

**55, Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1JU**

**Change of Use from vacant office use on part basement and ground floors to an Adult Gaming Centre (AGC)**

1. The site

This is located on the south side of Fleet Street which is numbered sequentially . Facing the site from Fleet Street No 56 is to the left and 54 to the right of the subject the property. A separate planning application is to be made concerning the ground floor and basement

The gross site area is 89sqm.

This is a consequence of both Fleet Street and that part of Lombard Street now called Pleydell Court being ancient highways with the subsoil of these highways remaining in the ownership of the frontagers in accord the principle of *ad medium filum*. Whilst outwith the application it is noted that the full basement extends under Fleet Street to approximately the kerb line and under Pleydell Court.

2. The building

From records available it is possible that the present building , on all six levels, was erected in 1886 oversailing Pleydell Court. With distinctive white glazed bricks to both parts of the external elevations to Pleydell Court and within parts of the basement. The building suffered from war damage, which was made good in 1948/9 with the construction of a replacement internal staircase to all levels (City of London planning ref 1603). It is likely that at this time the present Crittall window frames were installed to all elevations. It was last used on all levels for a firm of solicitors before falling vacant in 2022.

3 The proposal

To change the use of part of the vacant office basement and the ground floor to an Adult Gaming Centre. The basement to be used by staff and for storage associated with the primary use and the ground floor for the AGC with the public access from Fleet Street. As shown on the plan as proposed a window display is to be installed facing Fleet Street and part of the return frontage.

The existing internal staircase is to be used to move from ground floor to basement. This is controlled by the applicant and is shown edged blue.

4 The Development Plan

This comprises The London Plan 2021 and the City of London Plan 2015. There is an emerging new City of London (CoL) Plan 2040 but given the first draft was published in November 2023 and the plan has yet to be examined, no weight is given to its policies.

The CoL Plan designates Fleet Street as a principle shopping street in the key diagram. But the policies CS 20 and DM20.1 have been rendered out of date to a significant extent by the introduction of Use Class E. Whilst the proposed use is *sui generis* it does not represent the loss of retail floorspace given the previous use. And it will assist in maintaining the viability and vitality of this shopping street.

The site is outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 and the City Flood Risk area as shown in the 2015 plan.

Noise attenuation measures are to be installed to the soffit of the first floor to ensure that the proposed use does not disturb those above should a separate application for residential use be granted by the Local Planning Authority.

## 5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 90 advises *Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:*

- a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;*
- b) define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;*
- c) retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;*
- d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;*
- e) where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and*
- f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.*

The proposed window display area to Fleet Street and the footfall generated by the proposed use will help maintain the vitality of Fleet Street as a principle shopping street. The proposal helps deliver sub sections a and d of this paragraph of the NPPF. By installing noise attenuation measures to the soffit of the first floor, the delivery of sub paragraph f is also enabled.

## Material Considerations

A vacant frontage detracts from the principle shopping street. And the premises have been occupied twice by squatters in 2024 who were removed with the assistance of the City of London Police.