

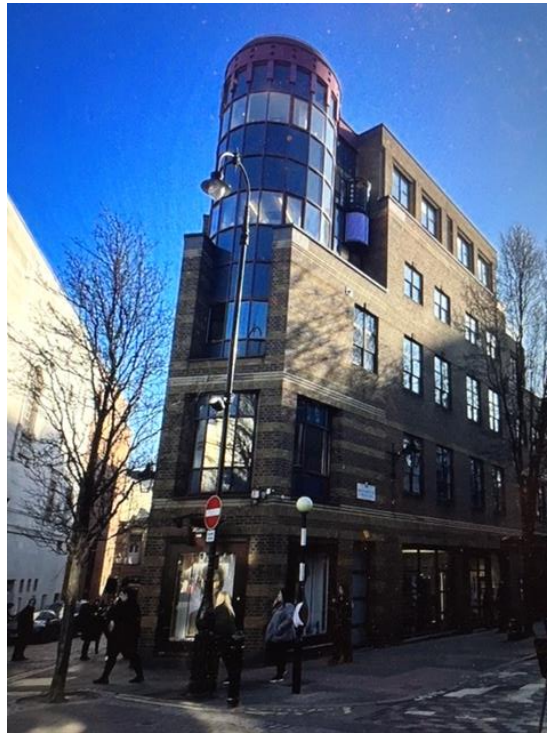
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*No. 45 Monmouth Street Seven Dials  
London Borough of Camden*

A Heritage Appraisal of the Building and the  
Potential Impact of the Proposed Shop Entrance Door  
August 2023

## Purpose of this Appraisal

This appraisal seeks to describe the heritage significance of No. 45 Monmouth Street and to ascertain the potential impact of the proposed shopfront door alteration on that significance, regarding the building and the wider historic environment.

The proposal will be discussed in the context of current local and national heritage policy for managing change in the historic environment.

## History & Designations

The Seven Dials development was laid out in 1692 by Sir Thomas Neale and contains terraced housing and shops of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. For most of its life, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the triangular block was known by the name of its occupant; the hardware shop of Comym Ching.

Between 1985-7, the Comyn Ching Triangle was regenerated by Terry Farrell & Partners in a seminal project. The scheme involved the restoration of historic buildings, the knitting in of contextual modern additions and the creation of a central court. The scheme marked a change from the post-war practice of site clearance to facilitate modern development.

The Terry Farrell Partnership scheme demonstrated a respect for local mixed-use character, conservation of historic fabric and new Post-Modern interventions. Its responsive to established character was widely hailed as demonstrating how new and old could together promote a rich streetscape.

The scheme was carried out in three phases:

### PHASE 1

1983-1985

- The restoration and part reconstruction of 15 Listed Buildings and their shopfronts (of 17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century date).
- The creation of the central Ching Court
- New entrance to upper floors of Shelton and Monmouth Streets
- 53-63 Monmouth Street-mix of office and retail.
- 11-19 Shelton Street-mix of flats and retail.

- 21-27 Mercer Street- four houses for sale.

## PHASE 2

1985-1987

- New buildings on the corner of Seven Dials at 45-51 Monmouth Street and 29-31 Mercer Street for office and retail.
- New Building on the corner site 19 Mercer Street and 21 Shelton Street for flats.

## PHASE 3

1985-1987

- Southern apex of the site at 65-75 Monmouth Street and 1-9 Shelton Street
- Restoration or reconstruction of the listed 65-71 Monmouth Street and four unlisted Shelton Street houses, integrated with the new southern corner building for retail, office and residential use.

The modern new building projects were sold to private developers to finance the restoration of the listed buildings.

In November 2016, the heritage significance and value of this project was recognised by being Listed Grade II. The heritage significance and townscape value are also recognised by the site being included in the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area (Sub Area 1).

The listing description is extensive and comprehensive. The shop fronts associated with No. 45 Monmouth Street are briefly referred to;

*Ground floor shop door and window units are of timber with fixed horizontal lights; those at the apex are in deep stepped brick openings and full height openings are above a quadrant moulded cill. On both the Monmouth Street and Mercer Street elevations the shop window is divided by an off-centre brick drum with a dark red plain band at the head.....*

## The Proposal

It is proposed to install a new timber shopfront door within the existing ground floor opening at the apex of the building's triangular plan looking onto Seven Dials and the reconfiguration of the shopfront entrance facing Monmouth Street.

## Appraisal

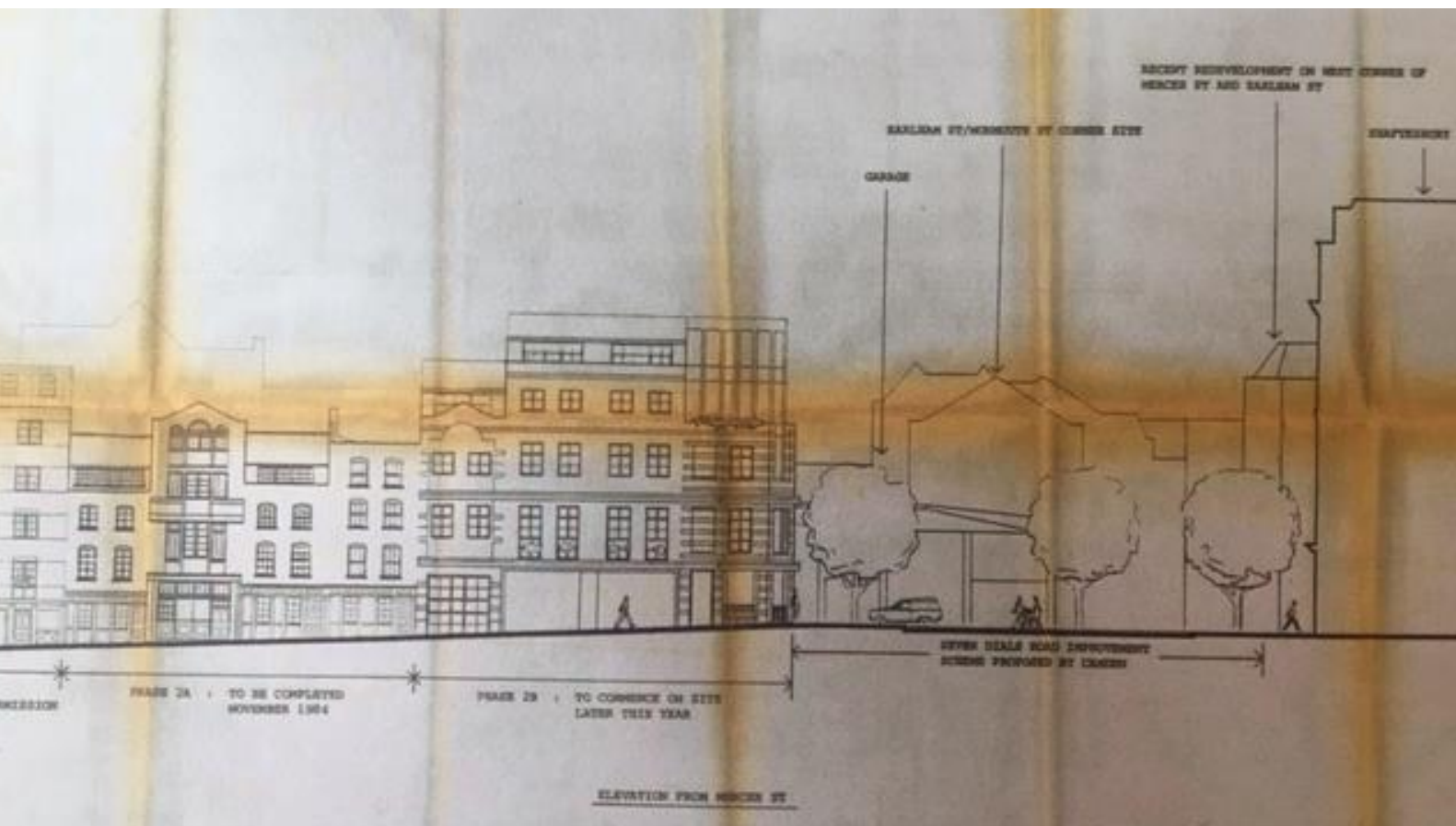
In order to ascertain whether changing the shopfront door would have a harmful impact on the heritage significance of this listed building. It is necessary to form a judgement on the level of importance of the existing shopfront. Historic England guidance on decision-taking when considering change to heritage assets is that we must;

- Understand the nature of the significance.
- Understand the extent of significance.
- Understand the level of significance.

Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning :2

Although the existing shopfront is mentioned in the listing description, Vidal Sassoon has only occupied the shop since 1993; some six years after the building was completed. The existing shopfront has no provenance with the original design for the whole building. The planning permission drawing for the building (1984) shows the ground floor shop units left open for tenants to insert their own fronts.



This indicates that the precise design of shop front was not a definitive issue for the original architects. The repair and restoration of traditional timber shop fronts and doors on the listed terraced buildings was clearly important and was carefully detailed. The shop fronts to the new Post-Modern building at No. 45 Monmouth Street were a flexible decision depending on the new owners, after the modern buildings were sold to private developers to finance the restoration of the listed buildings.

Therefore, if we look at the criteria provided by Historic England, carefully judging **the nature, extent and level of heritage significance**, it is clear that the existing shopfronts are of low significance, whilst still being broadly acceptable in overall aesthetic terms. The existing shopfront does not offend against the Terry Farrell aesthetic but there is the possibility of sympathetic alteration without harm to significance.

What is important, however, is that whatever new shop door is proposed it must respect its heritage context;

- A new shopfront door should conform to the existing structural opening with the same reveal depth.
- The section of framing and finish used should have a visual relationship with glazing elsewhere on the building.
- The colour of the shopfront entrance should be the same or have a visual relationship with the other window and openings on the building.

These criteria show that it is possible to have some variety in the shopfront design without having a harmful impact on character or significance. There is no totally fixed design but simply some essential ground rules to respect the building.

One of the characteristics of the Comyn Ching Triangle is the interplay between strict and accurate listed building repairs and the more free and contrapuntal relationship with Terry Farrell's Post-Modern interventions. Therein lies its magic. It is not accurate that all change is detrimental; the tests set out above from Historic England must be applied. In this case the proposed shopfront entrance at No 45 Monmouth Street respects the building in terms of the original opening, scale, colour and finish.

## Conclusion

The replacement of the existing shop front door within the existing open will not damage the heritage significance of No.45 Monmouth Street as it constitutes a

minimal degree of alteration. The proposed shop is sympathetic to the listed building in location, finish and colour. The proposal would also respect the character and appearance of the Seven Dials Conservation Area.