

2 January 2023

Dear Ms Meynell

Re: Planning Application 2022/3772/P (and related application)

I write to object to and to raise concerns about the proposed change of use of the first-floor premises at 28 Church Row, London NW3 6UP from Office to Residential (planning class change E to C3).

Commercial premises demand – from an occupier's perspective

I am a previous (professional) occupier of the first floor at 28 Church Row – for several years I occupied a large four-person office facing to the rear with views over gardens, a private kitchen and dedicated meeting facilities, perfect for any small business. With reluctance I moved my business to another rented office nearby, requiring space for expansion.

There was a waiting list of businesses seeking to occupy the premises when I moved in in August 2013 – at that point I had the good fortune of being at the top of the waiting list. I had been waiting my turn for years. The first floor 28 Church Row represents a sought-after office venue in Hampstead, close to the tube with many businesses in and around 28 Church Row address itself. It is also quiet, important for any office-based business, and worked wonderfully well as a successful mixed-use arrangement with office occupiers and residents on excellent terms, within a beautifully maintained premises.

My personal experience is that tenant demand for first floor offices at 28 Church Row was always strong. During my 48 months occupancy I was constantly asked by would-be occupiers if I ever relocated, would I let so-and-son know and they wanted to be the first to apply. I remain on good terms with the person who managed the office, Jody Hammond, her company filled the space the day I vacated (no void). She commented to me that in the 11 years she had managed it there had never been a void.

I was therefore most surprised to see an application for a change of use for first floor offices at 28 Church Row; and even more surprisingly I since discovered that the 28 Church Row landlord served notice on London and Hampstead Serviced Offices Ltd (Jody's employer) stating their unwillingness to grant a new lease to London and Hampstead Serviced Offices Ltd - when such a consistently strong demand for the first floor offices always existed. I know first-hand the appeal my first floor offices had to office users having occupied it between August 2013 and August 2017 and having fielded many informal enquiries personally.

This change of use application seems most odd, given the strong demand for commercial users. Something doesn't feel quite right knowing the area and the shortage of office space and suitability of the first floor at 28 Church Row.

I object to the change of planning application referred to above.

Simon Lees