

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/1991/P	Covent Garden Community Association (Elizabeth Bax, Chair of Planning Subcommittee)	14/07/2023 11:22:53	OBJNOT	<p>As the amenity society for the area for over 50 years, Covent Garden Community Association has one element of objection, and a number of other comments regarding this application.</p> <p>If the application were modified to reduce the time period to 4-6 weeks, we would withdraw our objection.</p> <p>This is not to say that we do not have other concerns, as explained below, but we would not wish to prevent this project from going ahead in some form this Summer given the amount of effort that has clearly been spent for a charitable organisation in preparing the model artwork etc. We have some light-touch requests that we have put in green text within the wider text below, for ease of reading.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>PRESSURES ON PAVEMENT SPACE</p> <p>Firstly, the public realm in the Covent Garden area is under great pressure and any project seeking to use space here needs to take this very seriously.</p> <p>Challenges to space on the pavement alone include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tables & chairs, A-boards, heaters, barriers etc. (some consented, some not). - Vertical drinking outside pubs, and queues outside restaurants. - What we estimate as a 50% to 100% increase in footfall* on some streets since the opening of the Elizabeth Line (cf. the LPA report on "The Crossrail Effect: How the Elizabeth line has transformed the capital") - Delivery vans, which are often forced to park on the pavement (albeit illegally) due to kerbside pressure. - Dockless bikes and scooters which, it is no exaggeration to say, are left everywhere. <p>(SEE PHOTOS)</p> <p>What little empty space remains is a relief for people living, working and visiting here. It can be enjoyed before passing on to the next obstruction.</p> <p>TIMESCALE</p> <p>The 6 locations chosen by the applicant are really the only spots which could be considered 'empty space' in the busy streets of Seven Dials. So, for the duration of the exhibition, it will all be occupied by one organisation.</p> <p>We feel that to extend this period to 3 months is excessive.</p> <p>There have been some similar ventures in the past, notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rhino models, present on the streets for the period 20/08/-22/09/18, and - Lion models, present on the streets for the period 10/08-24/09/2021. <p>These models were successful in raising awareness and funds for their associated charities. They were present on the streets for 4-6 weeks, which seems about right for these sorts of exhibitions. The public</p>

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consciousness will not tire of them too much, nor will they take over space for an unfair portion of the year.

CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Seven Dials is one of the prime conservation areas in the whole of the UK. It was given Outstanding status in 1974, one of only 38 (out of several thousand) in England. There are very few neighbourhoods that date back to Stuart times. It was also a Housing Action Area in the late 70s and early 80s which led to the refurbishment of derelict residential property and the creation of new homes.

Its character is therefore not only historic, but mixed use with substantial residential. Its layout is also unique.

People come here because it is interesting and beautiful and feels 'lived in'. Anything that detracts from this can harm the conservation area.

When projects are proposed that have an impact on the area's historic beauty and interest, it is important that they can be considered meaningfully. We believe that application documents should clearly show the location of any artworks, for example, with their design and colours in context. In the case of this project, a lack of representative images in context has made it difficult to assess whether the artworks would enhance or harm the conservation area. We therefore ask the applicant to place the models, which we understand are differently coloured, each in a location where its design and colours will not jar with the palette of the street.

POTENTIAL OBSTRUCTION

The pressure on pavement space is discussed above. In response to our concerns about how much width remains available for pedestrian access, the applicant has provided an additional document to show more precisely the location of the models in three of the 6 spots. Having checked the document with our own observations on the ground, we have the following comments and requests.

At the junction of Shaftesbury Avenue with Neal Street (included in application ref. 2023/1991/P): This location will have sufficient space as we have checked with the new 'Punjabi Baithak' restaurant that they do not intend to apply for tables and chairs in this location this year. However, during the day pedestrian flow here can be truly eye-watering, with crowds from the expanded Tottenham Court Road station. And in the late evening it is the main location for drug addicts to gather in the area. We are not sure how potential obstruction and antisocial behaviour can be mitigated except to ask the LPA for a condition to be attached to any consent that requires the applicant to remove or relocate the model if requested to do so by an officer of the LPA following reasonable complaints.

In Neal's Yard (included in application ref. 2023/1991/P):

This location will only have sufficient space if the surrounding food & beverage businesses have fewer tables and chairs outside than last year. The residents of more than 25 flats in Seven Dials Court must pass through here to access their main door, and the space is a haven for visitors including a lot of pushchairs. We therefore ask the applicant to work with commercial tenants in Neal's Yard to reduce the number of tables & chairs applied for under pavement licences to allow a circulation width of 1.8m around the model.

At the junction of Shelton Street with Monmouth Street (included in application ref. 2023/1997/P):

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This location is challenging because it is alongside Shelton Street, which is the busiest road in Covent Garden with quite heavy, fast traffic. It is also a narrow promontory of pavement with bicycle racks and a short distance of dropped kerb. The kerb is otherwise quite high and unsuited for disabled access. The applicant's supplementary document shows a location for the model inbetween tactile paving on the Monmouth Street side and the dropped kerb on the Shelton Street side. We are not sure whether this will be in accordance with fair access. We therefore ask the applicant and the council to check accessibility in this location. And we ask the LPA for a condition to be attached to any consent that requires the applicant to remove or relocate the model if requested to do so by an officer of the LPA following reasonable complaints.

In fact, given the uncertainties, we would very much appreciate a condition being attached to any consent that requires the applicant to remove or relocate any of the models if requested to do so by an officer of the LPA following reasonable complaints. We understand that the applicant has agreed to a condition of this sort, if the LPA is able to find compliant wording.

We trust that this input is helpful, and that it also serves to inform thinking for future projects in the area.

We hope that, subject to any consent, the project is a success for Shaftesbury Capital in bringing customers to their business tenants, and a success for the charity Tusk in raising funds to protect endangered animal species and their habitats.

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