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Planning Department
Westminster City Council
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Dear Sir or Madam

APPLICATION FOR ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT AT 42-48 GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W1W 7NB

We write on behalf of our client, GP Acoustics (UK) Limited, trading as KEF, to submit an application for Advertisement Consent at Ground Floor and Basement level, 42-43 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 7NB (the 'Site').

The proposed occupier of the Site, GP Acoustics (UK) Limited, intends to trade as 'KEF', and they will be moving into the ground and lower ground floors of the Site. The application comprises façade advertisements to the ground floor front elevation associated with the rebranding and new occupation of the Site. As a result, the following advertisement consent application is being submitted as set out below:

"Installation and display of 1no. fascia signs and the installation of 3no. transparent screens behind the glazing (internal) to project images on the glazing."

A previous application for temporary advertisement consent was submitted prior to this application (23/06608/ADV) for the installation of 3no. temporary window vinyl's applied to the front elevation window exterior. These related to the building refurbishment works and announcing the new occupant of this unit. The temporary vinyls were to mitigate views of the internal work to the unit, whilst the design and placement of the permanent fascia signage was being finalised.

Application Submission

This Covering Letter provides details on the proposed development's design and includes an assessment against planning policy. In addition to this document, a number of additional plans have been submitted, these are as follows:

- Application Form;
- Advertisement Drawings, prepared by Conran and Partners:
 - Site Location Plan (drawing ref. 9496-90-001_KEF)
 - Existing Façade (drawing ref. 9496-90-006_KEF)

- Proposed Façade Projections Visual (drawing ref. 9496-90-009_KEF)
- Proposed Projection (drawing ref. 9496-90-010_KEF)
- Proposed Façade Signage (drawing ref. 9496-90-011_KEF)
- Proposed Facade Signage Details (drawing ref. 9496-90-012_KEF)
- Proposed Facade Signage Visual (drawing ref. 9496-90-013_KEF)

The Site

The Site is located at 42-48 Great Portland Street and comprises of the ground and basements units of the building. The property forms part of a terrace of properties located in the East Marylebone Conservation Area. The property is not listed or locally listed.

According to Westminster City Council’s policy map, the Site is located within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), CAZ Retail Cluster (Great Portland Street), the West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area, and an Archaeological Priority Area (Great Estates – Tier 2).

The ground floor and basement units are currently vacant. Previously, the left-hand side (when facing the unit) had most recently been occupied by a coffee shop occupier and prior to that it was a Tony and Guy hair salon. On the right-hand side (when facing the unit) the ground floor and basement were occupied by a cycle/ sportswear shop. Following the 2020 changes to the Use Class Order, a new Class E use was introduced. This comprises of Commercial, Business and Service which includes a diverse range of uses which principally serve the needs of visiting members of the public and/or are suitable for a town centre area, for example; retail, restaurant, financial services, indoor sport, recreation and fitness, provision of medical/ health services, creche, day nursery and office use. The lawful use of the ground and basement of the property is therefore considered to be in Class E use. A Certificate of Lawfulness application was submitted prior to this application (ref: 23/03923/CLOPUD), which obtained confirmation that the future occupier’s use is lawful and in accordance with Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Class Order) 1987 (as amended).

The ground floor space can be accessed via existing entrances on Great Portland Street and Little Portland Street. Access to the basement level is via the existing internal staircase.

The upper floors of 42-48 Great Portland Street are in commercial use. Access to the upper levels is via an existing entrance on Great Portland Street. The upper floors do not form part of this application submission.

Planning History

Table 1.1 below identifies the planning history for 42-48 Great Portland Street, as acquired from the Council’s online planning application portal.

Table 1.1 – Planning History

Application Reference	Description of Development	Decision
23/06608/ADV	Display of X3 temporary vinyl signs to the front elevation glazing measuring 2.5m x 3.235m, 2.5m x 3.4m and 2.5m x 2.255 from a temporary	Permitted. Dated 09/10/2023

	period from 08 October 2023 to 29 February 2024	
23/03922/FULL	External alterations to the front facade at ground floor including replacement windows, alterations to the doors, installation of external plant and associated equipment on rear rooftop. Installation of 2 external staircase and metal handrail to access plant equipment.	Permitted. Dated 13/09/2023
23/03923/CLOPUD	Certificate of Lawful proposed use of the ground and basement floors of 42-48 Great Portland Street by KEF as Class E	Permitted. Dated 14/07/2023
20/03327/FULL	Installation of a louvre above fascia sign at front elevation.	Permitted. Dated 09/07/2020
09/01542/FULL	Use of basement and ground floor for retail purposes (Class A1). Alterations to the shopfront on the Little Portland Street elevation.	Permitted. Dated 01/05/2009
04/03210/FULL	Continued use (i) of part ground floor as a hair salon (Class A1) and (ii) of basement and part ground floor as a fitness studio (Class D2).	Permitted. Dated 16/01/2008
03/03786/FULL	Alterations including installation of new shopfronts (Great Portland St and Little Portland St frontages) in connection with the use of the ground floor as a hair salon (Class A1) and use of the basement as a fitness studio (Class D2)	Permitted. Dated 06/11/2003
04/03209/ADV, 04/03211/ADV, 09/02002/ADV, 09/03933/ADV, 09/04823/ADV	Various advertisement consent applications for internally illuminated fascia	2x refusal (09/04823/ADV and 09/02002/ADV) 3x Permitted (09/03933/ADV, 04/03209/ADV, 04/03211/ADV)

As demonstrated in the above table, there have been a number of different applications permitted at 42-48 Great Portland Street. Including where alterations have been permitted to the shop front associated with the needs of the occupier at the time and advertisement consent approvals. The approval in May 2009 (09/01542/FULL) was to facilitate the occupation of part ground floor and basement by two retailers, Cycle Surgery and Runners need.

KEF

KEF has taken a lease of the ground and basement floors. KEF sells high end speakers, headphones and sound equipment. They intend to use the property as their flagship store in London. KEF have secured temporary advert consent, as noted in the planning history above,

The store will be open for customers to come and browse their products, listen to the products before purchasing and then purchase the products. Customers will include individual customers purchasing the equipment for their own homes and trade customers who wish to acquire the products for business purposes. Customers will also include businesses that KEF has partnerships with, this includes music, film and recording businesses.

Proposed Applications

The Proposed Development is the installation and display of 1 no. fascia signs to the front elevation and 3 no. projection screens behind the glazing. The works proposed include:

- Installation of 1 no. back illuminated sign displaying the brand name and logo adjacent to the entrance doorway of the ground and lower ground floors of the Site; and
- Installation of 3.no projection screens behind the shop front glazing which will project images to the front elevation glazing.

Sign 1 will be a fascia sign, located adjacent to the entrance door of the Site. This sign will be visible from Great Portland Street and will advertise the name of the brand logo for both direct visitors and those passing by. The sign will be back illuminated.

Signs 2-4 will comprise of translucent film applied to the rear of the glazing, inside the Unit, with self-adhesive backing. This will project temporary branding to the front of the Unit for visitors and those passing by the establishment. The sign will be illuminated via a projector inside the unit.

Full details of the proposed advertisement are included within the submitted drawings.

Policy and Legislative Context

In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The adopted Development Plan for the Site is:

- The Westminster City Plan (2019-2040) (“City Plan”); and
- The London Plan (2021).

Also of relevance are any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) such as:

- “Shopfronts, Blinds and Signs - A Guide to their Design” (2004)

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (December 2023), the policies contained in the NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Planning Policy Assessment

Design

City Plan Policy 38B (Design Principles) states that:

“All development will positively contribute to Westminster’s townscape and streetscape, having regard to:

- 1. The character and appearance of the existing area, adjacent buildings and heritage assets, the spaces around and between them and the pattern and grain of existing streets, squares, mews, and passageways;*
- 2. Materials, building lines, scale...”*

In addition, City Plan Policy 43G (Public realm – Signs and Advertisements) states that *“Signs and advertisements will make a positive contribution to amenity of public safety by being sensitively designed in terms of their size, location, and degree of illumination, their impact of the building on which they are displayed, local context, street-scene and wider townscape”*.

The Supplementary Planning Guidance *“Shopfronts, Blinds and Signs - A Guide to their Design”* (the *“Guidance”*) was adopted in 2004 and whilst considered relatively out-of-date is still of relevance for the application.

Page 13 of the Guidance refers to Fascia Signs, and states that *“the materials and colours selected should be compatible with the building and those used on surrounding shopfronts and buildings. Acrylic and shiny materials, and the use of fluorescent colours tend to clash with traditional finishes and are visually inappropriate. On more traditional buildings, a painted timber fascia with painted lettering or individual letters of another suitable material is preferable. The lettering should be in proportion with the fascia size and only show the name of the shop, the trade and the street number, with no additional advertising.”*

The quantum of the signage proposed, and the size of the signage, is considered to be appropriate in the context of the Site’s location in a commercial area. The dimensions of the two fascia signs will ensure that they are visible, whilst still ensuring that they do not have an overbearing impact on the locality or character of the building.

The signage is important to the use of the Site, as it will allow the Site to be visible to customers and passers-by, provide details of the operation and fundamentally help support the long-term economic success for the operator, by being visible within the street. The location of the proposed fascia signage is typical of this type of development. It will not have a garish or overbearing impact on the locality.

The proposed fascia signage adjacent to the front entrance will be illuminated with LED back lighting. A subtle form of illumination is proposed to compliment the conservation area location. The illumination of the advertisements will be static. Given the small size and modest design it is considered that the signs will have a neutral impact to the Conservation Area. As such, the illumination will not detract from the design of the host building or the Conservation Area.

The three projecting images on the shopfront glazing will be illuminated. This signage will allow KEF to advertise products and brand partnerships. The interactive screens will be able to be updated regularly, as new products are launched so it does not become out of date. These signs use modern

technology to provide a smarter solution to placing products in a shop window. The signs will not be static as they will move slowly to present on the screen difference products or information to customers. The projector for the images will be located inside the building.

As a result of the above, is therefore considered that the design of the proposals accords with policies 38B and 43G and is suitable for the Site, use and the surrounding character.

Amenity

Factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural, or similar interest.

The Site is located within a highly commercial area within the East Marylebone Conservation Area. There are a large proportion of advertisements throughout the area, both on Great Portland Street and Regent Street. The proposed fascia sign is consistent with existing signage along Great Portland Street and of the type of signage you would expect to see in a mixed-use area with active ground floor uses. The luminance and positioning of the illumination will ensure that it does not disturb neighbouring occupiers, nor harm the conservation area setting. It is therefore considered that the advertisement in the area, would not have a detrimental impact upon the character of the building, or the wider conservation area.

In terms of the impact upon the public realm, the proposed signage is located within the curtilage of the Site and would not cause a physical obstruction to pedestrian activity within the local area.

Public Safety

Factors relevant to public safety and this proposed development includes the safety of persons using the highway and whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure or hinder the ready interpretation of any traffic sign.

The proposed window signage will be illuminated at the front of the unit. However, the illumination of the advertisements will be minimal and slow moving, as such it will not distract those moving throughout the surrounding highways.

In addition, due to the positioning of the proposed signage, and the size, it is deemed that this will not negatively impact upon those using the public highway.

Cumulative Impacts

The proposed signage is minimal and considered to be appropriate for the size of the Site. The signage is well sized and will therefore not result in clutter at the Site. The installation of the proposed signage is therefore deemed to be acceptable.

Conclusion

The above works are deemed to be appropriate to the surrounding area and host property, while also respecting the relevant planning policy. As a whole, we consider that for the reasons given above, the advertisement consent for external alterations should be considered as acceptable and, as such, should be approved.

We trust that this application contains sufficient information to validate the application as soon as possible, and we look forward to receiving your decision within the statutory determination period. However, if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Clare Bambury (clare.bambury@dwd-ltd.co.uk / 020 7489 4896) or Emma Penson (emma.penson@dwd-ltd.co.uk / 020 7332 2115) of this office.

The applicant also wishes to note they are open to discussion with Westminster City Council on any design changes required to make the application acceptable. Therefore, if any minor changes are sought by the Council, please let DWD know, and we will arrange for amendments to be made quickly. The applicant is keen to secure approval swiftly, to enable them to commence works at the Site and to occupy the long-term vacant space without delay.

Yours Sincerely,



Clare Bambury

Planner

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