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Date: 24/07/2014

Dear Ms Greer

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY

At: NEW HIBERNIA HOUSE, WINCHESTER WALK
Proposal: Proposal includes: change of use on the ground floor from B1 to A3 minor internal demolition to accommodate a new internal stair and lift, demolition of existing roof space used as ancillary office space, to be replaced with a part one, part two storey roof extension comprising of a single residential unit (class c3, approximately 150m2) and extension of an terrace to an existing flat within the Tennis Court Building. A further roof terrace is provided at the top level for the residential unit. (All as previously submitted with the exception of the reduction in floor area of the residential unit).

New Hibernia House

I write further to your pre-application enquiry received on 17 March 2014 that was submitted subsequent to a meeting with Dipesh Patel and Norman Brockie in December 2013. The scheme has been revised twice following the initial previous submission in 2013 (13-EQ-0196) and these this letter is based on the latest submission: HIBERNIAHOUSEREVISIONWMA 140504.

Description of proposal

The proposal is for a change of use of the ground floor from offices to a restaurant/cafe, and associated changes to the facade and a change of use of the top floor from office to residential along with a roof extension to accommodate the dwelling.

Policies

The Development Plan is made up of the London Plan 2011, Core Strategy 2011 and Southwark Unitary Development Plan 2007 saved policies, along with Supplementary Planning Documents. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration.

Key issues

- Principle of development including proposed change of use
- Quality of residential accommodation
- Impact of proposed development on amenity of adjoining occupiers and surrounding area

- Transport
- Design and impact on the Borough High Street conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings

Principle

Being in the Central Activity Zone, office use is protected by saved Policy 1.4 of the Southwark Plan. However, within the Bankside and Borough District Town Centre, a suitable Class A use may be permitted subject to compliance with saved Policy 1.7. The principle of a change of use of the top floor to residential is less certain. It appears that clause a of Policy 1.4 has not been met which means that this part of the development would need to comply with clause b.

Quality of residential accommodation

The 3 bed apartment proposed exceeds the minimum dwelling size for a 3 bedroom flat, as it would seem do the individual room sizes. Outlook would be effectively be from a single aspect, however considering the constraints of the site, this is acceptable. The terrace area shown on the lower and upper floors would provide generous outdoor amenity space.

Impact of proposed development on amenity of adjoining occupiers and surrounding area

Restaurant/cafe

Details will be required on how this commercial unit would be serviced and from where to ensure that hours and method of servicing would not cause harm to local amenity. Similarly, consideration will need to be given for suitable plant and in particular to controlling noise and odour.

Residential

The proposed roof extension seems to be sufficiently distant to existing residential uses to the north and east to ensure that daylight and sunlight would not be affected. Drawings showing 25 and 45 degree lines for windows opposite and at right angles to the proposed extension would however be required to confirm this in accordance with the Residential Design Guidance.

Transport

Parking

No car parking is proposed and this is appropriate for a site in the CAZ. Cycle parking would be required. Two spaces for the residential property which would need to be accommodated within the ground floor envelope be secure and separate from cycle parking for the A3 use which would need 1 one cycle parking space per 20 staff plus one per 20 customers.

Servicing

Winchester Walk has double yellow lines which although it does not have kerb 'blips', seems too narrow to allow servicing along it without causing traffic disruption. This is a matter that will need detailed consideration. Details of the location for servicing will need to be included with any application.

Design

Ground floor

The proposal to reinstate the original rectangular openings at the ground floor and enlarge them to the ground to create a new active frontage is welcome. Shop windows in multi-paned crital type would be a significant improvement to the street level presence of the building. Changes to the ground floor elevation are likely to enhance the Borough High Street conservation area.

Upper floors

Scale and Massing

A two-storey roof-top extension is proposed for a new residential unit. The proposed extension is arranged in 5 geometric bays to echo the bay design of the existing building. The western bays from

the double-height living space of the residential unit and correspond with the gabled western bays of the existing building. The remaining three bays are set forward and terraced back on two floors to accommodate the bedroom wing of the proposed unit.

In terms of its height, the proposal steps back on the upper-most floor to reduce its visibility from within the conservation area and to limit any incursion into views of the Cathedral. In its scale this appears appropriate and will appear as a predominantly single attic storey at the top of this building which is appropriate in this context.

The massing of the proposed unit is deliberately broken down and articulated in bays that work well with the bayed arrangement of the existing building. However, in the most recent views of the proposal, the three eastern bays appear to be as tall as the two double-height western bays. This has an impact on the hierarchy of the facade which appears incongruous at first sight. A slight adjustment in the height of the three eastern-most single storey bays will reinstate that hierarchy and will ensure that the building appears to step down more deliberately as the viewer approaches the Cathedral especially when viewed from Winchester Walk and Bedale Street.

On closer inspection it appears that these three bays are raised to around 1 ½ storey to hide the handrail of the upper floor terrace. However, this does not mitigate the impact of this height on the conservation area and fails to preserve the hierarchy of the existing facade as noted above. Officers would instead suggest a handrail set-back from the southern edge and a reduction the height of the three eastern bays on the fifth floor.

The sixth floor design follows the bayed design and is set back further on the roof. The western-most bay on the sixth floor, is omitted to provide a roof-top terrace which is a welcomed improvement on the earlier design which rose sharply over two storeys at the party wall nearest the Cathedral and would have had a more overt impact on its sensitive historic setting. The further proposal to enclose that bay with a lattice-like frame is not welcomed and could add further bulk and mass in this sensitive location. Accordingly the lattice-like frame and should be omitted.

The rendered local views demonstrate that the proposal is visible from the public realm in the conservation area. Its materiality a combination of metal core-ten cladding with large expanses of glass. This will ensure that extension will appear like a recessive attic storey and not an overly dominant or harmful intrusion. Whilst distinctive, the core-ten cladding is a strident and earthy incursion and remains sensitive in this historic context.

Materials

The balance of glazing and a heavier cladding could work well with the correct detailing, detailed architectural design and choice of cladding material are likely to be reserved by condition should planning permission be granted.

Setting of the Borough High Street conservation area and listed buildings.

The Grade I listed Southwark Cathedral is the most significant heritage asset nearby and most sensitive to changes that might affect its setting. Core-ten as a choice for cladding is a concern as it would affect the setting of this listed building, particularly as the extension would frame views to the cathedral from the west. A more muted material akin to traditional roof cladding such as dark zinc or lead could still result in a confident design while respecting the cathedral's setting. Changes to the massing recommended above would also lessen this impact.

Mayoral Community Infrastructure levy

With a new residential dwelling, the development would be subject to a financial contribution under the Community Infrastructure Levy, presently £35 per m² of new floorspace.

Sustainable development implications (environmental)

The dwelling would need to be designed to comply with Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. Extensive glazing to the south may result in overheating during the summer and loss of heat during

colder months, this matter will need detailed design consideration.

List of documents required at application stage

The following link will take you to the council's webpage where you can view the list of documents that should accompany the application:

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2021/full_planning_permission

Conclusion

The scheme proposed is broadly acceptable with the introduction of an active frontage at ground floor level particularly welcome. With some amendments to the massing of the upper floors proposed, the impact on local views, including views to Southwark Cathedral, would be acceptable.

This advice is given to assist you but is not a decision of the Council. Further issues may arise following a formal planning application, where a site visit and public consultation and consultation with statutory consultees would be undertaken.

Yours sincerely

Gary Rice

Head of Development Management