

Our Ref: 22281/SH/je
Your Ref: PP-11401777
Email: sharper@firstplan.co.uk
Date: 11 August 2022

Planning Department
Camden Council
5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG

Dear Sir/Madam,

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION FOR INTERNAL ALTERATIONS, INCLUDING REDECORATION, NEW PARTITIONING AND REPLACEMENT FINISHES THROUGHOUT. 31 GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON, WC2B 5AE.

We have been instructed by our client, The Mission Group Plc, to submit the enclosed listed building consent application online via the Planning Portal (ref. PP-11401777). The application seeks listed building consent for internal alterations throughout the building.

In accordance with national and local validation requirements, the following documentation has been submitted:

- Completed Listed Building Consent Application Forms;
- Completed CIL Form;
- Site Location Plan;
- Block Plan;
- Existing and Proposed Drawing Pack including Schedule of Works (prepared by Maris Interiors);
- Photographic Survey (prepared by Maris Interiors);
- Planning and Heritage Statement (included within this letter).

Site and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises a Grade II listed building at no. 31 on the north-western side of Great Queen Street – see Figure 1 below. The four-storey building also backs onto Parker Street further to the north-west and subsequently comprises a double frontage at nos. 26 and 28 Parker Street. This application, however, is concerned solely with the existing office space across the first, second, third and fourth floors, together with the access at ground floor level, of 31 Great Queen Street. It is understood that part of the ground floor of the building has previously been in separate use as a restaurant. The exterior of the building boasts an impressive appearance of very high quality constructed from classical Bath stone.



Figure 1. Streetview Image of Application Site at 31 Great Queen Street

Historically, it is understood that the building was constructed in 1923-4 and served as the headquarters for the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls but has since undergone various extensions and refurbishment works. The building now largely comprises of vacant office space across its upper floors, along with an element of separate residential use. The first, second and third floors are accessed internally via a modern, glazed lift, with a separate staircase providing access to the fourth floor.

The area surrounding the application site is characterised by a diverse mix of uses, including various cafes, restaurants and other retail uses, located predominately at ground floor level along the western side of Great Queen Street. The application site also lies directly opposite the Grade II* Freemason's Hall, which is located on the south-eastern side of Great Queen Street.

As previously mentioned, the application site is a statutorily Grade II listed building and also lies within the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. The buildings at 27 – 29, 33 – 35 Great Queen Street are also Grade II* listed, and 36 – 38 are Grade II listed. The Freemason's Hall located opposite the application site is also Grade II* listed.

Planning History

31 Great Queen street has an extensive planning history, and a summary of those applications considered to be of greatest relevance to this application has been provided below:

- Listed building consent was granted on 25th September 2003 (ref. 2003/1610/L) for: *'The installation of upper floor windows to the front elevation to replace existing.'*
- Planning permission was granted on 26th November 2008 (ref. 2008/4192/P) for: *'Change of use and works of conversion from office (Class B1) at the rear of the third-floor level to residential (Class C3), change of use from residential (Class C3) at fourth floor to office (Class B1), extensions to mansard roof, new roof terraces, balustrades, reconfiguration of existing plant and enclosure on the roof.'*
- Listed building consent was granted on 26th November 2008 (ref. 2008/4347/L) for: *'Internal and external alterations including removal of partitions and walls and installation of new partitions, installation of a new lift, alterations to the existing lift, extensions to the mansard roof, new roof terraces, balustrades, reconfigurations of existing plant and enclosure on the roof.'*

- Listed building consent was granted on 13th August 2010 (ref. 2010/2975/L) for: *'Alterations to layout of first floor timber partitions.'*
- Listed building consent was granted on 4th April 2017 (ref. 2017/0483/L) for: *'Installation of internal secondary glazing at first floor level.'*

Application Proposals

This application seeks listed building consent for the internal fit-out of the currently vacant office building at 31 Great Queen Street. The fit-out of the building will facilitate its occupation by our client, The Mission Group Plc, and bring this vacant office building back into use. The Mission Group Plc represents a collective of creative agencies that provide a range of marketing, advertising, promotional and consultancy services, and operates its office spaces worldwide.

A summary of the proposed works to each floor is provided below:

Ground Floor

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Cleaning existing stone flooring, stairs and walls.

First Floor

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Repairing existing timber flooring and partitions;
- Replacing existing light fittings;
- Replacing existing carpet;
- Installation of soft furnishings and office furniture.

Second Floor

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Replacing existing carpet;
- Removing 2no. doors and a partition and introducing new partitions.

Third Floor

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Installation of soft furnishings and office furniture;
- Installing new partitioning;
- Replacing existing carpet.

Fourth Floor and Terrace

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Replacing existing flooring and terrace decking;
- Removing existing kitchen units;
- Replacing existing light fittings.

Main Staircase and Lift Lobby

- Making walls and ceilings good and repainting;
- Cleaning existing stone floor and staircase;
- Replacing existing light fittings;
- Repairing existing doors.

Full details of the proposed internal works are illustrated and detailed on the drawings prepared by Maris Interiors and submitted in support of this application. A series of photographs and schedule of works have also been enclosed to assist in identifying which proposed works relate to which part of the building's envelope.

Relevant Planning Policy

The Development Framework for Camden Council comprises the Camden Local Plan (2017) and the London Plan (2021). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and any other relevant planning guidance is also a material consideration.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

The NPPF provides the overarching planning policy guidance for development across England. It states:

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Chapter 12 of the NPPF focuses on the creation of high quality and well-designed places. Specifically, Paragraph 126 outlines that good design is one of the fundamental factors in producing sustainable development by making better places to live and work and by helping to make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 130 outlines that decisions should ensure that development proposals will create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, whilst also functioning well and add to the overall quality of the area.

Paragraph 199 highlights that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.

London Plan (2021)

The London Plan is the overall spatial development strategy for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20 – 25 years. The overall strategy is for ‘Good Growth’ to promote sustainable development – including the use of previously developed land and buildings in a design-led approach, ensuring development is accessible and takes into account physical constraints.

Policy E1 ‘Offices’ notes that improvements to the quality, flexibility and adaptability of office space should be supported by new office provision, refurbishment and mixed-use development.

Policy HC1 ‘Heritage Conservation and Growth’ outlines that development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should seek to conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the asset’s significance and appreciation within their surroundings.

Policy SD4 ‘The Central Activities Zone (CAZ)’ sets out that the distinct environmental and heritage of the CAZ should be sustained and enhanced.

Camden Local Plan (2017)

Policy D1 ‘Design’ notes that development proposals should respect local context and character, whilst preserving or enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2 ‘Heritage’.

Policy D2 ‘Heritage’ outlines that development proposals should preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings including conservation areas and listed buildings.

Camden Planning Guidance – Design (2021)

This guidance document notes that when assessing listed building proposals, the Council has a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Furthermore, it outlines that proposals should seek to

respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly change them.

Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Statement (1998)

This Statement sets out the clear indication of the Council's approach to the preservation and enhancement of the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area and is used by the Council in the assessment of all development proposals.

The Statement makes reference to Great Queen Street within the description of 'Sub Area Two' and details its history within this. This acknowledges and references the various listed buildings located along Great Queen Street, as well as the evident mix of uses here, including a mix of offices, pubs, shops and restaurants.

Heritage Statement

31 Great Queen Street is a Grade II listed building located within the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) sets out clearly that there is a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets; in this case, having regard to the internal alterations proposed, the Grade II listed building. Therefore, the main considerations are the impact of the proposals on the historic significance and importance of the building, as well the overall design, and any impact on amenity. Each of these considerations have been addressed in greater detail below.

Heritage Considerations

As detailed throughout this statement, the application site comprises a Grade II listed property at 31 Great Queen Street. The Historic England Listing (Listing Entry Number: 1113214) provides the following description for 30 and 31 Great Queen Street:

“Royal Masonic Institute for Girls. c1923-4. By ER Barrow. Bath stone with rusticated front under steep slated roof with central pedimented dormer. 3 storeys and attic. 5 window bays. Classical style. C20 shopfront. Recessed entrance bays at ends of building with console bracketed cornices and balconies over. Over main left-hand entrance, seated attendants support coat of arms. Central 3 bays with Corinthian attached columns in antes rising through 1st and 2nd floors, carrying entablature surmounted by 4 Portland stone allegorical figures. Recessed windows: central 3 bays 1st floor with flanking pilasters carrying entablature with “Royal Masonic Institute for Girls” inscribed on the frieze. INTERIOR: not inspected.”

As set out in Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.' It is considered, based on the above listing description and our understanding of the building, that the majority of the historical interest surrounding this property relates to its exterior, with the interior remaining uninspected.

Indeed, based on a combination of desktop-based research and site visits, it is evident that the internal envelope and layout of the Grade II listed building has been historically modified and altered to accommodate its former occupants at the time of their tenancies, with original features having been removed previously, including those removed as part of listed building consent ref. 2010/2975/L. It is understood that at basement and ground floor level there is little surviving historic fabric. Similarly the second, third and fourth floors are considered to be of lesser historical and architectural value. This is further illustrated within the enclosed

photographic survey of the building, which evidently shows that these upper floors feature some modern and contemporary office furnishings, fittings and finishes.

The first-floor level is considered to be of greater significance as a result of its original, ornamentally detailed and constructed timber partitions, although it is understood that around a number of these have been removed in the past or modified to include glass and solid partitions to create fully enclosed spaces. Furthermore, it is also understood that a number of the fixtures and fittings belonging to the first-floor office space, which were considered to be of moderate architectural and historic interest, have since been altered or removed.

The application proposals relate solely to the internal areas of the ground, first, second, third and fourth floors of the currently vacant building. The proposals will help to facilitate our client's occupation of and operation from the building and bring this former office space back into use. Much of the existing layout of each of the floors will be retained, including all of the current partitioning installed at first floor level, with only a very small amount of partitioning being added. The additional partitioning proposed primarily at second and third floor level is required to create additional separated office space, meeting rooms, storage areas and social spaces, all of which are considered typical of and necessary for a contemporary office occupier. This also includes the provision of other necessary soft furnishings, floor finishes and other refurbishment works. It is therefore considered that the historic significance of the building will be unaffected, and instead will be enhanced through improvements to this heritage asset.

As confirmed by the planning history for the site, the fourth floor and the associated roof terrace are more recent additions to the original building, and therefore, these are not considered to be of any historic interest despite forming part of the wider heritage asset.

The wider schedule of works are considered to have very little to no impact on the significance of the listed building given that they are limited to redecorating, new floor finishes, furnishings. Given the sensitivity surrounding the positioning of the existing partitioning and first floor level, the proposed alterations have been designed and finished to respect these, and in the case of the new partitioning, are fully reversible.

For confirmation, the proposed works relate solely to the internal envelope of the building, and the exterior of the building, to which the greatest level of significance is attached, will remain unchanged. As such, given the limited extent of the proposed works, it is not considered that these will impact or detract from any other nearby or wider heritage assets, such as the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area or any surrounding listed buildings along Great Queen Street.

Design and Amenity Considerations

From a design perspective, it is considered that the proposed works will significantly improve and enhance this vacant office building, through facilitating occupation by our client, whilst also acknowledging and remaining sympathetic to the surviving historic significance and interest surrounding the building. The refurbishment of the existing office spaces will create inviting and appealing flexible working spaces to be utilised and enjoyed by its occupants. It is evident that some parts of the building have deteriorated and now appear tired, and the proposed works will revitalise these areas.

Given the extent and nature of the proposed works, it is not considered that these will have any detrimental impacts on neighbouring or surrounding amenities. The proposals simply involve refurbishment and internal fit-out works to the upper floors of the building to facilitate its use as office space again. The existing roof terrace space connected to the fourth floor has also already been considered acceptable in principle. The proposed works relating to this particular area will simply involve making this space good and usable in association with the office space again.

It is therefore considered that the proposals adhere to the previously identified national and local planning policies, including Policies D1 and D2.

Design and Access Statement

Use

The application site is currently vacant but already benefits from a lawful office use. This will not change as a result of the proposals and these will simply facilitate the reoccupation of this premises as an office.

Amount and Scale

The works solely involve minor internal layout reconfigurations comprising removing, replacing and installation partitioning to create new working and social spaces, as well as other minor associated refurbishment works.

Layout and Appearance

The internal physical layout of the existing building will remain largely unchanged, with only very minor alterations to the existing partitioning used to divide the first and second floor office spaces. The proposals will not result in any uplift or change in the existing overall floorspace of the building. The internal appearance of the building will be significantly improved by the proposed refurbishment works which will assist in facilitating the occupation of the vacant office space by our client.

The proposals relate solely to the internal area of the building and will not alter or change the existing external appearance of the Grade II listed building.

Landscaping

The proposals do not involve any landscaping.

Access

Access to and from the upper parts of the building is gained through the existing ground floor entrance doorway which fronts onto Great Queen Street. This entrance is to be retained and will remain unchanged as part of the proposals. Furthermore, the internal layout of the building will also remain accessible for all users of these spaces.

Sustainable Design Statement

As outlined throughout this statement, this application simply seeks listed building consent for the internal refurbishment and fit-out of the upper floors of this Grade II listed building. The proposed works are modest in scale and do not involve any energy efficient services, technologies or renewable energy generation, urban greening, SuDs or biodiversity elements. From a heritage perspective, as explained within the preceding sections of this statement, it is not considered that the proposed internal works will detract from the character or significance of the listed building or the wider conservation area and these will remain sympathetic to the more traditional elements of the building through its design and choice of materials. Furthermore the proposals do not involve the creation of any additional or new floorspace.

Conclusions

This application seeks listed building consent for the internal fit-out of the currently vacant office building at 31 Great Queen Street to facilitate its occupation by our client, The Mission Group Plc. Despite being a Grade II listed building located within the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area, it is evident that parts of

the vacant office building have previously undergone various internal alterations and have been modified to accommodate its previous tenants.

The proposed changes are considered modest in scale and amount and have been sensitively considered to ensure that the works do not negatively impact or detract from the significance of the building and any remaining historic interest associated with this heritage asset. The proposals will assist in facilitating the reuse of this currently vacant office building by our client and will significantly enhance and refresh its internal appearance.

We therefore trust that you have the necessary information and we look forward to receiving confirmation that this application has been validated in due course. In the meantime, should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FIRSTPLAN". The signature is written in a cursive, stylized font.

SAM HARPER
Director

Enc.