CITY OF WESTMINSTER				
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE	Date	Classification	Classification	
	1 March 2016	For General Release		
Report of		Ward involved		
Director of Planning		West End		
Subject of Report	431 - 433 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DA			
Proposal	Use of the basement and part ground and first floors as retail accommodation (Class A1), use of part ground and first and the entire second to fourth floor levels as eight flats (Class C3). Installation of new shopfronts and alterations to elevations. (SITE INCLUDES 35 NORTH ROW).			
Agent	Mr Jamie Bryant			
On behalf of	Oxford Street Limited			
Registered Number	15/06742/FULL	Date amended/	28 August 2015	
Date Application Received	23 July 2015	completed		
Historic Building Grade	Unlisted			
Conservation Area	Mayfair			

1. **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant conditional planning permission.

2. SUMMARY

431-433 Oxford Street and the rear building (35 North Row) comprise unlisted buildings located within the Mayfair Conservation Area. The two buildings are currently linked at ground floor level with the Oxford Street property primarily being in lawful use as a bank (Class A2) and the North Row property being in lawful use as residential flats. Permission is sought to use the basement, part ground, and part first as a retail store (Class A1) and to use part ground, part first and the entirety of the second to eighth floors as eight residential units (Class C3). Permission is also sought for the installation of new shopfronts and associated alterations to the front, side and rear elevations.

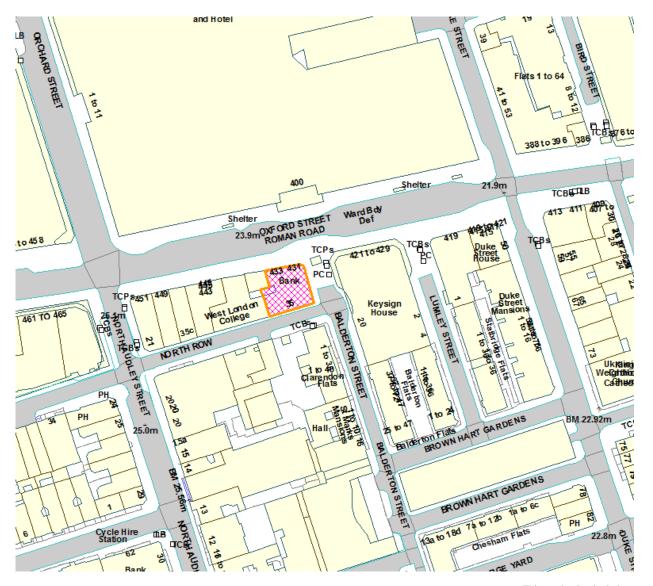
The key issues are:

- Whether the reduction in the number of residential units on the site from 15 to 8 and the reduction in residential floorspace from 778 sq.m (GEA) to 638 sq.m (GEA) is acceptable.
- Whether the reduction in the floorspace serving visiting members of the public from 1,078 sq.m (GEA) to 1,019 sq.m (GEA) is acceptable.

The proposal results in the loss of residential floorspace and floorspace serving visiting members of the public caused by the internal reconfiguration of the buildings. It is acknowledged that some of the existing residential units provide sub-standard accommodation in terms of their outlook, levels of natural light and the size of the units. It is also acknowledged that large parts of the bank were used as ancillary offices and vaults.

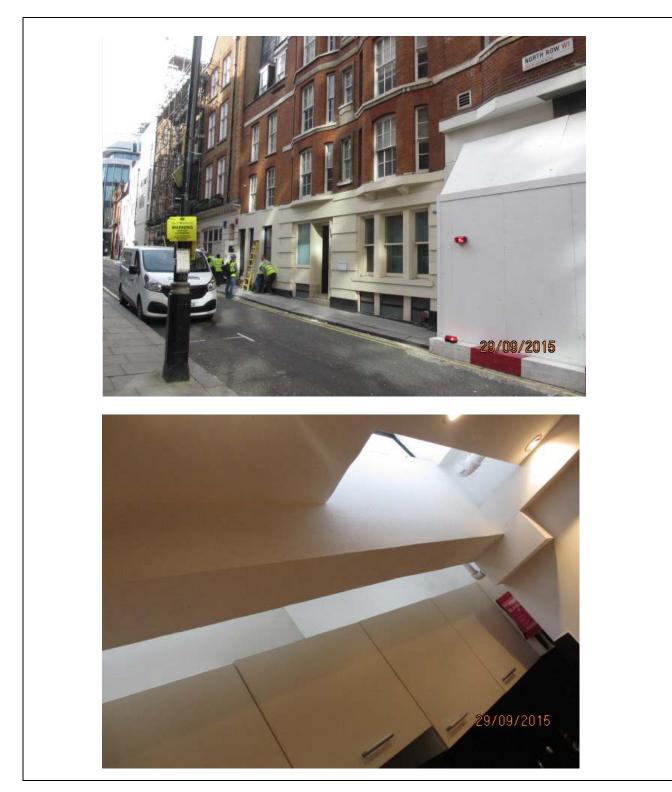
The proposal will allow for the creation of a large retail unit with a greater amount of floor space open to the public and the re-organisation of the residential floor space allows for a better quality of residential provision. In these circumstances it is considered the proposal will enhance the character and function of the West End International Shopping Centre and provide better quality residential accommodation. As such, it is recommended that conditional planning permission be granted.

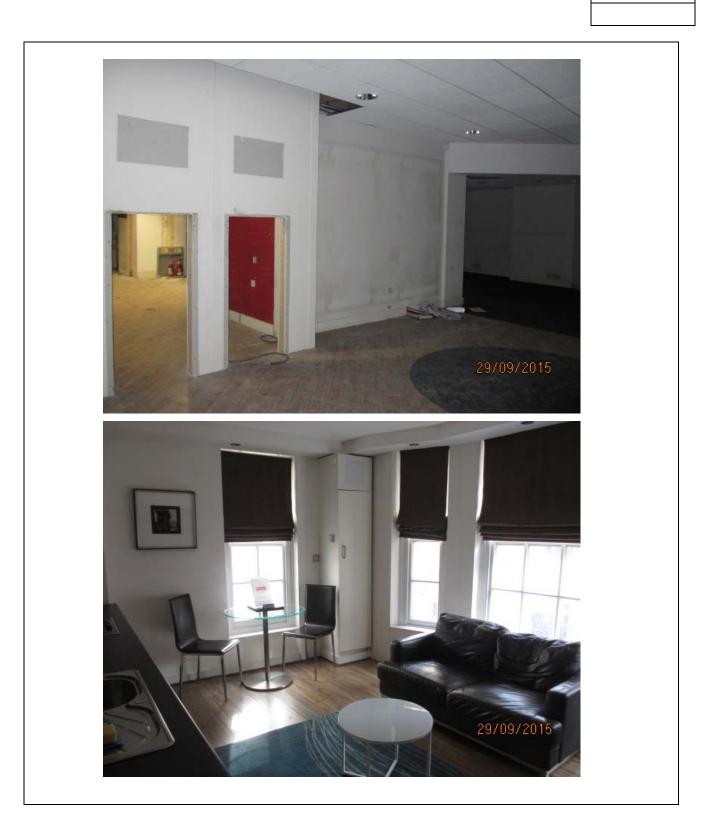
3. LOCATION PLAN



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4. PHOTOGRAPHS





Item No. 5

5. CONSULTATIONS

Residents' Society of Mayfair & St. James's: No objection.

Highways Planning: No objection subject to conditions.

Environmental Health: Objection – the layout of some units results in the creation of 'remote rooms'.

ADJOINING OWNERS/OCCUPIERS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED:

No. Consulted: 70 Total no. of replies: 1 No. of objections: 1 No. in support: 0

Objections on the following grounds:

- There are currently issues with waste being left on the public highway.
- Noise disruption resulting from the commercial collection of waste from the site.

PRESS ADVERTISEMENT / SITE NOTICE: Yes

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6.1 The Application Site

431-433 Oxford Street comprises of basement, ground and first to third floor levels. Previously used as a bank (Class A2), the property has recently been vacated. Planning permission was granted in August 2015 for the installation of three ATMs on the Balderton Street elevation. These alterations are shown on the proposed drawings for information only. 35 North Row is to the rear of 431-433 Oxford Street with the buildings connected internally at ground floor level. The property's lawful use is as fifteen residential flats and comprises basement, ground and first to fifth floor levels. It was noted at the site visit to the property all the flats were being used as short term letting accommodation, although it is not known whether this is their lawful use. The buildings are located within the Core Central Activities Zone, the Mayfair Conservation Area, the Primary Shopping Frontage of the West End International Shopping Centre and the West End Special Retail Policy Area. The buildings have elevations to Oxford Street, Balderton Street and North Row.

6.2 Recent Relevant History

15/05256/FULL

Alterations to the North Row and Balderton Street elevations including the installation of three ATMs.

Application Permitted 20 August 2015

02/07999/FULL

Erection of an extension to 35 North Row at third and fourth floor level, erection of rooftop lift overrun behind an acoustic screen and stair access in connection with refurbishment of existing flats to form eight studio flats and 1 x 1 bedroom flat and use of part second floor of 431-433 Oxford Street for purposes within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services).

Application Permitted 12 June 2003

99/03395/FULL

Alterations and extension at third and fourth floor at (entire site) 35 North Row (including roof, plant and screen) in connection with the use of the first to fourth floors as seven flats, basement, ground and mezzanine of 35 as bank extension to 431 Oxford Street. Application Permitted 12 July 1999

7. THE PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the use of entire basement of the two properties as well as most of the ground and first floor levels (excluding a residential core) as retail accommodation (Class A1). The second, third and fourth floor levels are proposed to be used as residential accommodation (Class C3) comprising 7x1 bedroom units and 1x2 bedroom unit. The conversion of the banking floorspace into retail floorspace is development permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order (2015).

It should be noted that, due to unaligned floor plates within the two properties and the reduced floor to ceiling heights in 35 North Row at first / second floor levels, it is proposed to remove the existing first and second floors and replace them with a new first floor. The new first floor will then align with the floor plate in the Oxford Street property allowing for the proposed retail use to occupy the entire floor.

Alterations are proposed to the ground floor of the North Row elevation to include the installation of new doors and artwork along the ground floor elevation, new shopfronts and Portland stone cladding are proposed to the Oxford Street and Balderton Street elevations.

Use	Existing m2 (GEA)	Proposed m2 (GEA)	+/- difference (m2)
Residential	778	698	-80
Bank (A2)	1,078	0	-1,078
Retail (A1)	0	1,019	+1,019
Commercial (A1+A2)	1,078	1,019	-59
TOTAL	1,856	1,717	-139

The table below shows the existing and proposed GEA landuse figures for the proposal:

8. DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Land Use

Residential use

Currently the residential provision within 35 North Row equates to 778m² (GEA) and 15x1 bedroom units with units at basement and first to fifth floor levels. The proposed residential provision equates to 698m² and eight units being 7x1 bedroom and 1x2 bedroom at first to fourth floor levels.

The last planning consent relevant to 35 North Row was granted in June 2003 and permitted extensions at third and fourth floor level and the provision of eight studio flats and 1x1 bedroom flat. This represented a reduction in the number of units on the site by four but an increase in the residential floorspace by $43m^2$. The loss of residential units was considered acceptable due to the substandard accommodation provided by the existing residential units which were below the required minimum space standards and the basement flats received very limited natural light and were therefore considered uninhabitable. It would appear that this permission was partially implemented but the current configuration of studio units would appear to be broadly in line with the existing drawings submitted with the application above. Notwithstanding these issues the lawful situation is considered to be fifteen residential units as is currently evident on the site.

Policy S14 of the City Plan states:

'All residential uses, floorspace and land will be protected. Proposals that would result in a reduction in the number of residential units will not be acceptable, except where:

- the council considers that reconfiguration or redevelopment of affordable housing would better meet affordable housing need;
- a converted house is being returned to a family-sized dwelling or dwellings; or
- 2 flats are being joined to create a family-sized dwelling.

Proposals for conversion or redevelopment of single family houses to flats will be assessed taking into account the character of the street and area; impact on residential amenity including parking pressure; and the mix of units proposed.

The number of residential units on development sites will be optimised.'

Policy H3 of the UDP also seeks to maximise the amount of land or buildings in residential use.

There are currently two studio flats in the basement of the site, both of which only receive natural light from pavement lights above part of the units and windows into a heavily enclosed lightwell in the centre of the buildings. This allows only a very limited level of natural light into the properties and there is also no outlook from the properties at all as the pavement lights are opaque glazed. It is therefore considered the basement units provide very poor quality of accommodation. Of the thirteen units on the upper floors of the property only five of them are compliant with the minimum size standards for a one person residential unit and three of these are only compliant if they have a shower instead of a bath (which allows a reduction in the minimum unit size from 39m² to 37m²). Of the eight

units on the upper floors which do not comply with the national technical guidance some are over 30% smaller than the stipulated minimum.

The applicant contends that the basement flats are, *…effectively uninhabitable for residential purposes due to the lack of natural light and do not benefit from an express grant of planning permission, we consider that this part of the building should not be included in the existing residential floor space figures for the purpose of assessing the merits of the application.* It is however noted that the basement flats were in situ when the application was submitted in 2002 and would appear to have been in place ever since. Whilst it is accepted that the basement flats provide a very poor level of accommodation it is not considered that they should be excluded from the residential floorspace calculations.

As the site has recently been purchased by the applicant it has no information on the period of time for which all the residential flats have been used as temporary sleeping accommodation. This application has therefore been assessed on the basis that the existing flats are in lawful use as permanent residential accommodation.

The proposed residential units are all compliant with the national technical guidance without any of them being oversized, thus ensuring the number of residential units on the site is optimised as required by Policy S14 of the City Plan. It is also noted that the City Council considered in 2003 that the existing units on the site were sub-standard and that a reduction in the number of units to provide a better quality of accommodation was acceptable. Taking these exceptional circumstances into account, in this instance an exception to the policy that resists the loss of residential units and residential floorspace can be accepted.

Policy H5 requires that in residential developments 33% of new units should be family sized (3+ bedrooms). In this instance, as the proposal is for the reconfiguration of existing residential accommodation which does not include any family sized accommodation it is not considered necessary to provide any in the proposed layout. Furthermore, any requirement to provide family sized accommodation on this site would further reduce the number of residential units.

Bank / Retail

The existing commercial floor space was previously occupied by HSBC who have vacated the premises. HSBC occupied part basement, ground and first to third floors in the Oxford Street part of the application site. The floorspace equated to 1,078m² (GEA). However, it is noted that the majority of this floor space was not open to visiting members of the public and was used for back office functions on the upper floors and safe storage in the basement. The proposed retail unit will measure 1,019m² (GEA) which represents a loss of 59m² (GEA) of commercial floor space.

The applicant contends that a retailer has been secured for the retail unit to create a flagship retail store on this prominent corner site opposite Selfridges. It is also noted that the proposed retail store would occupy larger floor plates over basement, ground and first floors, with the gross internal area (GIA) increasing by 17m².

Policy S21 of the City Plan states that 'existing non-A1 retail uses, and uses occupying shop-type premises within designated shopping centres will be protected from changing to uses that do not serve visiting members of the public and that do not have active shop fronts.' Whilst the commercial GEA of the commercial floorspace will be slightly reduced the proposal will provide a new retail unit on the Primary Frontage of the West End International Shopping Centre. The provision of retail accommodation is encouraged and compliant with Policy S7 of the City Plan which seeks to encourage improved retail space in the WESRPA and Policy S21.

Whilst the slight reduction in commercial GEA floorspace is not ideal it is considered acceptable as the GIA increases, the change of use is to retail which is beneficial to the character and function of the West End International Shopping Centre and larger more usable floorplates are proposed. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable with regard the loss of the existing bank and the provision of the enhanced retail accommodation.

8.2 Townscape and Design

The major design impacts of the proposal centres on changes to the shopfronts at ground floor level. The upper stories of the building are well ordered red brick facades with a detailed and ornate fenestration pattern. The ground floor shopfronts have recently been overclad in Portland stone, a common design alteration in the Mayfair Conservation Area. The alterations see a new cladding applied which is similar in appearance to the existing. The cills of the shop windows are lowered and the entrance door raised in height to encompass the existing fanlight.

The proposed changes are relatively minor and would preserve the character and appearance of the Mayfair Conservation Area, in accordance with UDP Policies DES 1, DES 5 and DES 9, as well as City Plan Policies S25 and S28 and the relevant sections of the NPPF.

8.3 Residential Amenity

All the proposed residential units will be dual aspect which will help ensure acceptable levels of internal daylight and sunlight and also allow for natural ventilation. Four of the units directly overlook Oxford Street but also have windows to Balderton Street or an internal lightwell. Subject to a condition securing the submission of a Sound Mitigation and Ventilation Strategy for the City Council's approval to demonstrate that the residential units will be adequately ventilated and will comply with the relevant Council's noise criterion within UDP Policy ENV 6, the quality of the residential accommodation proposed is acceptable.

The Environmental Health Officer has objected to the application as the layout of some of the residential units results in the creation of 'remote rooms' where the route of escape from the bedroom is past the high fire risk kitchens. Whilst these concerns are noted, this is not a material planning consideration and the layout of the flats would be considered under the application of the Building Regulations. The application could not be reasonably refused on these grounds. An informative is proposed to advise the applicant of this potential issue.

8.4 Transportation/Parking

As the proposal results in a decrease in the number of residential units it would likely result in a decrease in the demand for on-street car parking in the vicinity. There is therefore no need to assess the application with regard Policy TRANS 23 of the UDP which assesses the impact of development proposals on on-street parking stress levels.

It is considered the change of use from a bank to a retail unit, with a slight reduction in floor space would have a negligible impact upon car parking requirements. No information has been provided with regard the servicing requirements of the unit. Whilst it is accepted servicing will be restricted by existing loading restrictions it is considered a retail unit of this size could have additional servicing requirements to the bank and therefore a condition requiring the submission of a Servicing Management Plan is proposed.

Cycle parking is proposed for the residential units within the internal lightwell at basement level with access from the ground floor. This would be an acceptable place for cycle storage and to accord with the FALP (2015) nine cycle parking spaces would need to be provided. A condition is proposed requiring the submission of detailed drawings to show the provision of these nine cycle parking spaces. No cycle parking provision has been shown for the retail use. It is considered cycle parking could easily be provided at basement level and a condition is attached requiring the submission of drawings to show this.

8.5 Economic Considerations

No economic considerations are applicable for a development of this size.

8.6 Access

Level access is provided to the ground floor of the retail accommodation and the applicant has confirmed the future occupier will be providing lift access to the basement and first floor levels as part of their fit-out.

The residential units are to be accessed by a stair and no lift is provided. This is no worse than the existing situation and it is considered installing a lift would further reduce the floor space for either the residential units or the retail provision to the detriment of the proposal.

8.7 Other UDP/Westminster Policy Considerations

Refuse /Recycling

A condition is proposed requiring the submission of detailed drawings to show the provision of separate waste and recycling storage areas for both the individual residential units and the retail use. It is not considered there is sufficient space within the demise of the residential area for a communal waste / recycling collection point.

An objection has been received to the application from a residential occupier who states that currently there is an issue with waste being left on the highway which affects pedestrian movements and encourages pests. They have stated it would be preferably for the residential waste to be collected by the local authority as opposed to a commercial waste collector. As the existing flats are currently all let as temporary sleeping accommodation it is possible the waste is collected by a commercial collector. This would no longer be the case with the current proposal. As detailed above a condition is proposed requiring the submission of amended drawings to show the provision of waste and recycling storage facilities within each of the residential units and the retail unit. With this condition in place it is considered suitable storage facilities will be provided and any waste collection will be conducted in a similar manner to other residential properties in the street. It is not considered necessary to further restrict the waste collection.

8.8 London Plan

This application raises no strategic issues.

8.9 National Policy/Guidance Considerations

The City Plan and UDP policies referred to in the consideration of this application are considered to be consistent with the NPPF unless stated otherwise.

8.10 Planning Obligations

Planning obligations are not relevant in the determination of this application.

8.11 Environmental Impact Assessment

An Environmental Impact Assessment is not required for a scheme of this scale.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

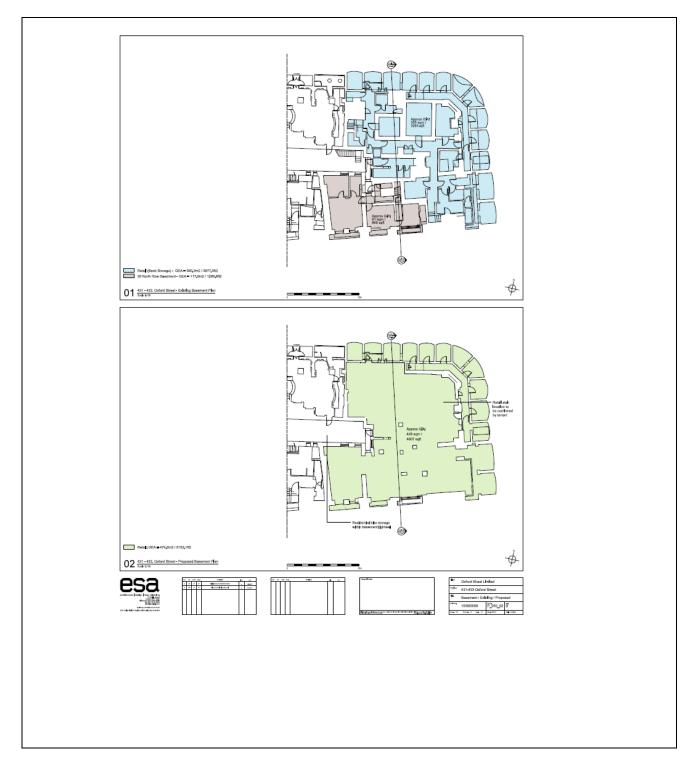
- 1. Application form
- 2. Response from Residents Society Of Mayfair & St. James's, dated 28 September 2015
- 3. Response from Environmental Health, dated 25 September 2015
- 4. Response from the Highways Planning Manager dated 15 October 2015
- 5. Letter from occupier of 19 Balderton Flats, London, W1K 6TD, dated 22 September 2015

Selected relevant drawings

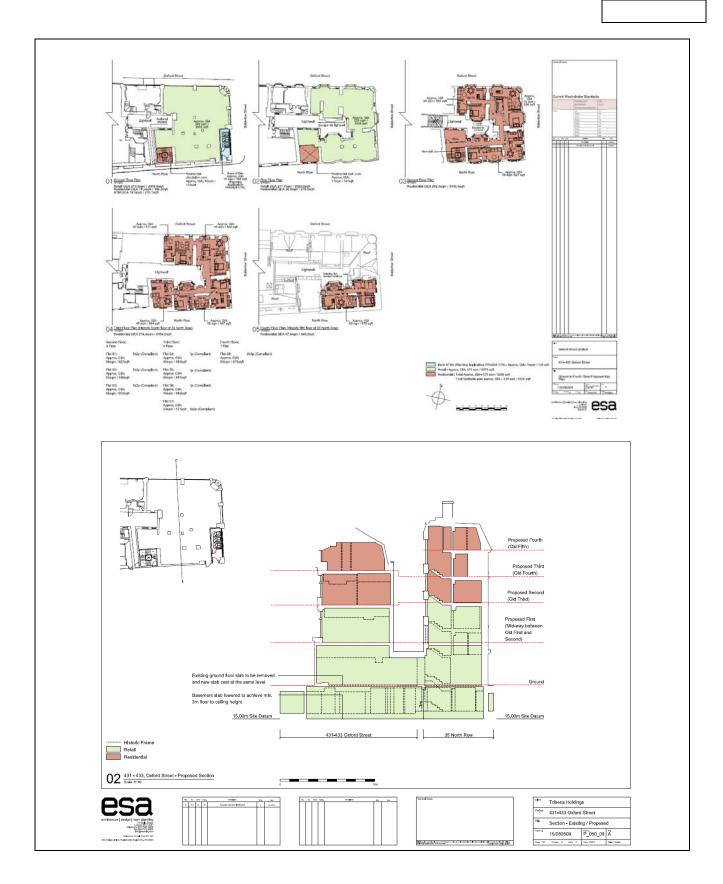
(Please note: All the application drawings and other relevant documents and Background Papers are available to view on the Council's website)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT PLEASE CONTACT MATTHEW GILES ON 020 7641 5942 OR BY EMAIL AT CentralPlanningTeam@westminster.gov.uk

10. KEY DRAWINGS



Item No. 5



DRAFT DECISION LETTER

Address: 431 - 433 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DA,

Proposal: Use of the basement and part ground and first floors as retail accommodation (Class A1), use of part ground and first and the entire second to fourth floor levels as eight flats (Class C3). Installation of new shopfronts and alterations to elevations. (SITE INCLUDES 35 NORTH ROW).

Reference: 15/06742/FULL

Plan Nos: Drawings: 220_00, 220_01, 220_02, 220_03, 220_04, 220_05, 050_14_431-433_Pr_01-04 RevB, P_050_22 RevA, P_050_23 RevB, P_050_32, P_050_31, P_050_24 RevB, P_050_15 RevA, P_050_09 RevA, P_050_12 RevA, P_050_06, P_050_07, P_050_05, P_050_04 RevA, P_050_02 RevB, P_050_16 RevA, 050_14.

Case Officer: Matthew Giles

Direct Tel. No. 020 7641 5942

Recommended Condition(s) and Reason(s):

1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the drawings and other documents listed on this decision letter, and any drawings approved subsequently by the City Council as local planning authority pursuant to any conditions on this decision letter.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2 You must carry out any building work which can be heard at the boundary of the site only:

* between 08.00 and 18.00 Monday to Friday;

- * between 08.00 and 13.00 on Saturday; and
- * not at all on Sundays, bank holidays and public holidays.

Noisy work must not take place outside these hours. (C11AA)

Reason:

To protect the environment of neighbouring residents. This is as set out in S29 and S32 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and ENV 6 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R11AC)

3 You must hang all doors or gates so that they do not open over or across the road or pavement. (C24AA)

Reason:

In the interests of public safety and to avoid blocking the road as set out in S41 of Westminster's

City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and TRANS 2 and TRANS 3 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R24AC)

4 The design and structure of the development shall be of such a standard that it will protect residents within it from existing external noise so that they are not exposed to levels indoors of more than 35 dB LAeq 16 hrs daytime and of more than 30 dB LAeq 8 hrs in bedrooms at night.

Reason:

As set out in ENV6 (4) of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007, and the related Policy Application at sections 9.84 to 9.87, in order to ensure that design, structure and acoustic insulation of the development will provide sufficient protection for residents of the development from the intrusion of external noise.

5 The design and structure of the development shall be of such a standard that it will protect residents within the same building or in adjoining buildings from noise and vibration from the development, so that they are not exposed to noise levels indoors of more than 35 dB LAeq 16 hrs daytime and of more than 30 dB LAeq 8 hrs in bedrooms at night.

Reason:

As set out in ENV6 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007, and the related Policy Application at section 9.76, in order to ensure that design, structure and acoustic insulation of the development will provide sufficient protection for residents of the same or adjoining buildings from noise and vibration from elsewhere in the development.

6 Prior to the occupation of the retail unit, you shall submit and have approved in writing by the local planning authority a detailed Servicing Management Strategy for the retail accommodation to include an assessment of delivery noise combined with mechanical services, servicing hours, noise from doors and gates and activity noise from trolleys and/or human voices. All servicing shall be undertaken from Oxford Street and in accordance with the approved Servicing Management Strategy.

Reason:

To avoid blocking the surrounding streets and to protect the environment of people in neighbouring properties as set out in S42 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and STRA 25, TRANS 20 and TRANS 21 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R23AC)

7 You must apply to us for approval of details of secure cycle storage for the residential and retail use. You must not start any work on this part of the development until we have approved what you have sent us. You must then provide the cycle storage in line with the approved details prior to occupation. You must not use the cycle storage for any other purpose.

Reason:

To provide cycle parking spaces for people using the development as set out in TRANS 10 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007.

8 You must apply to us for approval of details of how waste is going to be stored on the site and how materials for recycling will be stored separately. You must not start work on the relevant part of the development until we have approved what you have sent us. You must then provide the stores for waste and materials for recycling according to these details, clearly mark the stores and make them available at all times to everyone using the . (C14EC)

Reason:

To protect the environment and provide suitable storage for waste as set out in S44 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and ENV 12 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R14BD)

9 All new work to the outside of the building must match existing original work in terms of the choice of materials, method of construction and finished appearance. This applies unless differences are shown on the drawings we have approved or are required by conditions to this permission. (C26AA)

Reason:

To make sure that the appearance of the building is suitable and that it contributes to the character and appearance of this part of the Mayfair Conservation Area. This is as set out in S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and DES 1 and DES 5 or DES 6 or both and paras 10.108 to 10.128 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R26BE)

10 You must paint all new outside rainwater and soil pipes black and keep them that colour. (C26EA)

Reason:

To make sure that the appearance of the building is suitable and that it contributes to the character and appearance of this part of the Mayfair Conservation Area. This is as set out in S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013 and DES 1 and DES 5 or DES 6 or both and paras 10.108 to 10.128 of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007. (R26BE)

11 You must apply to us for approval of a Sound Mitigation and Ventilation Strategy to demonstrate that the residential units will be adequately ventilated and will comply with the Council's noise criteria set out in Condition 4 of this permission. You must not occupy any of the residential units hereby approved until we have approved what you have sent us. You must then carry out the work according to the details approved before any of the residential units hereby approved are occupied and you must thereafter retain and maintain the approved measures.

Reason:

In order to ensure that the new housing provides a well-designed, high quality living environment that provides sufficient protection for residents of the development from the intrusion of external noise, as required by Policy S29 of our City Plan that we adopted in November 2013 and Policy ENV6 (4) of our Unitary Development Plan that we adopted in January 2007, and the related Policy Application at sections 9.84 to 9.87.

Informative(s):

- In dealing with this application the City Council has implemented the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way. We have made available detailed advice in the form of our statutory policies in Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013, Unitary Development Plan, Supplementary Planning documents, planning briefs and other informal written guidance, as well as offering a full pre application advice service, in order to ensure that applicant has been given every opportunity to submit an application which is likely to be considered favourably. In addition, where appropriate, further guidance was offered to the applicant at the validation stage.
- 2 You are advised that the proposal results in the creation of 'remote rooms' in some of the proposed residential flats and that to accord with Building Regulations you may need to revise the internal configuration of the units.
- 3 You may need to get separate permission under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 if you want to put up an advertisement at the property. (I03AA)
- 4 Please make sure that the street number and building name (if applicable) are clearly displayed on the building. This is a condition of the London Building Acts (Amendments) Act 1939, and there are regulations that specify the exact requirements. If you would like more information, you can contact Ray Gangadeen on 020 7641 7064. (I54AA)
- 5 The sound insulation in each new unit of a residential conversion should meet the standards set out in the current Building Regulations Part E and associated approved documents. Please contact our District Surveyors' Services if you need more advice. (Phone 020 7641 7240 or 020 7641 7230). (I58AA)
- 6 The design and structure of the development shall be of such a standard that the dwelling is free from the 29 hazards listed under the Housing Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS). However, any works that affect the external appearance may require a further planning permission. For more information concerning the requirements of HHSRS contact:

Residential Environmental Health Team 4th Floor East, Westminster City Hall 64 Victoria Street London SW1E 6QP www.westminster.gov.uk Email: res@westminster.gov.uk Tel: 020 7641 3003 Fax: 020 7641 8504. 7 Please be advised that, should any of the measures required by Condition 11 constitute development, a separate application for planning permission will have to be submitted and this application will be assessed on its merits.