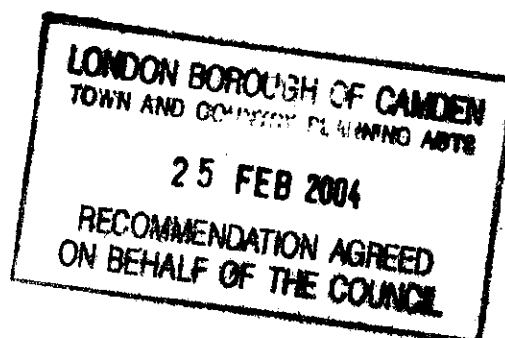


LDC Report		20/04/2004
Officer Michael Fox		Application Number 2004/0858/NEW
Application Address Englands Lane Residence England's Lane London NW3 4XJ		Drawing Numbers Undated written statement, A4 Location plan and A4 Detail plan.
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature J Waddell	Authorised Officer Signature A D Sheby 25/2/04



Proposal

Application for Certificate of Proposed Lawful Use as a Hostel (Sui Generis)

Recommendation Refer to Draft Decision Notice

Assessment

History

There is no planning permission for the use of the building. Files held by the Planning Service contain various references to the use of the building as a hostel over many years.

On 30th September 1997, planning permission was granted for the refurbishment of and alterations to the "Former Nurses Home", including the erection of two rubbish chutes and new paladin store rooms on the north elevation and alterations to the existing fire escape staircase. A second application was granted on the same date for the replacement of the existing boundary fence by new metal railings and new entrance gates. In both cases, the applicant described the present use as "hostel accommodation".

On 28th October 1997, an officer opinion was issued concluding that planning permission would not be required for continued use as a hostel.

In 1999, an allegation was made of an unauthorised change of use to a hotel. This was investigated, and an officer's report of June 1999 confirms, based on a site visit, that the use was as a residential hostel, and that there was no breach of planning control. The property is there described as "Nurses Hostel" and as "lodgings for nurses, doctors etc."

In 2003 a planning application was submitted describing the existing use as "hostel", and seeking permission to extend the property by an infill extension "to provide an additional 12 hostel units". The present use is described there as "hostel". The applicants withdrew this planning application before it could be determined (as officers had indicated that the extension was likely to be refused for design and amenity reasons).

The applicant (LB of Camden Housing Department) submits that the property was used as a nurses residence by the Royal Free Hospital until 1996, when the NHS sold the building, and that it was subsequently run as a "hostel for overseas workers and students".

Hostel Use – General definition

There is no strict definition of hostel use. However, hostels are generally recognised as either having simple bedrooms with shared communal bathrooms, kitchens etc; or self-contained accommodation (usually in the form of bedsits including kitchenettes and shower/bath/WC), with a significant amount of shared communal provision. In the case of self-contained accommodation, the following needs to apply:

- The property needs to be managed as a **single planning unit** - with the operator responsible for the provision of such services as, for example, heating, lighting, furnishing, decorating of the accommodation, cleaning of the communal areas and maintenance etc.
- There needs to be a significant amount of shared communal provision such as, for example and depending on the precise nature of the hostel and the client group targeted by the operator - laundry facilities, recreation/TV room, storage room(s), gym facilities etc.

Proposal

The proposed use of the premises is for the housing of homeless persons/families. A small proportion of the rooms would also be for occupation by key workers, though they would be absorbed within the overall management of the building.

The proposed use would comprise 162 self-contained units, in the form of bedsits with their own wc/showerrooms and kitchenettes. The applicant specifies that this would be entirely block managed, served by an intensive 24-hour in-house management service provided by the Council's Temporary and Supported Housing Group, which would be responsible for all aspects of health and safety, maintenance, repairs and servicing. This would include maintaining in a serviceable condition all of the following:

- Cookers;

- Fridges;
- Fire alarms;
- CCTV;
- Lifts;
- Lighting;
- Heating;
- Supply of water/gas/electricity.

The proposed hostel would contain the following communal facilities:

- 2 laundrettes;
- communal storage rooms;
- computer, teaching and meeting rooms;
- clinical consultation facilities;
- a large indoor recreation/activities room; and
- external play space for children.

Additional support for the client group provided on-site would include assistance with signing on with a GP, obtaining school places, gaining employment, claiming housing and welfare benefits, access to local amenities and bidding for properties through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Furthermore, occupants would gain access to learning and employment opportunities being prioritised by the Temporary and Supported Housing Group, and would be invited to take part in meetings of the Homeless Families Network.

Conclusion

On the balance of probabilities, the existing lawful use of the premises is as a hostel. The use proposed, in terms of its management as a single planning unit, and the substantial amount of communal facilities proposed would be considered to also be in hostel use. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no material change of use in the use of the premises.

It is therefore considered that the use of the building proposed would comply with the generally understood criteria for hostels, in accordance with *sui generis* use under Article 3(6) of the Use Classes Order 1987. As such the proposal would not comprise a change of use and planning permission is not required, so a Certificate of Proposed Lawful use should be granted.