentration of medical, educational, cultural and research institutions within Central London that form an integral part of the Knowledge Quarter"

At 4.32 the Local Plan states:

"A cluster of research-based organisations is based around an area of King's Cross, Euston Road and Bloomsbury, known as the Knowledge Quarter. Their geographical proximity and concentration is a catalyst for collaborative-based working. In order for these institutions and enterprises to meet changing standards and requirements and sustain their leading edge, there is often an ongoing need to update and modernise facilities."

Local Plan policy E1 specifically states that the Council will secure a successful and inclusive economy in Camden by creating the conditions for economic growth and harnessing the benefits for local residents and businesses. To do this the Council will support a number of measures, including:

"d. encourage the concentrations of professional and technical services, creative and cultural businesses and science growth sectors in the borough;

e. support the development of Camden's health and education sectors and promote the development of the Knowledge Quarter around Euston and King's Cross while ensuring that any new facilities meet the other strategic objectives of this Local Plan"

5.33 of the Local Plan confirms that the Council recognises that jobs are provided by many types of uses within the borough, not just those based in offices or industrial premises, with particular reference to the employment generated for staff working within the Knowledge Quarter.

Indeed, the proposed tenant, Glion, intend to use the space within the building for office use with remaining areas used for teaching. Consequently, a large number of staff will continue to be employed at the build in managerial, administrative and back of house roles (as would be expected from an office building), rather than solely teaching roles.

A review of Camden's recent decision making confirms that officers have recently agreed that a flexible use as office (Use Class E) and/or learning and non-residential institutions (Use Class F.1), would provide benefits to the local area. In recommending proposals at 70 Gary's Inn Road for approval (RN:2019/5592/P) the planning committee report states:

“The building would still provide employment within both the educational use and office use, albeit at a lower level than a whole office building (were it to be occupied). Policy E1 recognises this and states that the Council will secure a successful and inclusive economy in Camden by creating the conditions for economic growth and harnessing the benefits for local residents and businesses and will recognise the importance of other employment generating uses, including education.”

Glion intend to use the space in a similar manner to that at 70 Grays Inn Road. The main reason for seeking the flexible use rather than only changing to F.1 is to protect the existing office use class of the building in perpetuity. This ensures that the proposals comply with Local Plan policy E2 which provides further guidance on the Council's approach to maintaining and securing a range of premises for businesses to support Camden's economy and provide employment opportunities for the borough's residents, and deals more specifically with the protection of employment uses.

Paragraph 120 of the revised NPPF (2021) states planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, and should encourage multiple benefits from urban land, including through mixed use schemes. The NPPF further goes on to add under Paragraph 122 local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools.

The proposed development is seeking to utilise a vacant building by providing a key service to the area. Whilst the applicant is seeking permission for the flexible use of the building, the operation of large areas of the building will more closely align to that of an office with the space being used as student and staff workspace with a series of working desks, meeting rooms and communal spaces.

The university is seeking to educate and provide the necessary skills and connections to students in hopes to propel their career and allow them the opportunity to be best in class. By encouraging and allowing the development of educational facilities such as the one proposed the council are directly supporting London's leading role as a centre of higher and further education of national and international importance. The proposed development further adheres to the NPPF as it seeking to provide a mix of both office space and education space thereby ensuring a level of employment will stay onsite.

Policy S3 of the London Plan states that the Mayor will support provision of further and higher education facilities to meet the demands of a growing and changing population and to enable greater educational choice. The policy adds that development proposals which enhance education and skills provision will be supported, including those which seek to use existing or change of use buildings. The proposed development is seeking the flexible of use of Dilke House for Class E and Class F1, thereby using an existing vacant building for university purposes and is therefore complying with policy S3.

Furthermore, the London Plan states that the Mayor supports measures to secure and develop London's leading role as a centre of higher and further education of national and international importance. London's higher and further education providers have considerable potential for innovation supported by collaboration between businesses, the public sector and other relevant research organisations. These initiatives can act as a catalyst for economic growth and promote social mobility in areas with high levels of deprivation by creating new jobs and training opportunities for local residents, as well as supporting the growth of emerging sectors in London. The Mayor will support higher and further education providers and boroughs to identify opportunities to work in partnership to benefit from the development of higher and further education facilities. Therefore, by approving the university request to operate from the site, the council will be supporting the Mayor's vision to further extend London's position globally and being able to offer exemplary educational facilities.

The Council further support the development of educational development as Policy C2 states that the Council will work with its partners to ensure that community facilities and services are developed and will further support the investment plans of educational, bodies to expand and enhance their operations, taking into account the social and economic benefits they generate for Camden, London and the UK.

We trust that you have sufficient information to assess the proposals. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss any matters or require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

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