

James Hughes
London Borough of Haringey
Level 6, River Park House
225 High Road, Wood Green
London N22 8HQ

18 September 2017

Dear James,

Hornsey Town Hall – Objection to loss of B1 office space

(planning references HGY/2017/2220)

As you know, I run an architectural practice that primarily serves homeowners and private developers with bespoke architectural work. Since relocating my office within Hornsey Town Hall, in February 2015 my list of projects has grown significantly, particularly within the immediate area surrounding the Town Hall. Of all these projects, those within Haringey form the clear majority, as in small-scale residential work, building work has generally followed the office location. Added up, these projects emanating from one office equate to over £1M worth of building work within Haringey alone, which are either being designed or under construction.

Contribution to local economy and community

This kind of contribution to the local economy is a clear benefit of the Town Hall as currently operated by ANA, who have provided studio and office space, as well as fantastic events over the last 2-3 years. Living and working locally as I do has allowed better connections throughout the local community, and this means better outcomes for families where parents work near to their children's schools. This is the case for significant number of Hornsey Town Hall tenants, as well as myself. The current operation also allows for a thriving life of its own, and it is through this that over the last 2 years that I have given architectural work to a number living nearby, 1 of those a student.

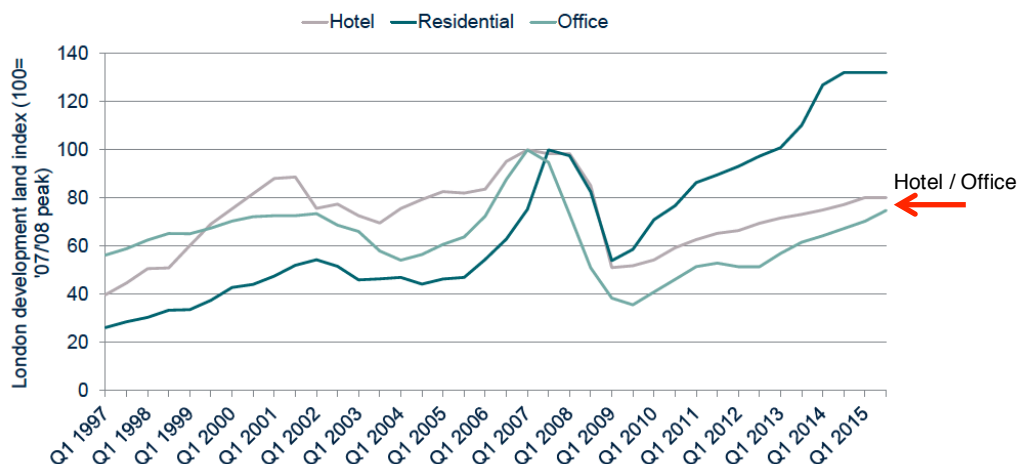
B1 office use provision in the current application

While some open-plan 'co-working space' has been provided, I object to the plans as submitted because they do not realistically provide for the vast majority of current tenants, or the idea that many can only operate with self-contained spaces. With only **68sqm** of cellular office space (3 rooms) proposed within **335sqm** allocated for B1 use, compared to the **1300sqm** approximately rented by local small businesses currently in Hornsey Town Hall, the new development will not cater adequately. Restoration of the building does not have to be contrary to planning policy in this respect, when there is a demonstrably viable ongoing use, a use which is within the council's own policies to retain. It is also a use for which the building was primarily designed - as a local civic centre. The 'interim' use, following years of vacancy, happens also to be the historic one, which this application seeks to change.

The co-working spaces themselves are curiously located far apart from each other, which would seem to make little sense for the overall geography of the building.

Viability

After essential restoration is accounted for, consider the prospect of inserting a hotel with that of retaining spaces to work. The difference between a hotel - with major structural changes, basement excavation, service voids through slabs, kitchenettes and bathrooms for all 67 rooms, ventilation, and much more besides – compared with keeping the building largely as is with some likely redecoration – likely amounts to tens of millions of pounds, a highly significant proportion of the overall site development of £66M. Couple this with an indicator of development land value, which places hotel use (C1) on a par with office use (B1), and the proposed major use of the building, which has brought considerable local resistance for its poorly connected location for a hotel, looks less viable than current use.



Savills' land development index, prime London. p144 from the GLA document 'Economic evidence base for London 2016'. Note that this is for 'prime' London, which is arguably more valuable for hotels than office use, also that more recent trends show office value rising against residential use in 2017.

OJEU process

The OJEU process has led to the current application, and while not related to the planning permission, it is relevant that at the point of Haringey committing to the process, the 'interim' use as an arts centre, offices, studios, was not in operation. As a result of a market-driven OJEU process, there is a vast imbalance of residential use across the site, which has been significantly increased after bids were submitted. This imbalance is clearly at the cost of a better planning mix of uses, namely that meaningful B1 office space is not prioritised.

Future local use

The listed building status exempts this building from a permitted change to residential use, which is not the case for other office spaces nearby, of which there are not many. They of course could be granted residential use as a permitted change, further reducing a healthy balance of uses in the neighbourhood.

Technical inaccuracy

'Co-working' areas labelled on drawings - ground floor 'rates office' (206 sqm), 1st floor individual rooms (68 sqm), 2nd floor co-working space (61 sqm) - do not total the area of co-working space allocated on the areas summary. From this I assume that a mistake has been made and the area of B1 use actually proposed is **335sqm**, and not **448 sqm**. Perhaps you can clarify. Over 100sqm is a significant difference and should naturally bring adjustments to the viability assessment. Either way, the actual amount of space available for this use is a small fraction of current demand.

I trust you can make this aspect of the application a priority in the decision process, as well as sensing the strong local feeling for continuation of current operation, rather than the predominance of residential use, whether C1 hotel or C3 flats, which overwhelm the site. I've added below excerpts of various relevant aspects of planning policy below which no doubt you'll be referring to in your recommendation. I hope also that a longer-term relocation, likely outside the borough towards central London, will not be needed if the importance of this issue is reflected in any scheme that gains consent.

This letter summarises the issues around the loss of B1 space only – the other problematic areas (massing, lack of affordable housing, incompatible uses, architectural details, harm to a listed building, transport issues, etc) are naturally still relevant. I believe that this site is of sufficient strategic importance, and that the conflict of interest for Haringey so pronounced, that referral to the mayor would still be appropriate.

Yours Sincerely,

Ivan Henshell
MA DipArch RIBA

cc. Crouch End councillors: **Jason Arthur, Natan Doron, Sarah Elliott**
MP for Hornsey & Wood Green **Catherine West**
Mayor of London **Sadiq Khan**
Principal business growth officer, Economic Development Haringey **Hem Amin**

From **Haringey's Local Plan – Strategic Policies 2013-2026:**

5.1 SP8 EMPLOYMENT

Protection and Enhancement of Existing Employment Sites

*5.1.20 A review of the borough's existing employment land and buildings was undertaken in 2009. The Employment Study 2009 provided an assessment of the employment land and demand in the borough. **The study recommended that all existing employment sites (designated or otherwise) be retained.** Therefore, in the first instance, support will be given for all designated sites and smaller sites to remain in employment use. However, flexibility will be shown for alternative uses that complement the employment uses, contribute to social infrastructure or provide training.*

5.1.23 The need for an increase in the provision of good quality, flexible office space, particularly for small businesses is supported by the views of commercial property agents active in Haringey- as identified in a survey carried out as part of the Employment Land Study 2009. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are also an important part of Haringey's economy, and the London Plan highlights the need for local authorities to ensure adequate provision is made for SMEs, given the anticipated role of these businesses in accommodating future growth of employment outside central London. Where appropriate and viable, the Council will encourage the provision of such office accommodation for SMEs. In addition, environmental enhancement and high quality design are an important element in the enhancement of existing employment sites. Please see SP11 and SP12 for the Council's approach to design and conservation.