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7A & 23 Eccleston Street, London, SW1W 9LX

Planning and Heritage Statement

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Introduction

1. This Statement accompanies a planning application for the change of use and land use swap at the above properties: the change of use of No. 7A from the existing Class E to provide a 3-bedroom flat, and the change of use of the upper floors of No. 23 from a 1-bedroom flat to Class E to provide a single commercial unit throughout No. 23; new dormer windows to 7A Eccleston Street.
2. The proposals have been the subject of two pre-planning submissions, with replies dated 18 January 2023 (ref. P/22/00720) and 23 November 2023 (ref. P/23/00646). This formal planning application has responded to this process with changes to the proposed scheme and the preparation of necessary supporting evidence. This Statement explains the proposals and assesses relevant planning policies and heritage matters.



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Historic and existing layout of buildings

3. Evidence shows that the building of 7 Eccleston Street was originally a garage at ground floor with accommodation above. Attached as an Appendix are photographs from the early 1920s showing this use, which provided servicing for cars, accessed via Eccleston Street and, it is understood, through to the Eccleston Place yards at the rear; what is now Eccleston Yards. Although there is a degree of supposition, it is understood from Post Office Directory records and the photographic records that the upper floors were in residential use at that time, as was the case with most other properties on this side of Eccleston Street. The historic photograph shows that the upper floor residential accommodation was accessed via its own front door to the street.
4. The ground floor of No. 7 is now a separate, self-contained retail unit (Class E) and is occupied as such on separate lease. The upper floors over first, second and mansard have a self-contained entrance to the street and are known as No. 7A and is in office use (Class E), which is currently vacant. As explained later in this Statement, the configuration of the office space in the building leads to difficulties in letting the space.
5. 23 Eccleston Street is a single property which has a basement and ground floor in Class E use, but this is currently vacant. The first, second and mansard floors have, according to planning records, a residential use. However, there is no physical separation between these uses: access to the residential property is through the commercial premises itself, across the 'shop floor' to the front shared door. This layout stems from a historic lease arrangement of previous occupiers, ie when 'living over the shop' was a more feasible option. An extract from one early lease for No. 23 is attached as an Appendix, confirming this historic arrangement.
6. The historic photograph also confirms this important difference between No. 23 and No. 7: the ground floor to No. 23 has always been only the shopfront, with no separate entrance to the upper floor accommodation from the street. Thus, the arrangement for residential accommodation has always been the antiquated arrangement of accessing it through the shop floor. As a consequence of this, the residential floorspace in the property is vacant.

Assessment of proposed development

7. The proposals in this application seek to swap the uses: No. 7A to become a self-contained dwelling, and No. 23 to be a single commercial (Class E) use.
8. The reason for this is, at present, the layout of both properties effectively offer the worst of both worlds: neither the office space in No. 7A or the residential space in No. 23 can be let. Accompanying this application are Statements from Knight Frank and from Hanover Green Retail that explain these commercial matters in detail. These three documents are key parts of the applicant's case, and were produced in response to requests from the Council during the pre-application discussions. The evidence they provide is considered below in relation to the main issues in this application.

Principle of the changes of use

9. The properties lie within the CAZ, and No. 7A within the Victoria Opportunity Area. Policy 14 of the City Plan, as relevant to the current project, supports the intensification of the CAZ to provide additional floorspace; requires active frontages that serve visiting members of the public on the ground floor; supports the provision of a range of retail unit sizes in redevelopment proposals; supports mixed commercial uses; and resists loss of such uses on the ground floor.
10. The proposed change of use of the upper parts of both properties must therefore be carefully considered. In this regard it is important to have regard to when such residential use may be allowed, but also to have regard to the actual objectives of CAZ policy in relation to office space.
11. In this regard and of relevance to the first matter is the overarching approach of Policy SD5 of the London Plan, which says that new residential development should not compromise the strategic function of the CAZ. The potential for residential use is explained, with mixed-use office/residential proposals supported where there is an equivalent or net increase in office floorspace. The Policy further states that residential or mixed-use development proposals should not lead to a net loss of office floorspace in any part of the CAZ unless there is no reasonable and demonstrable prospect of the site being used for offices, with the potential for land use swaps being recognised.
12. Policy E1 of the London Plan also sets out the general objective of seeking improvements to the quality of office space, and that the CAZ should be developed and promoted.
13. Policy 13 of the City Plan states that the net loss of office floorspace within the CAZ to residential use will only be permitted in those parts of the CAZ that are predominantly residential in character and where the proposal would reinstate an original residential use. The pre-application process determined Nos. 7A and 23 Eccleston Street do not lie in a predominately residential area. However, in addition to this 'predominately residential' test, paragraph 13.13 of the Policy also states there may be instances where existing office stock within the CAZ has reached the end of its economic life, and there is no interest in its continued use for such purposes, or for other uses that fall within Class E. Thus, again, the objective of the Policy is to seek to retain and promote good quality office space.

14. The existing GIA of the Class E space within No. 7A is 118.7m² (although 5.6m² of this is the ground floor entrance hall). The existing GIA of the nominal residential space at first, second and third floors of No. 23 is 57.3m². The proposed development would therefore lead to a reduction of 61.4m² Class E space (or 55.8m² disregarding the entrance hall). There would also, of course, be the provision of a self-contained dwelling.
15. The accompanying Statements set out the evidence to demonstrate why, although there would be a net reduction in Class E space, this would lead to a more useable and lettable property at No. 23. The Hannover Green Retail statement further addresses the question as to whether sub-division at ground floor – to create two separated units in the building – would not be feasible. In summary, due to configuration and size of No. 23 there is a demand for a single Class E use within that building; there is no demand for two split users, or with a restriction in the type of Class E use. This is strongly evidenced by there being an identified occupier who wishes to move into the entire building as soon as possible, and that occupier being one who would bring an active frontage at ground floor whilst using all other levels of the building.
16. It is therefore our submission that the proposed use swap would provide economic benefits to Eccleston Street and the CAZ by enhancing and diversifying the retail and commercial offer, varying the retail sizes, and bringing a mix of uses to the area, in accordance with Parts A and G of Policy 14 of the City Plan. As the existing office space at No. 7A is unattractive to occupiers – as demonstrated by the Knight Frank statement – this change would clearly outweigh the net reduction in Class E space.
17. A further consideration in this application which adds weight to the application is, of course, the provision of the dwelling at No. 7A. This would be a family-sized dwelling to comply with the space standards, and to be consistent with Policy H10 of the London Plan and Policy 10 of the City Plan, which seek a mix of housing and in particular larger, family-sized dwellings. As explained, the upper floors of No. 23 do not form a self-contained dwelling, and so the proposals can be seen as leading to a true benefit in providing a dwelling in this area. There was originally a residential use at No. 7A.

Heritage matters

18. The properties are unlisted properties that lie within the Belgravia Conservation Area. External works are proposed to No. 7A only, with new dormers proposed at the front of the property. The design of these has responded to comments made at the pre-application stages, with a traditional design approach that sits comfortably within the roof and the wider terrace. The significance of the Conservation Area would not be affected by these changes, and hence no conflict with Policies 38, 39 and 40 of the City Pla, and Policy BEL1 of the Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan

Residential accommodation

19. As noted above, the proposed flat satisfies the space standards for new dwellings. As a swap from existing residential floorspace, there would be no change with regards to servicing or parking in the area. There would not be any impact upon the residential amenity of existing occupiers.

Energy and sustainability

20. An Energy and Sustainability Statement is enclosed relating to the change of use from commercial to residential at No. 7A, where there would be internal changes to facilitate such use. The occupier of No. 23 as a whole commercial unit would be utilise existing facilities within the upper floors of the building. The Statement examines the proposals against the Council's Environmental SPD, to satisfy Policy 36 of the City Plan and Policy BEL2 of the Belgravia Neighbourhood Plan.

Transportation and waste

21. There is no net change in uses as a result of the proposed development: simply a swap in where residential and where Class E occurs. Thus, there is no change in requirement for parking or waste provision, as each swapped use will operate in the same way as at present, which sees waste stored within the premises and put out for collection on the appropriate days. Policy 37 of the City Plan would therefore be satisfied.

Fire safety

22. Enclosed is a Fire Strategy concerning the change of No. 7A to a residential dwelling, which would be above the retained ground floor retail unit. This addresses matters as required by Policy D12 of the London Plan. As the change in No. 23 is from being two different uses to a single commercial unit within the same building the matters can be addressed at Building Regulation stage.

Use swap

23. The pre-application response stated that the changes of use at the separate properties would be tied together with a legal agreement securing a formal land use swap. The applicant has a commercial occupier who wishes to move into all of No. 23 as soon as possible, and so any agreement will need to facilitate this process. The legal agreement will be pursued parallel to the planning application, in discussion with Officers.

Conclusions

24. The accompanying Statements explain how the configuration of the two buildings are at present wasted assets for the Grosvenor Estate and for this part of the CAZ and VOA: they are unattractive to potential occupiers, and their vacancy does not achieve anything in relation to the objectives of the London Plan or the City Plan. Grosvenor have explored all options for the properties and the swapping of the uses represents the opportunity to bring the buildings into active use. The applicant has an occupier for the commercial use of all of No. 23 who wishes to move in as soon as possible.
25. The pre-application process established the matters to be addressed to secure permission for the changes. The policy context allows for the change of use and land use swap, provided sufficient evidence is shown to justify a small net loss of office space in favour of general commercial Class E throughout No. 23. We consider this has now been demonstrated, along with information as to why the existing configurations of the buildings, or possible internal changes to No. 23, would not lead to occupation in the current uses.
26. The application has therefore addressed matters raised at the pre-application stage, and planning permission can be granted subject to the mechanism to ensure the land use swap.

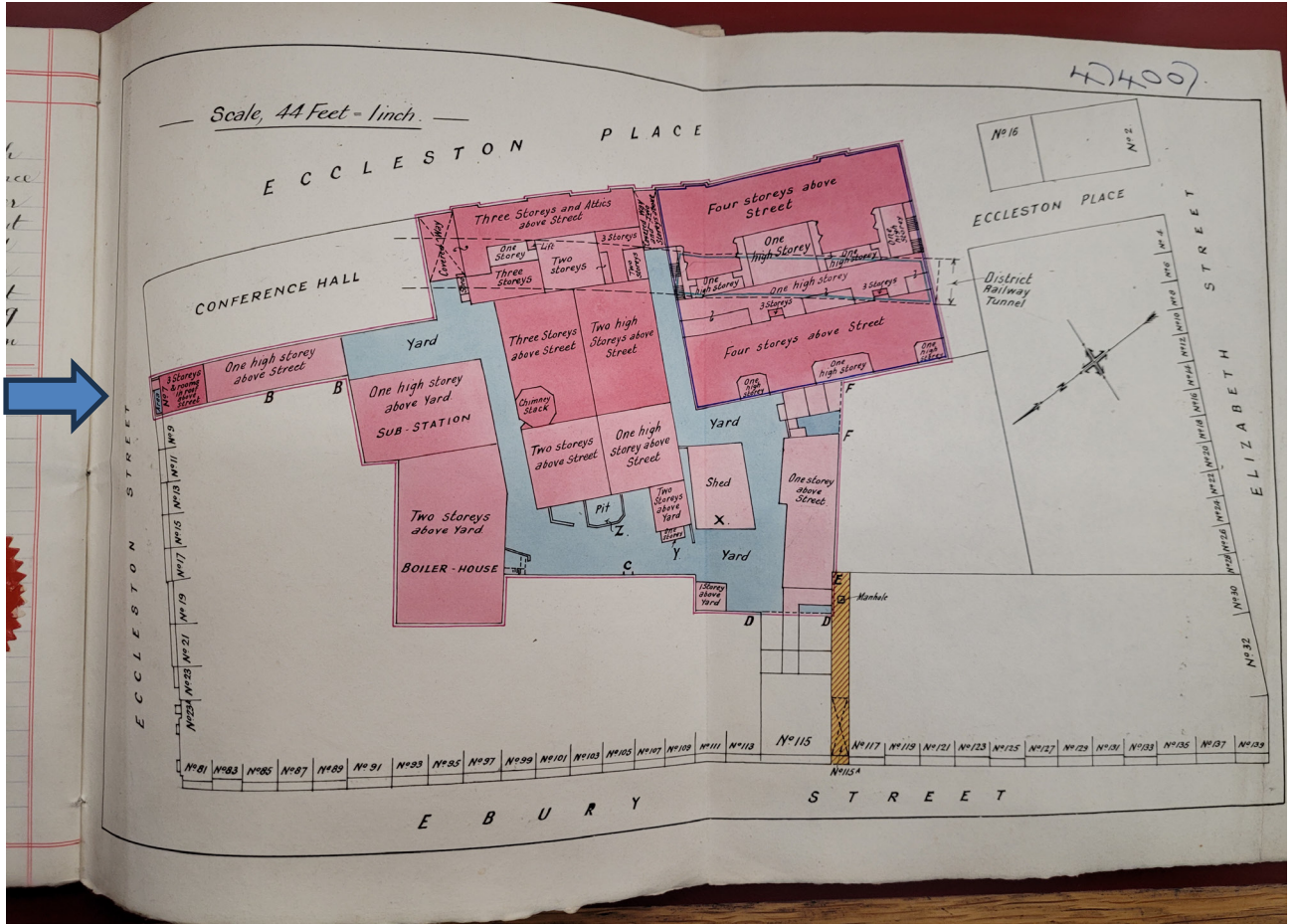
Appendices



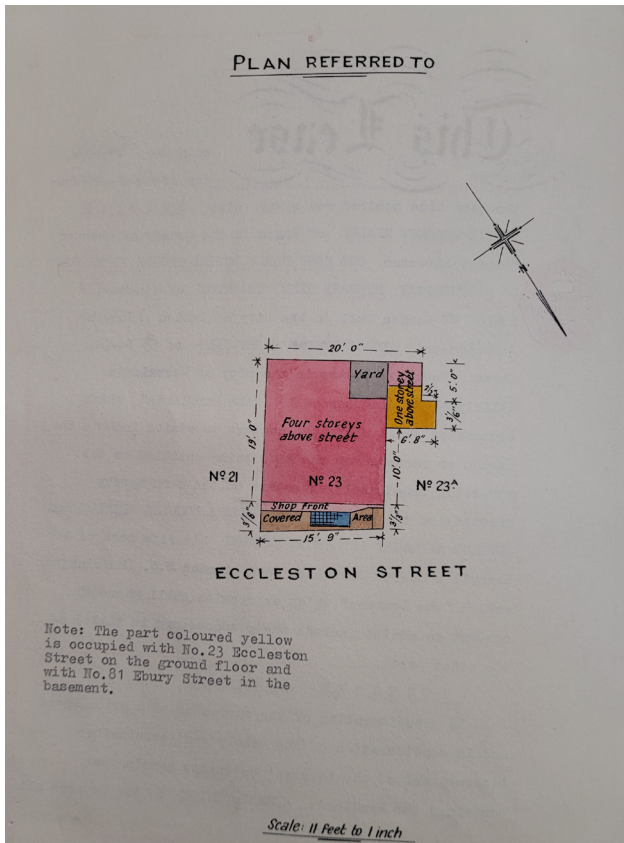
7 Eccleston Street, showing original garage use on ground floor with opening doors for vehicle servicing. Separate entrance to upper floors to residential use above.



23 Eccleston Street, showing shop at ground floor with shopfront across entire frontage and single entrance to premises



1921 lease plans showing layout of 7 Eccleston Street and connection to Yards behind



instrument or instruments (if any) properly stamped or if such instrument be a Will or Codicil then the Probate or in the case of an intestacy the letters of administration or in the case of an order of Court a copy of such order and also the Lease in cases where production of the Lease is necessary or appropriate in order that the Landlords may place and sign on such instrument as ought to be noted in respect of such registration a memorandum of registration And will pay to them a fee of three guineas for registering any and every such instrument in relation to this Lease

(X) The demised premises shall be kept and used only as follows:-

(i) As to the basement as storage accommodation in connection only with the use of the ground floor as hereinafter mentioned

(ii) As to the ground floor as a retail shop for some trade or business in every instance first to be approved in writing by or on behalf of the Landlords the said ground floor to be in the occupation of not more than one company firm or person in every instance first to be approved in writing as aforesaid

(iii) As to the first second and third floors as a self-contained private residential maisonette in the occupation only of a director partner or senior employee of the Company or firm or of the person in occupation of the ground floor of the demised premises as hereinbefore

11.

mentioned

(XI) (a) Neither the basement nor the said maisonette on the first second and third floors of the demised premises shall be separately sublet but the same shall be kept and used only in conjunction with the use and occupation of the ground floor as hereinbefore mentioned in Clause 2(X) hereof

(b) No produce goods wares or other articles or things whatsoever shall during the said term hereby granted be placed or hung out or exposed for sale or stored or otherwise outside the door or outside any other part of the demised premises and no other person or persons shall be permitted or encouraged by the Lessees or by any person deriving title under the Lessees to place or keep a stall or stalls or to sell any produce goods wares or other articles or things on the pavement forecourt or roadway in front of the demised premises or any part thereof but the Lessees and all persons deriving title under the Lessees will endeavour and concur with the Landlords their respective Lessees and tenants of the demised premises and adjacent or neighbouring hereditaments in endeavouring to clear and keep clear the said pavement forecourt and roadway from all stalls sales markets and other causes of obstruction

(XII) No living poultry or animals (other than a dog or cat) shall be kept nor shall there be exposed on any part of the demised premises any clothes or linen or any

12.

Extract from 1969 lease showing restriction in upper floors to residential use being tied to those operating shop on ground and basement floors