GOODWIN
PLANNING SERVICES
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS
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The Chief Planning Officer
Manchester City Council
PO Box 532
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Our Ref: SG-1343-L2

28th March 2019

Dear Sirs

RE: PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF 5TH FLOOR, 19 SPRING GARDENS, MANCHESTER, M2 1FB FROM B1 TO D1 USE
PLANNING PORTAL REF: PP-07738415

We are instructed by Code Nation Ltd to submit an application for the above change of use. The application is retrospective as the change of use occurred in December 2018 as the applicants did not believe they required planning permission as their Lease specifies they are allowed to utilise the building for B1 or D1 uses.

The application proposal only involves the 5th Floor. No change is proposed to the remainder of the building as part of this application. There are no physical alterations to the external appearance of the building. The application therefore purely seeks retrospective consent for the change of use from B1 to D1.

As the application involves minor development no Design and Access Statement is required. However, this letter explains the background to the proposals and the details of the proposed use. It then assesses the proposals against relevant policies at local and National level.

Planning permission for the erection of a 7 storey office building following the demolition of Kent House was granted initially on 2nd November 1977 under application reference F04524. The permission was subsequently renewed on 6th February 1980 under planning permission F12375. Whilst no use was specified in the planning permission and the use was not restricted by condition, the description of development was "*erection of a 7 storey office building after demolition of existing"*. The approved use is therefore for office purposes.

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The applicants are a tenant of the 5th Floor. As set out above, their Lease indicates that the approved uses are B1 and D1. However, it has subsequently become apparent that the D1 use does not have planning permission despite being allowed in the Lease. The tenants have therefore been requested to apply for planning permission by the Landlords.

The tenants (Code Nation Ltd) are a company specialising in the provision of apprenticeships, particularly in the area of coding and digital security with locations currently based in Manchester and Chester. The intention is to shortly open other centres in Nuneaton and Cambridge.

Apprentices generally undertake a 15 month course. 12 weeks of that course are site based (for Manchester apprentices this is within the 5th Floor of 19 Spring Gardens). The remaining 12 months are with their employers. The initial 12 week period provides an intense training in technical skills giving a strong foundation in code to allow students to become code developers.

The majority of students (80%) are on an employer sponsored project during their studies. This means that they are already employed prior to undertaking the course. Once the 12 week course is finished the apprentices return to their employers to complete the final 12 months at the employers site. During this period Code Nation continue to provide training at the employer's site.

In addition, a small proportion of students enter the apprenticeship scheme without being backed by their current employer on a private basis. The course aims to provide these students with the skills required to open doors to business opportunities, utilising the skills and knowledge gained during the course.

In terms of funding, 75 – 80% of the apprentices are Government funded with 20-25% being privately funded. The majority of apprentices are Manchester/North West based.

The business operates on a quarterly turnover of around 80 apprentices. Thus each group of apprentices undertake the 12 week course on site and then return to their employers. At that stage a second group of around 80 apprentices commence their 12 week course. There are therefore 4 groups of approximately 80 apprentices put through the 12 week course annually. The maximum number of apprentices on site at any one time would not normally exceed 80.

In terms of employees, the site operates as a Head Office, not only for the Manchester site but also for Chester. It will also provide support facilities and Head Office function for the future opening of the training sites in Nuneaton and Cambridge.

The Head Office staff comprise 17 employees as follows:-

- 4 x Directors;
- 1 x Compliance;
- 3 x Operations;

- 6 x Sales;
- 2 x Apprentice Operations;
- 1 x Admin.

The intention is that this number will increase by around 50% once the Nuneaton and Cambridge sites are functioning.

In addition, the teaching staff on site comprise the following:-

- 6 Instructors;
- 1 Instructor who is also a Director of overall Instructors for all sites.

Although the planning application is therefore submitted for D1 use (as this would be the primary use of the fifth floor) it can be seen that the floor also provides office accommodation for Head Office staff managing the businesses other sites.

The site therefore provides significant employment as well as valuable training through apprenticeships generally for young people to enable them to establish a future career in coding.

The application documents include an indicative internal layout of the 5th Floor. This shows the classrooms located around the exterior of the floor with a communal working area in the core and ancillary office space/staff room also served off the communal area. The communal area is available for both apprentices and office staff undertaking the Head Office function.

In terms of planning policy, the site lies within the defined City Centre but outside of the City Centre Primary Shopping Area (which adjoins the site to the north of Marble Street). The building within which the application site falls is not allocated for any particular use in the Plan.

The Manchester Local Plan Core Strategy comprises the Development Plan for the area. Paragraph 8.20 indicates that the role of the City Centre is recognised through an established policy context which emphasises its importance in delivering the City's goals. It indicates that the Core Strategy will compliment these goals and focus on providing guidance which will establish a policy context within which City Centre development can come forward, ensuring in particular that it provides the flexibility necessary for the City to grow and respond to opportunities as they arise. The document therefore acknowledges that flexibility is a key component for the Strategy to enable the City Centre to respond to emerging opportunities.

Policy CC1 indicates that the primary economic focus is the City Centre and fringe where high quality accommodation will be encouraged to boost investment by local, national and international businesses. It indicates that the focus for employment growth will be in

B1a high density offices but also that the provision of a range of economic development uses such as retail, leisure, entertainment, culture and tourism facilities will be encouraged within the City Centre to provide a vibrant employment location attractive to businesses, employees and visitors to the City Centre.

The use of the 5th Floor to provide apprentice training for computer based businesses is clearly complimentary to the range of economic development uses encouraged within policy CC1 and the ability to utilise the 5th Floor flexibly to provide this D1 use (and ancillary office accommodation) is a direct example of the flexibility necessary to allow the City to grow and respond to opportunities as they arise as set out in paragraph 8.20 of the Plan.

Paragraph 8.23 also indicates that the City Centre contains many of the assets driving growth in the City Region. One example it gives is the highest concentration of higher education facilities in the North West, providing a highly skilled population attractive to businesses. Clearly the application proposals further compliment this asset of the City Centre identified in the Plan.

Paragraph 8.25 acknowledges that the City Centre is the most suitable location for such growth, particularly as the City Centre is a "*highly accessible location".*

Policy CC7 advises that the City Centre presents the most viable opportunities for mixed use development and indicates that, in general, these will be promoted as a means of using land as efficiently as possible with a range of uses being considered for all sites. The explanation to the policy advises that mixed uses will be an essential part of the City Centre development as they reflect a variety of uses which coexist in this environment and they are an important means of promoting the efficient use of land. The proposal is therefore further supported by policy CC7.

Similarly, policy CC10 supports development which promotes diversity of activity within the City Centre. Again, the proposals are consistent with the objectives of this policy.

The application proposals are therefore entirely consistent with, and supported by, the relevant policies of the Development Plan. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF they should therefore be treated as sustainable development and should be granted planning permission without delay.

Additionally, the NPPF provides additional support for the proposals. Paragraph 85 advises that planning decisions should support the role of Town Centres by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation and that planning policies should allow Centres to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes.

The application proposals are therefore consistent with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and National Planning Policy.

As a result we look forward to receiving notification of approval in due course. However, if you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Goodwin
BA (Hons), MCD, MRTPI