

Design and Access Statement

Basement Studio, 179-181 West End Lane, London NW6 2LH

London Borough of Camden – Application Reference 2022/2118/P

Introduction

In the 1970's, the plot of land adjoining the railway lines opposite West Hampstead Underground Station was vacant. The land sloped down from street level to the railway boundary, partly behind the abutment of the road bridge. Evidently, it was not thought to be economically capable of redevelopment, having remained disused for many years.

Early in the 20th century, there had been some commercial premises on this site, possibly including a hairdresser's or barber's shop. Possibly, such a building was destroyed by bombing during World War II. The land had belonged to the Metropolitan Railway.

Owing to the difficulties of access onto the site for unloading etc., this land remained barren.

The parade of 5 shops and upper parts running from no. 169 at the corner of Sherriff Road up to no. 177 West End Lane, was formerly known as Exeter Terrace.

Those shops date from the 1920's or earlier. They were of ornate construction, with stone features such as cornices and window surrounds. They were separate from whatever building had constituted nos. 179 and 181 at that time, or subsequently. All that remained from those premises was a 6" s.g.w. drainage connection to the sewer.

In 1980 the vacant plot was purchased by its present owners and planning permission was obtained to construct the present 5-storey building of contemporary 1970's style, comprising a shop with basement, offices at first-floor level, and low-cost housing at 2nd and 3rd floor levels in the form of 4 no. residential flats. The new building was completed in 1983.

The commercial space at basement, ground and first-floor levels was leased to London Borough of Camden for use as offices for a Housing Advice Centre (HAC) and remained so for some 25 years. During part of that period, the first-floor offices were sub-let for other purposes, including a recruitment agency.

The ground floor and basement were subsequently let to the Metropolitan Police as a Safer Neighbourhood Office. More recently they have been converted to become a Dental Surgery.

The flats were sold on long leases for some £30,000 to £40,000 each. Owing to the adjoining railway, these offices and flats benefitted from natural light to windows along the flank boundary, as well as at the front and rear of the building.

The addition of No. 177 to the building at 179-181

During the 1970's and 1980's the old building at 177 West End Lane, forming part of the original Exeter Terrace, had become very dilapidated. The ground floor and basement were vacant, having last been used as a retail butcher's shop. The upper parts were occupied by a manufacturer and installer of fluorescent lighting display signs.

The building was offered for sale with vacant possession, and acquired by the present owners for substantial re-building, with a view to connection to their adjoining premises at 179-181.

Following the grant of planning permission, almost the whole of the building at 177 was taken down, but for some residual elements of the timber floor structure supported on new steel beams. The front and rear walls were wholly demolished and re-built in facing brickwork with new windows and other features wholly to match the adjoining premises in style and proportion.

The new design incorporated a minor extension at the rear, to align with the adjoining building line at 179-181, constructed in reinforced concrete with external walls in facing brickwork.

The obsolete party wall between the two buildings was taken down, because the new building at 179-181 had been built with an independent 225 mm wall on concrete foundations to provide adequate support.

The floor levels were arranged to coincide with those at 179-181, and communicating doorways were formed through the 225 mm wall to connect the two buildings at each floor level. In this way, the existing concrete staircase at 179-181 was able to serve both buildings, which became united as one building from then onwards.

Only the shop at ground floor and basement retained the no. 177 street number, having its own street entrance, and having its own gas, water, and electric services.

Following the re-building project, the upper floors of no. 177 were arranged as offices on 1st floor with residential flats at 2nd and 3rd floor levels. These floors were approached through the main entrance and stairwell of the 179-181 West End Lane building, and had that postal address. They were served by gas, water and electric services in common with the rest of the 179-181 building.

In due course, following the pattern established in the original building at 179-181, the new flats on 2nd and 3rd floors were sold on long leases to residential occupiers, and the offices on the 1st floor were let to successive commercial / professional users.

In 1985, the ground floor and basement were let for a term of 20 years to United Biscuits plc, for use by one of their subsidiaries as a restaurant. During the course of the letting formalities to this tenant, or shortly thereafter, the tenant's intention changed, in that they preferred a Perfect Pizza take-away rather than a full-menu restaurant with seating, such as Pizzaland.

The Use of the Basement at 177 West End Lane

For the next 35 years, the layout remained as described above. Through successive lease renewals, the ground floor was utilised for production and supply of Pizza for take-away or home delivery. In the hands of Perfect Pizza, later trading under the name Papa John's, there was no table restaurant on the ground floor as originally intended, and the basement was not used for food preparation and kitchen.

As a result of the above, the basement was almost wholly disused, with staff toilets at the front, and only a small manager's office in the rear extension below a flat-roof skylight. The main body of the basement was empty and indeed, the rear skylight was boarded over for security.

In Valuation terms, the tenant ascribed a minimal value to the basement, owing to its disuse, and the same was reflected in the VOA's Rating Valuation for Business Rates.

So, following lease negotiations with the tenant for a fresh lease, agreement was reached in 2019/20 for the basement to be returned to the owners for alternative uses, and for the take-away business to continue on the ground floor only.

As a result of the present re-modelling of the premises, the tenant now has an uninterrupted floor area on the ground floor, and staff facilities at the back, while the basement staircase has been re-positioned, fully enclosed, offering self-contained access to the old basement from the main entrance hall and stairwell belonging to the 179-181 West End Lane address.

It is emphasized that this proposal is for the revitalisation of an existing basement and bringing it into economic use. It does not involve any excavation or below-ground construction so as to form, or create, a new basement

The proposed Basement Studio is now well-equipped and fitted out, suitable for a variety of Class E uses. It is consistent with the use of the first-floor offices and is not detrimental to the residential uses on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Building.

Improvements to the Rear Garden

While the ground floor take-away business had little or no use for the basement, the outdoor space to the rear of the Building fell into neglect and disuse. Although it was demised together with the shop, there was no cultivation of the garden area. It became over-grown with weeds and was used as a dumping ground for surplus plant and equipment, packaging materials, broken furniture and the like. Even the paved area wasn't maintained or kept clean and tidy.

It was over-run by rodents and was an eyesore when viewed from the upper floors of the Building. It was a management headache for the owners of the Building and a frequent source of complaint from tenants of the upper floors, owing to its generally run-down appearance.

As a result of the proposals, the basement would now be in productive use, presently envisaged as a Pilates Studio or similar. The users of the basement will have the benefit of an oak-tread stairway with sheer glass balustrade up to garden level, as well as good natural light through the glazed conservatory structure. Further, the attractively landscaped rear garden

area will be available for the users of the Studio as amenity space for use in fine weather. While the area is used in that way, it is likely to be kept tidy and maintained, appearing pleasant when viewed from the upstairs floors, or from neighbouring premises.

DAS Template Headings

1. What are the features of the existing site?

- What are the important features of the property? For example, how old is it, has it been altered previously?

The Building as a whole is of recent modern design and construction, having been built in the 1980's. The present Application relates to a small single storey addition at the rear to improve the potential use of the existing basement in two ways:

- a) To provide good natural light into a dark area
- b) To offer access to amenity space in an attractively laid-out rear garden

- Are there any planning policies that might affect your proposal?

The Camden Local Plan provides:-

Under Health and wellbeing

At 1.28 Improving Camden's health and well-being, both physical and mental, goes beyond providing access to medical facilities and includes a range of measures to improve our social and physical environment.

Under Strategic objectives

At 1.35 11. To improve health and well-being of Camden's population and reduce health inequalities through good special planning, supporting healthier lifestyles and environmental improvements, as well as ensuring appropriate access to health facilities.

Under Delivery and location of growth

At 2.2 *Policy G1 Development will take place throughout the borough with the most significant growth expected to be delivered through:
f. development at other highly accessible locations, in particular Kilburn High Road and West Hampstead.*

Under "Making the most of our limited land"

At 2.7 It is important that development delivers not only homes, but also employment space together with the services and facilities that are needed to maintain and create healthy and sustainable communities....

Under Growth areas

At 2.19 A significant proportion of Camden's growth up to 2013 is expected to be delivered in the six identified growth areas of ..., ..., ..., ..., West Hampstead Interchange, The first five of these areas are identified in the London Plan as Opportunity Areas or Areas for Identification.

At 2.20 These areas are identified as being suitable for large-scale redevelopment or significant increases in jobs and homes, and are based around transport interchanges.

- Under West Hampstead Interchange
- At 2.39 The Council expects developments in the area to contribute to:
- A mix of uses, including substantial new housing (including affordable housing), town centre, employment and community uses

- Under Town Centres
- At 2.53 The borough's town centres are considered to be suitable locations for the provision of homes, shops, food, drink and entertainment uses, offices, community facilities and are particularly suitable for uses that are likely to significantly increase the demand for travel

- Under Providing a range of employment premises
- At 5.6 In order to secure a strong and successful economy, the Council will support businesses of all sizes, particularly start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises. However, premises suitable for small businesses as well as medium sized enterprises are currently under pressure from rising land values, limited land availability and "permitted development" rights which allow the change of use from offices (B1(a)) to housing (C3)

- At 5.8 The Council has introduced "Article 4 Directions" to remove the right to convert offices to homes without planning permission

- Under Employment premises and sites
- At 5.34 Policy E2 provides further guidance on the Council's approach to maintaining and securing a range of businesses to support Camden's economy and provide employment support for the borough's residents.

Policy E2

The Council will encourage the provision of employment premises and sites in the borough. We will protect premises or sites that are suitable for continued business use, in particular premises for small businesses, businesses and services that provide employment for Camden residents and those that support the functioning of the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) of the local economy.

We will resist development of business premises and sites for non-business use unless it is demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction:

- a. the site or building is no longer suitable for its existing business use; and*
- b. that the possibility of retaining, reusing or redeveloping the site or building for similar or alternative type and size of business use has been fully explored over an appropriate period of time.*

- Under Business and employment uses
- At 5.35 Having a range of sites and premises across the borough to suit the different needs of businesses for space, location and accessibility is vital to maintaining and developing Camden's successful economy. An increase in the number and diversity of employment opportunities is fundamental to improving the competitiveness of Camden and of London

- If the site is within a **Conservation Area**, describe how your proposal fits in with the character and appearance of the area.

The proposed extension is entirely constructed in glass panels within Crittall framing, powder-coated black. This type of construction is attractive in appearance and harmonises well both with the modern red facing brickwork of the existing building and with the grey brickwork of the adjoining properties.

The extension contains an open-riser stair flight in oak boarding, with glass balustrade, to provide access to the garden.

The proposed studio has very high-quality finishes and specification throughout, with modern kitchenette and well-equipped washroom facilities.

2. How will people in the locality be affected by your proposal?

- How might your neighbours be affected by your proposal?
- Who will use the development, and do they have any specific needs which will need to be considered in the design of the development?

The extension is modest in size, single-storey in height, and cannot be seen from the street or from windows in the Sherriff Road buildings to the rear.

The proposed occupier is to use it as a Pilates Studio for teaching individuals or small groups, during the day, and intends to operate from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm. This kind of health-and-fitness use is gentle and extremely quiet.

Neighbouring residents would not be aware of the activity taking place.

The adjoining premises at ground floor and basement level are presently occupied as a dental practice at nos. 179-181 and as a wine-bar at no. 175.

The offices and residential units above are unlikely to be adversely affected, especially in view of the proposed working hours.

3. Please provide details of the layout of proposed development

- You should explain how the chosen layout fits into its surroundings, for example is the proposal located to the front or rear of the property?
- If your proposal will not change the existing layout, for example if new windows are being proposed, you should state this.

The floor plan of the existing basement will not be increased.

The proposed studio occupies the basement area previously surplus to the requirements of the existing Pizza take-away unit at ground-floor level.

The proposal does not entail the loss of any residential floor-space.

The access to the new basement studio is via the existing main entrance to the upper floors of the complex, already occupied as offices and residential flats.

Owing to the new glazed conservatory, and the stair flight mentioned above, the studio will have access to the paved area to the rear, as a “break-out space” or for staff use during rest breaks.

There are no new windows other than the conservatory glazing mentioned above.

4. Please provide details of the scale of the proposed development

- You should explain the size of your proposal, for example, how high, wide and long is the proposal?
- If your proposal will not change the scale of development, for example if new windows are being proposed, you should state this.

The internal floor measurements of the basement studio remain at 15250 x 5250 mm wide, exactly as previously existing, including the single storey area at the back.

At the rear of the premises, the glazed extension at ground floor level creates a double-volume area measuring 3200 x 4900 mm wide, which will now reach some 3000 mm in height above garden level rather than the basement being roofed over with a concrete slab and skylight at garden level.

5. Please provide details of the landscaping in the proposed development

- Are you proposing to make changes to the landscaping of the site as part of your proposal?
- If your proposal will not change the existing landscaping, please state this.

The rear yard previously had some concrete paving, beyond which the majority of the sloping area was left rough, generally run-down, and overgrown with weeds.

The ground-floor tenant had exclusive access to this space and used it as a tip for surplus equipment, packaging materials and the like. It was also used for degreasing their cooking equipment and for washing up.

There were frequent complaints to building managers about its unsightly appearance and sightings of rats.

As a result of the proposed changes to the use of the basement, the rear area has now been levelled and landscaped in stepped areas of paving to follow the rising ground level. The paved areas are laid to fall towards the perimeter border at back and sides for natural irrigation. The border strip has been planted out with various shrubs and flowering plants. The final impression is of pleasant outdoor space for sitting out, also attractive in appearance from the upper floor levels.

(see photographs showing the rear area as previously and as presented today)

6. Please provide details of the appearance of the proposed development

- You should explain and justify the appearance of the proposal and how it relates to the existing buildings and/or surroundings
- You should explain and justify the choice of materials
- This should be answered for every development proposal

As already stated above, the appearance of the proposal is sympathetic with the adjoining Building both above and with the neighbouring properties, and the materials match the existing so far as possible.

For context, the adjoining wine-bar at no. 175 West End Lane is arranged with outdoor seating areas extending to the rear site boundary and provided with single storey-height lightweight roofing structures.

7. Please provide details of how any access issues have been addressed

- You should explain and justify how people will access the site and if any changes have been made to ensure the site is accessible to all groups
- If no changes are being made to access arrangements, please state this

The proposal envisages the basement in Class E use being accessed through the existing shared entrance hall and stairway which serve the offices (in Class E use), and residential areas, on the upper floors.

8. Please provide details of any additional information that you think may be useful

Further information is provided in the opening paragraphs at pages 1 – 3 above.

A noise, vibration and ventilation assessment has been prepared by Clement Acoustics, ref. no. 17812-NIA-01 dated 02 September 2022, and is annexed to the Planning Application.

It deals with the new AC unit to the rear of the ground floor extension and also addresses the ventilation system which is installed internally.

As to the cooling hierarchy, it is submitted as follows:-

- There is little or no heat generation arising from the proposed use. There is no mechanical plant involved in the work being done.
- The subject premises are at basement level and not significantly exposed to heat entering, even in summer weather.
- The new conservatory structure was individually designed and built by D & R Design who are based in Exeter but who work closely with Crittall. These companies are highly experienced specialists in their field and were familiar with the associated fenestration and insulation required. In particular, the structure was specified to be glazed with solar control double glazed units to both walls and roof.
- A system of mechanical ventilation was installed as part of the upgrade of the premises, to ensure fresh air supply, cooled at intake.
- There are three small split-cooling units installed in the premises, connected to the single outdoor condenser at the rear of the premises. This is relatively minor in proportion to the substantial external condensers already in place, serving the upper floors of the Building.

With regard to mitigation towards cooling the local environment, it is submitted for the Applicants that:-

- a. Any heat being exchanged back to the environment at the AC Condenser itself only derives from heat gained from the environment. There would be no significant heat being generated from the user of the premises here.
- b. The studio premises, located within the existing basement of the Building, are innately in a cool location. It is not anticipated that the split-cooling units would be working

actively in normal weather conditions, but they would be available in reserve during a heat-wave.

- c. Split-cooling units running on electricity can also be run in heating mode, thereby providing an alternative fuel for room-heating. This is a sensible provision while gas supplies for traditional central heating boilers are now uncertain in years to come and may ultimately be phased out, while electrical energy is in part generated from renewables.
- d. The proposal incorporates very extensive and attractive landscaping in the rear garden area, including shrubs and small bushes, as described in section 5. above. (Refer to the attached photographs).

Such landscaping provides an amenity to the Building that more than compensates for any harm to the environment caused by the use of split-cooling units during exceptionally hot weather.