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27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Jessica,

Re applications ref. 2023/2448/L and 2023/2454/A for installation of illuminated projecting signs on Urban Outfitters, Seven Dials Warehouse, 52-56 Earlham Street WC2H 9LJ

As the amenity society for the area for over 50 years, Covent Garden Community Association objects to this application.

It is for 2 large (80x60cm) projecting 'blade' signs made of aluminium and acrylic, each attached to the listed building with an aluminium block bracket.

However, if the application were modified so that the signs were hanging from iron brackets, and they were made of wood with painted lettering, then we would withdraw our objection.

We also feel that the addition of large projecting signs does add clutter to the streetscape and does not enhance the conservation area. However, we would not maintain our objection on these grounds alone.

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## CONTEXT

The listed building is a part of the former Woodyard brewery, founded on Shelton Street in 1740.

The application site is within the Seven Dials Conservation area, one of only 38 (among 6,000 in England) given Outstanding status in the 1970s. The application site is prominent in views from the Covent Garden Conservation Area, too.

The applicant's Design Access & Heritage Statement is in error at 5.1 where it claims that "Similar projecting signs can be found on the majority of all shopfronts along the street". There are, indeed, some projecting 'blade' signs in Earlham Street, but not the majority. However, these have been installed contrary to the policy guidance, and we believe that they should not be permitted let alone act as any sort of precedent. Blade signs are fixed by a rigid rod or block that is integral to the sign, rather than hanging from a traditional-style bracket as the guidance prefers.

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## RATIONALE FOR OBJECTION

Planning guidance that applies here includes The Seven Dials Study produced by the Seven Dials Trust in partnership with Camden. Signs should be made of wood, lettering should be painted, and fixtures should be iron brackets from which the sign hangs. Creativity of form is, however, very much encouraged.

The relevant section is at: <https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/specifications/shopfronts/fascia-hanging-signs/>.

A further advantage of hanging signs is that they support the council's sustainability goals. When a shop changes hands, a sign like the ones proposed in this application must be thrown away and another one manufactured, with all the resultant carbon release. The metals and plastics are not easy to recycle. However, a traditional wooden sign that follows the guidance can simply be repainted. Or, if it is a creative 3-dimensional sign then the bracket can still be retained.

The proposals also go against Camden's Local Plan policy D4 and Advertisements SPG; they do not respect the fabric and design of the host building, and are not constructed of materials that are sympathetic to the host building and surrounding area.

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## CHARACTER OF THE AREA (USES)

It is worth noting that the applicant's Design Access & Heritage Statement is in error at 2.4, although the point is not material to this application. It claims that "Seven Dials is primarily a retail and night life area".

Firstly, Seven Dials is predominantly residential and/or hotel bedroom use on all floor above ground floor level on many of its streets. The axonometric models commissioned by the Seven Dials Trust for 3 of the area's streets show this, as below. (The work has not been done for Earlham Street yet, unfortunately.)



Secondly, there is, in fact, no 'night life' in Seven Dials after 11.30pm/Midnight (week/weekend) except for one basement cocktail bar open until 1am that, sadly, causes problems for residents as a result.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Bax  
Chair, Planning Subcommittee

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