



PROGRESS PLANNING

51 Belmont Road

Retention of a small onsite office for use by the management company of the building which will be situated at lower ground floor level.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
The Site	2
Proposed development	3
Planning Policy	3
Principle of Development	3
Assessment of change of use	3
Impact on the character and appearance of the area	3
Security and Accessibility	4
Parking/Refuse	4
Flooding or Drainage Issues	4
Impact of neighbours	5
Noise impact.....	5
Contamination & environmental impact.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion.....	5



Executive Summary

This report has been submitted in support of the full planning application for retention of the small onsite office for use by the management company of the building which will be situated at lower ground floor level.

51 Belmont Road is located in the heart of Uxbridge which is a suburban Metropolitan Town in West London. The site is situated in a highly sustainable location with a PTAL rating of 6a. The site is located less than 300 metres from the local Sainsburys and less than 200 metres from the main high street which features several cafés, restaurants and other amenity services. It benefits from close proximity to Uxbridge tube station which allows quick and efficient travel to the core centre and wider boroughs of London.

This application works with the previously consented application (34151/APP/2019/1179) which secured permission for the 'Removal of undercroft parking, single storey third floor level extension, and rearrangement of lower and upper ground floor levels to provide 16 residential units and external alterations including landscaping'. The site contains a total of 30 residential units and an underutilised plant space in the lower ground floor of 51 Belmont Road.

The proposal seeks to transform this unused space into an onsite office unit for use by the management company for the site. The space will work ancillary to the rest of the maintenance and servicing of the building.

The Site

The site consists of a four-storey residential building which previously consisted of an office building. It is located on the northwest side of Belmont Road approximately 95m northeast of its junction with the High Street, Uxbridge. The building is situated between 41-49 Belmont Road & Belmont Medical Centre.



Existing Site plan

The application site is located within the Uxbridge Metropolitan Town Centre. It has a PTAL rating of 6a which indicates that there is good public transport provision locally.

Proposed development

The proposal seeks the retention of a small onsite office for use by the management company of the building which will be situated at lower ground floor level.

Planning Policy

The proposed development has been assessed against the London Plan 2021, the Development Plan Policies contained within the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1 & 2, the NPPF 2021 and supplementary planning guidance by both the London Borough of Hillingdon and GLA.

Principle of Development

In terms of the principle of development, the previous use of the building was commercial and only a small element of office is sought to be retained. Therefore, the use of a small part of this building for an office unit is acceptable and is long established. The Hillingdon local plan notes there to be a shortage of good quality office stock in Uxbridge. This small office will be used by the management company that maintains the building and as such will not be let externally, but it will nonetheless enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre, even if only very modestly, and it is hoped that this proposal would be welcomed for making more efficient use of the site and potentially enhancing the quality of the servicing of the existing building by having an office for the management company based within it.

Policy E4: Uxbridge notes the councils' aspirations to have mixed-use development within the Uxbridge Town Centre. The proposed development would be a welcomed addition to the area and proposes to incorporate a mixed-use development which is critical to the character of a thriving metropolitan area.

Assessment of change of use

The proposed change of use to Office is sought to provide an onsite unit for the management company that maintains the building and in order to make better use of this underutilised area. The use of the site has previously been office and therefore an office in this location is deemed to be acceptable. The following section goes to further justify the acceptability of the scheme with respect to relevant planning material considerations.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

Strategic Policy BE1 of the Local Plan: Part 1 requires all new development to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods. Policies BE13 and BE19 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two – Saved UDP Policies (Nov 2012) seek to ensure that the new development complements or improves the character and amenity of the area, whilst policy BE38 seeks the retention of topographical and landscape features and provision of new planting and landscaping in development proposals.

Policy BE4 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 – Saved UDP Policies (Nov 2012) states that new development within or on the fringes of conservation areas will be expected to preserve or enhance those features which contribute to their special architectural and visual qualities; development would avoid the demolition or loss of such features. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The site is not located within a conservation area and there are no heritage assets that would be affected by that this proposal. The building has little architectural interest or merit and it does not have an active frontage onto the street. Importantly, the proposal will not result in any change to the external appearance of the building, therefore, there will be no impact on the streetscene and visual amenity of the area.

Security and Accessibility

The site is in a highly accessible location with close proximity to the services of Uxbridge town centre, the tube and cycle network. The building already accommodates 50 cycle spaces which are primarily unused and these would be kept within the proposal. 50 cycle space are considered adequate given the scale of the proposal and underutilisation of existing cycle parking spaces. Access to the proposed office is provided through the private elevator situated to the east of the site. The elevator enables disabled access for all future occupiers/users.

The proposal seeks to retain only a small element of the historic office on the site. The office is situated at lower ground floor of the residential block. The access to the proposed office should not conflict with the current residential usage as a separate and secure route (using a fob system) will be created and will be maintained to separate the commercial element from the residential. This will also ensure that both elements are secure. Also, as the unit will be used by the management company for the building, it is considered that the small degree of shared use of spaces is acceptable in this particular circumstance.

The proposal would provide a natural surveillance for all occupiers ensuring the site and wider community are not unduly disrupted by anti-social or criminal behaviour. In essence the proposed scheme would provide a mixed development which would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre in accordance with policy D11 of The London Plan 2021.

Parking/Refuse

This site is located within a Metropolitan Town Centre where a car free development should be deemed acceptable not only due to its location but given its high PTAL rating of 6a. The proposal would not cause any overspill parking or parking stress in the town centre and surrounding streets as parking is already restricted for the site. Given the abundance of public transport options on the doorstep, a car free office is considered appropriate, particularly given its scale.

This proposal would provide secure, sheltered and accessible cycle storage at lower ground floor level adjoining the proposed office space and would go to further justify a car free development in a sustainable location in Uxbridge. The cycle storage which is currently available already provides ample storage to accommodate this proposal.

The current site benefits from an existing refuse storage for the residential waste of 51 Belmont Road. Given the scale of the development proposed and the nature of its intended use, there is unlikely to be much waste generated, however the unit will be occupied by the management company (a private refuse/cleaning/management company) that will collect waste direct from the premises on a weekly basis to ensure that the office is adequately serviced.

Overall and given the site's PTAL, its location within a Metropolitan Town Centre, and proximity to a tube station and bus station, a car free development would be acceptable and there is adequate cycle parking on site for future users. Occupiers of the site are already restricted from obtaining parking permits and the proposal will not lead to any highway impacts, therefore, the proposal would be considered to comply with the Hillingdon local plan.

Flooding or Drainage Issues

The EA Flood Zone map indicates that the site and the proposed development is not located within an area at risk of flooding. Nor, would the development increase surface water flooding given there are no external changes to the scheme.

Given the above, there is no reason to preclude development of this site on the grounds of flood risk or there being insufficient capacity to cater for the run-off from the proposed development, in accordance with policy EM6 'Flood Risk Management'

in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1, policy SI 12 Flood Risk Management of the London Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

Impact of neighbours

The proposal merely seeks to retain a small element of office for use by the management company of the building. There are no external changes that would impact neighbouring properties or fall outside what is acceptable in this location.

Policy DMH 3: Office Conversions of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 states that the conversion of offices must provide an external finish that is suitable to a residential building and in keeping with the character of the area. Given the scale and nature of the proposed use that is being retained, which will have no external visitors to the premises, the proposal would not be considered to harm the residential amenity of existing residential occupiers.

Noise impact

Given the nature of the proposed use, there is unlikely to be significant noise disturbance to neighbouring properties. Nevertheless, measures will be taken to ensure that appropriate sound insulation is provided between the ceiling and floor of the residential properties above it. Further details of these measures including detailed working drawings could be obtained via a condition to safeguard existing residents from noise.

Conclusion

In terms of principle of development, the retention of the small onsite office for use by the management company of the building is considered acceptable given its ancillary relationship to the building and town centre location. Care has been taken to ensure that the residential and small office is separated as much as possible from the residential elements of the building. However, as the management company for the building will be utilising the office, it is not considered that this would be as much as an issue in this particular case.

The proposal is extremely small in nature and there are no material changes to the building. The amenity of existing occupiers would be safeguarded and the proposal would not lead to any highway concerns. Overall, the modest proposal should be considered acceptable given its limited impact.