

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: 221366/CLP

Address: Davidson House, Forbury Square, The Forbury, Reading, RG1 3EU

Proposals: Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed use of room 378 as a Private Hire Licensed Operating Centre office.

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

Applicant: Bolt Services UK Limited

Date received (valid from): 14 September 2022
December 2022

Agreed extension decision date: 5

Introduction and Proposal

The site is a 6 storey building known as Davidson House, which forms the southern end of Forbury Square. The external finish of Davidson House is curtain wall glazing and the building is separated at ground floor level by a walkway, allowing access between Forbury Square and Abbey Square. The building is within the Reading Central Area, the Central Core Area and the Office Core Area. It is also within an air quality management area (AQMA).

A lawful development certificate is sought to confirm the proposed use of room 378 on floor three of Davidson House as office space for an app-based taxi business (Bolt), and the view that this would fall within the use class of the existing use and would therefore not require planning permission for a change of use. The room would be used for providing access to Bolt's digital warehouse that holds all driver, vehicle and booking records. It would also be used to provide access to its cloud-based technology, which automatically accepts and allocates bookings. The office would be used during normal office hours Monday-Friday. The applicant expects less than one visitor per month into the office room.

The applicant has provided information to state that it is very different to traditional taxi/minicab/private hire operations in that it does not have radio masts, flashing lights, signage, waiting rooms for customers and drivers, vehicles, counter services or large numbers of visitors; Bolt is an "app only" company. Customers download the app and register a credit or debit card in order to use its services.

The intended use detailed above would fall within use class E(g)(i).

Plans/Information Submitted

The agent supplied the following plans, received on 14/09/2022:

Floor Plan

Location Plan

Relevant Recent Planning History

Planning Permission was granted for Office Development in the 1960s.

Application Number: 172092

Description of Development: Improvements to canopy/passageway and entry statement to existing office building and refurbishment of entrance lobby and common areas. Change of use from class B1 (a) to D2 of the basement area adjacent to south entrance.

Decision: (PER) Application Permitted on 12 February, 2018

Application Number: 180728

Description of Development: Discharge of condition 5 of planning permission 172092

Decision: (OBS) Observations sent on 23 July, 2018

Application Number: 181253

Description of Development: Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 (Materials) of planning permission 172092

Decision: CONDITIONAL DISCHARGED on 06 August, 2018

Application Type: PLANNING TYPE

Application Number: 182081

Description of Development: APPLICATION TO DISCHARGE CONDITION 4 OF PLANNING PERMISSION 172092.

Decision: CONDITIONAL DISCHARGED on 17 April, 2019

Application Number: 191133

Description of Development: Discharge of Conditions 5 and 6 of planning application 172092 dated 12th February 2018

Decision: CONDITIONAL DISCHARGED on 01 October, 2019

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Description of Development: Discharge of Conditions 5 and 6 of planning application 172092 dated 12th February 2018

Decision: CONDITIONAL DISCHARGED on 01 October, 2019

Summary of Consultations

RBC Legal and RBC Business Rates were consulted on this application although consultations are not required for an application of this type.

Legal - No response

Business Rates - The whole of the building is offices with the exception of a Carluccio's restaurant and a unit which was Forbury's restaurant (believe this unit is currently empty) both on the ground floor.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Practice Guidance

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Assessment

The proposal must be assessed to ensure that the proposed use will fall within the current use class of the building. Based on the information provided, the proposed use would fall within use class E(g)(i). Evidence suggests the current use of the room 378 on floor 3 of Davidson House also falls within use class E(g)(i). Therefore, planning permission would not be required for a proposed change of use.

Recommendation

Sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that a Certificate of Lawfulness should be granted for the proposed use of room 378 Davidson House as office use ancillary to the 'app only' taxi company (Bolt) under use class E(g)(i). Therefore, the Local Planning Authority can issue the applicant with a Certificate of Lawfulness for the proposed development.

