



45 Welbeck Street
London W1G 8DZ
020 3409 7755
info@hghconsulting.com
hghconsulting.com

London Borough of Barnet
Planning Services
2 Bristol Avenue,
Colindale, NW9 4EW

11th October 2021

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: 186 High Street, Edgware, HA8 7EX – Planning application for change of use of commercial unit (Class E) to two residential units (Class C3) and minor alteration from single to double doors at ground floor

On behalf of Shanly Group, hgh Consulting has been instructed to prepare and submit a planning application for the change of use of the vacant commercial unit (Class E, formerly approved as Class A2 / B1) to two residential units (Class C3) and a minor alteration from a single to double doors at ground floor at 186 High Street, Edgware.

The planning application is accompanied by the following plans and documents:

1. Location Plan (1341.PLN.200).
2. Existing Ground Floor Plan (ref: 1341.DF.21-22.3).
3. Plots 21 and 22: Conversion from commercial to residential (ref: 1341.DF.21-22.1).
4. Existing Hillside Drive elevation (ref: 1341.DF.21-22.4).
5. Hillside Drive Elevation (ref: 1341.DF.21-22.2).
6. Marketing Report prepared by Peterman's Estate Agents.

This letter provides: a brief description of the location of the site; the background to the proposals; description of the proposed development; and assesses the proposed change of use against the relevant policy in the development plan and other material considerations.

Site Location

The site is located in the London Borough of Barnet on the corner at the junction of Hillside Drive and High Street, Edgware on the eastern side of the A5 as shown on the aerial photograph below (Figure 1).

The site comprises the recently constructed and substantially occupied building that was granted planning permission on 29th March 2019 (ref: 18/4685/FUL) (Figure 2).

The site is located within the Edgware urban area, characterised as predominantly residential with the flatted development of Castleham Court to the south of the application site, Peters Lodge to the north, a modern flatted development directly opposite the site and semi-detached dwellings to the rear on Hillside Drive. To the north of the site approximately 150m is Stonegrove Park providing local amenity access and equipped play areas and basketball / tennis courts.



Figure 1: Aerial photograph showing location of the site (above)

Figure 2: Photograph of the front elevation of the development with the commercial unit (ground floor) (below)



The site is located approximately 400m to the north of Edgware town centre retail frontage with high street shops and restaurants.

The application site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 4. The site is approximately 0.8km (10 minute walk from Edgware Underground station and there are bus stops to the north of the site outside and opposite St Peters Lodge with regular services to Brent Cross, Stanmore Station, Bushey Station and Watford (142) and West Hendon and Colindale (642).

The site is in Flood Zone 1, as defined on the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning and is less than 1ha. The site is not at risk of flooding, nor is there a requirement to prepare a Flood Risk Assessment.

Background to proposals

Planning permission was granted for the erection of a new building comprising flexible A2 and B1 floorspace and 20 self-contained flats in March 2019 (ref: 18/4685/FUL). The development has been constructed and a photograph of the front of the building facing High Street is shown in Figure 2.

Shanly Homes initially marketed the commercial space on the ground floor for a short flexible lease and a long term lease from April 2020 and instructed a local commercial agent from June 2020. Despite the extensive period of marketing, there has been little interest in the commercial unit. Shanly has not been able to let the commercial unit and the unit is vacant. It is for this reason, to make best use of this vacant unit, that the application is being made to convert the commercial unit into two residential units.

Description of the proposed development

The application is for:

“Change of use of the commercial unit (Use Class E) to two residential units (Use Class C3) and minor alteration from single to double doors at ground floor.”

The proposed sub-division of the commercial unit and layout of the two proposed residential units are shown on drawing *“Plots 21 and 22: Conversion from commercial to residential (ref: 1341.DF.21-22.1)”*.

Plot 21 will be a 4 person 2 bed flat of 74.2sqm. Plot 22 will be a 3 person 2 bed flat of 61.7sqm. Both units will open out onto a terrace from the living room and will have secure access from the main internal corridors.

The proposals also involve a minor change to the internal layout and a minor change to the Hillside Drive elevation from a single to double doors on the ground floor.

Assessment of the proposed development

The application proposal is for the change of use of the commercial unit at 186 High Street, Edgware to two residential units. The change of use is considered to be acceptable for the following reasons.



Lack of demand for the commercial unit following extensive marketing campaign

Policy D14, part iii of the Barnet Local Plan (Development Management Policies DPD) “*New and existing employment space*” requires office space to be retained in town centres and edge of centre locations. The loss of office space will only be permitted in town centres and edge of centre locations where it can be demonstrated to the Council’s satisfaction that the site is no longer suitable and viable for its existing and alternative business use in the short, medium and long term and a suitable period of active marketing has been undertaken.

Para 15.2.4 confirms that effective marketing is where a site has been continuously actively marketed for both sale and rent for a period of 12 months at an appropriate price for employment use and no interest has been expressed.

Sorbon Estates, the commercial arm of Shanly Group commissioned Petermans Estate Agents to market the commercial unit as well as Sorbon Estates marketing the unit themselves through their website. Petermans, a well-established local commercial agent that has been involved in numerous of lettings and sales of commercial properties in Edgware, has undertaken a comprehensive marketing campaign that commenced in June 2020. Full details of the marketing activities that took place are set out in the enclosed marketing report and included the erection of a board outside the property, listings on all major property websites and portals as well as the distribution of the property particulars to a number of agents and contacts.

The premises were marketed both on the basis of a new lease with a flexible term by arrangement and for the sale of a long lease. The rents and prices quoted for the long lease are considered to be in line with other new build and existing modern office stock and are lower than others in Edgware, Mill Hill and Colindale. They were marketed for Class A2 and B1 uses in accordance with the planning permission.

The marketing has now been carried out for a period of over 15 months. There have only been five viewings of the property and no offers have been made to lease the accommodation on a traditional short lease. Three offers have been made for a sale by way of a long leasehold interest, but none at the terms quoted for a 125 year leasehold and none of the offers have been anywhere near the fair value of £460,000.

Reasons given for a lack of interest in the unit include the lack of car parking and the fact that the property is located in a residential area and is not situated in a commercial area or the town centre.

The marketing report concludes “*the property has been marketed compressively for in excess of 15 months, during which serious interest has been hard to attract*”.

The applicant therefore considers that after a suitable period of active marketing, the site is no longer suitable for its existing approved business use (A2 or B1 / now class E) in the short, medium and long term. The Council confirmed in discussions during the consideration of the approved scheme that other uses such as A1 or D1 would not be suitable for the site given the lack of car parking, lack of space for servicing and noise and disturbance to residents of the development and neighbouring properties. An office use was the only commercial use that was considered to be suitable by the Council for this site. The site is not part of a wider employment area, and its loss would not affect the continued operation of a neighbouring use.

On the basis of the above, the loss of this small employment space is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Contribution of two residential units to the Council's housing supply

The application site is within a residential area and the remainder of the building is in residential use. The site has a good PTAL rating of 4, located near to local bus stops and only a 10 minute walk from Edgware Underground station. The site is near to local shops, services and other local amenities in Edgware and as such is in a sustainable location. The principle of two additional residential units in this residential development is considered to be acceptable and will contribute two good size two bed residential units to the Council's housing supply.

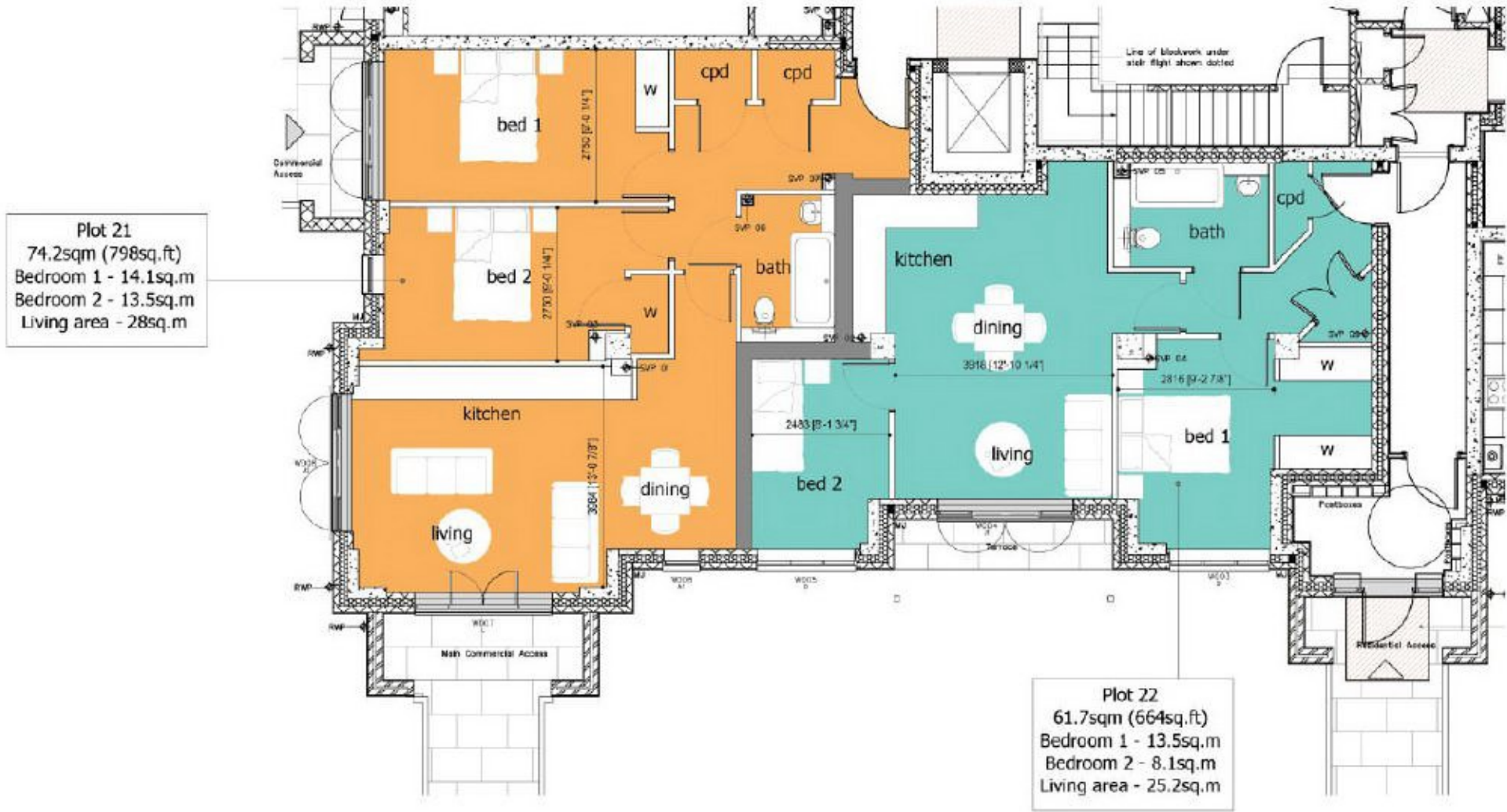


Figure 3: Extract from Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Both units will be two bedroom flats and will comply with the minimum internal space standards in Table 3.1 of the London Plan and internal space standards in policy D6 of the London Plan. The scheme incorporates amenity space at ground floor level and at roof level. Furthermore, the site is located in close proximity to Stonegrove Park. This provision of amenity space and the proximity to Stonegrove Park was considered a positive benefit of the scheme and acceptable to the Council for the remainder of the residential units.

Government Policy

Under other circumstances the applicant would have simply made an application for prior approval for the change of use from office to residential under Class MA of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended (GPDO). However, they are not able to do this due to the fact that the building had not been available to occupy for a continuous period of at least 2 years prior to the date of submission of this application. This continued provision in the GPDO to allow the conversion of a number of non-residential commercial uses to residential units highlights the Government's continued commitment to increasing housing delivery by making the best use of vacant commercial units.



Summary

The proposals are for the change of use of the commercial unit at 186 High Road, Edgware to two high quality two bedroom residential flats. The site is in an established residential area and in a sustainable location with good access to public transport and shops and services in Edgware town centre. The commercial unit has been through an extended period of comprehensive marketing by a local agent for over 15 months with flexible terms or long term lease on offer. This has resulted in very little interest for the unit and no successful offers / lettings.

The two additional residential units will make a modest, but nevertheless important contribution to the Borough's housing supply. The benefits of the proposal are considered to far outweigh the loss of a small vacant employment unit for which there is no demand and is located outside of a town centre or employment area. As such planning permission should be granted for the change of use.

I trust that you have sufficient information to validate and register the application. If you have any queries, please contact my colleague Richard Henley [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

Jill Bell MRTPI
Associate Director