

Application ref: 2021/6142/PRE  
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Aimilios Davlantis  
BKDM LLP

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Pre-application Minor Development Pre-application Advice Issued**

Address:

**75 Kenton Street  
London  
WC1N 1NN**

Proposal: Change of use from office (Class E) to a mixed use building, with a dwelling unit (Class C3) across ground, first and second floors and an office use (Class E) at the basement level plus associated minor elevation alterations

Drawing Nos: Design and Access Statement

#### **Site constraints**

- Bloomsbury Conservation Area
- Central London Area
- Underground development constraint - Slope Stability
- Underground development constraint – Subterranean (groundwater) flow

#### **Relevant planning history**

2013/5975/P - Change of use from offices (Class B1a) to residential (Class C3) to provide 4 x 2 bedroom flats and associated alterations to include the opening up at lower ground floor level to form a light well, creation of roof terrace at lower ground floor level, addition of rear balconies at first and second floor level, and side window to second floor level. – (application withdrawn 20/11/2013)

#### **Relevant policies and guidance**

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021**

## **The London Plan 2021**

### **Camden Local Plan 2017**

Policy A1 Managing the impact of development  
Policy D1 Design  
Policy D2 Heritage  
Policy H1 Maximising housing supply  
Policy H2 Maximising the supply of self-contained housing from mixed use schemes  
Policy C6 Access for all  
Policy E1 Economic Development  
Policy E2 Employment premises and sites  
Policy CC1 Climate Change Mitigation  
Policy CC2 Adapting to Climate Change  
Policy CC3 Water and flooding

### **Camden Planning Guidance**

Amenity CPG 2021  
Design CPG 2021  
Energy efficiency and adaptation CPG 2021  
Employment Sites and Business premises CPG 2021

### **Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011)**

#### **Site and surroundings**

The site is located within Kenton Street and is a four storey building near the corner of Tavistock Place. The building is not listed and is located within Bloomsbury Conservation Area and listed as a positive contributor. The building is a semi-detached masonry structure with a total internal area of 320sqm.

75 Kenton Street is identified on page 147 of THE Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011) as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. Whilst it is not shaded on the sub area map it assumed this is an error as the text of the document acknowledges the building in paragraph 5.223:

“Other buildings of interest include No 75 Kenton Street, a Victorian warehouse building on the west side which retaining its original doors and hoist bracket and a terrace.”

Whilst Bloomsbury Conservation Area is known for the Georgian terrace houses, it is an area that has slowly evolved over the centuries and the pre-application building is one that reflects the influence of the Victorian period when industrial uses expanded into the area.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The principal planning considerations are the following:

- Change of use
- Design and Heritage
- Neighbouring amenity

- Transport
- Energy and sustainability

## 1. Change of use

Policy E2 is clear that the Council will resist the loss of a business use to a non-business use unless it has been thoroughly explored whether there is possibility for that use to continue. The Council will consider the suitability of the location for business use; whether the premises are in a reasonable condition to allow the use to continue; the range of unit sizes; and whether the business use is well related to nearby land uses (para. 5.37). Where a change of use to a non-business use is proposed, the applicant must demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that there is no realistic prospect of demand to use the site for an employment use. The applicant must submit evidence of a thorough marketing exercise, sustained over at least two years. The premises should be marketed at realistic prices, include a consideration of alternative business uses and layouts and marketing strategies, including management of the space by specialist third party providers (para. 5.39). It is appreciated that the pre-application submission pack does mention that viability information will be submitted to support any full application. It is also heavily recommended that consideration of policy E2 of the Local Plan and the CPG on employment sites and business premises is adhered to.

The application building was not originally built as a dwelling house but as a light/industrial warehouse building and later re-purposed into an office building. The room layouts and sizes are not large but could still be used for small businesses and still represents viable modern office accommodation for that business type.

The proposal is also retaining some commercial office use on site. However both the size and quality is concerning. It seems from the floor plans and shaded areas shown on page 18 of the Design and Access Statement (DAS) that only 70sqm out of the 98.4sqm on the basement floor is to be allocated office space. This represents a very small percentage of the total office GIA of 291sqm. There are also question marks over the access and how independent the two uses are. These two spaces will need to be designed to operate independently of each other in order for the office space not to be ancillary to the C3 use above and so it can be demonstrated that some office is being retained on site. At the moment it appears the office can be accessed privately from the residential flat and even potentially going through residential access space to get to it to the front near the wheelchair lift. Furthermore, because it is just in the basement, the lack of natural light means the viability or marketability for this space as an office is further reduced. One option may be to remove the lift shaft and have that acting as a roof light. However overall, this is not an adequate re-provision of office space in terms of quality or quantity.

Policy H1 of the Local Plan aims to secure a sufficient supply of homes to meet the needs of existing and future households and will seek to exceed the target for additional homes in the borough by regarding self-contained housing as the priority land use of the Local Plan

Policy H2 of the Local Plan promotes the inclusion of residential development where non-residential development is proposed as part of a mix of uses. The Council will consider the character of development, size of the site, Local Plan priorities and whether or not the proposal serves a public purpose. Payments in lieu for larger developments will be required if housing cannot be provided on site.

In this case, where non-residential uses are proposed, the residential unit is considered acceptable. Due to the fact this is a small site that is not proposing any major external

alterations, the provision of one unit is considered acceptable. However the point above about requiring well sized and good quality office space still needs to be addressed.

In terms of the housing unit itself the proposal includes a 4 bedroom, 8 person dwelling over three floors. According to the national space standards a dwelling of this size should be at least 130sqm. The proposed dwelling is measured at 178.8sqm in total which exceeds this figure.

Further in terms of amenity, the property will be dual aspect and has numerous windows to the elevations which means the daylight and outlook is acceptable. The side elevation windows are close to the rear of the properties on Tavistock Place and, while it is unclear whether or not there would be an impact, in any full application there should be ample demonstration that privacy of occupants is not impacted.

## **2. Design and Heritage**

### Replacement of windows on the front elevation

- The function of these openings is to provide natural light to the staircase which is exhibited by their staggered arrangement. These openings were not originally glazed and it appears that this has been reflected in the current glazing which provides an air gap around the edge of the windows and also retains the original handrail behind.
- The alteration of the large front windows from uPVC to steel frames is supported. Currently the uPVC appears a poor intervention within the context of the positive contributor and negatively detracts from its character. Steel frames mean the overall finish will appear 'cleaner' whilst also providing a nod to the industrial history of the site.
- The windows to the centre of the building at the front are supposedly being 'restored'. The materials of the frames and casements should stay timber or be restored as such. Both these alterations should be supported by a robust material palette.
- Whilst the existing glazing is not particularly well executed with thick framing, it does allow for the retention of the existing balustrade and sense of openness to the staircase. A better option here would be to retain the original balustrade and set back the proposed glazing behind to give a sense of depth and openness to this part of the building.
- It is noted that the floor level at the front will be levelled across the whole façade of the building but there are not details with how the floor structure will relate to the staircase windows. It would look incongruous to have floor level cutting across the window opening. Even if the glazing was translucent the new floor level would still be apparent at night when the interior was lit.

### Replacement of entrance door and new front railings and concrete plinth

- In terms of the replacement of the side entrance door with double doors, this could be acceptable; however the plans are not completely clear on the design. Currently the door is a modern introduction with timber and glazing which is not particularly sympathetic to the building. Any contemporary design should aim to preserve the character of the property.
- The front railings are seemingly being updated with similar designed railings; however the proposed alterations are unconvincing. Sliding railings are not a characteristic of the area and would appear contrived as they would appear on different planes and have a metal plate at the bottom (instead of a masonry plinth). If this feature is to be proposed within any full application more details would need to be required and additional detail would have to be provided to ensure the impact at front elevation is reduced.

- Gating off the entrance would introduce an uncharacteristic feature as the purpose of railings in the street is generally to enclose light wells rather than create a defensible space. Whilst there may be some issues of antisocial behaviour, this might be partially addressed by 24 hour occupation of the building and introducing less intrusive measures such as security lighting.

### Disabled Access introductions

- There is no explicit mention that the applicant or potential buyer is disabled and requires a disabled-friendly residential unit. However the proposal includes various disabled-friendly access alterations including a disabled lift from basement to ground floor and the removal of the front stairs to accommodate this. If this isn't the case the scheme does not need to strictly adhere to the Part M Volume 4 of the Building Regulations.
- In terms of the proposed external stair lift, this will infill the front light well and therefore obscure the basement elevation of the building and truncate its appearance. If level access is required it could be provided internally without harming the exterior of the building (it is noted that significant alterations are proposed internally such as moving the main staircase).
- The stairs to the front is a historic feature of the front of the property and, according to the original plans, are an original part of the building. This element is important as a stepped entrance with railings either side contributes positively to the character. Removing the front entrance stairs would be harmful to the appearance of the building as these are an original part of the building and would leave the raised ground floor door incongruously unconnected to the street.
- The graphic shows part of the railings and steps retained with increased planting to soften to the front elevation. This appears to be an acceptable course of action and, whilst the alteration is important to create a disabled-'friendly' property, effort should be placed in both retaining original elements at front elevation and limiting the impact of the changes.

### Lift overrun

- Whilst the lift overrun will project through the pitched roof of the building, it is only by a limited amount and it will be set back enough from the frontage that it will not have an impact on the conservation area.

## **3. Neighbouring Amenity**

Policy A1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours. The factors to consider include visual privacy, outlook; sunlight, daylight, and overshadowing; artificial lighting levels; noise and vibration; odour, fumes, and dust; and impacts of the construction phase, including the use of Construction Management Plans.

Because most of the external alterations are to the front and Kenton Street is a relatively small, mostly residential, street, the proposal should be supported by some form of Construction Management Plan which demonstrates appropriate measures in places for minimising pavement obstruction, general disruption and appropriate safety measures.

In terms of amenity impacts, because there are very little external alterations, issues of outlook, privacy or daylight and sunlight are not considered to be significantly affected in this instance. With noise, the change of use would mean the ground, first and second floors are residential. This relationship is not an issue and many residential units are within close proximity to each other on the street.

## **4. Transport**

Policy T1 aims to promote sustainable transport by prioritising walking cycling and public transport. This is achieved by improving pedestrian friendly public realm, road safety and crossings, contributing to the cycle networks and facilities and finally improving links with public transport. All these measure are in place to ensure the Council meets their zero carbon targets.

Policy T2 limits the availability of parking in the borough and requires all new developments in the borough to be car-free. This will be done through not issuing parking permits, resisting development of boundary treatments and using legal agreements to secure these actions.

The DAS confirms the development will be car-free which is welcomed. The proposed two cycle parking spaces are welcome also; however there should be provision for cycle parking for both the commercial use and the residential use separately.

## **5. Energy and Sustainability**

The Council requires all development to minimise the effects of climate change and encourage all developments to meet the highest feasible environmental standards that are financially viable during construction and occupation. Policy CC1 requires all development to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by following the steps in the energy hierarchy; supports and encourages sensitive energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings; and expects all developments to optimise resource efficiency.

Policy CC2 requires all development to adopt appropriate climate change adaptation measures such as:

- A. the protection of existing green spaces and promoting new appropriate green infrastructure.
- B. not increasing, and wherever possible reducing, surface water runoff through increasing permeable surfaces and use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- C. incorporating bio-diverse roofs, combination green and blue roofs, and green walls where appropriate; and
- D. measures to reduce the impact of urban and dwelling overheating, including application of the cooling hierarchy.

No details of energy or sustainability measures have been provided as part of the pre-application document. Retrofitting the building with more energy efficient measures to minimise energy consumption (draught-proofing, thermally efficient windows and insulation) should be considered as part of any refurbishment works.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is considered the change of use could be acceptable, provided the necessary marketing information is provided. Without this the significant reduction of office space is unacceptable, even though the provision of a new dwelling is welcome in itself. The commercial use will also need to be demonstrated to be independent of the residential use and of a better quality, making it more viable. The glazing and front alterations will need to be altered and rethought for any full planning permission in order to be supported.

This document represents the Council's initial view of your proposals based on the information available to us at this stage. It should not be interpreted as formal confirmation that your application will be acceptable, nor can it be held to prejudice formal determination of any planning application we receive from you on this proposal.

If you have any queries about the above letter or the attached document, please do not hesitate to contact **Ewan Campbell**

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