

London Borough of Camden
Regeneration and Planning
5 Pancras Square
London
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Dear Sir / Madam

57-59 NEAL STREET, LONDON, WC2H 9PP

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONT, MINOR REAR INFILL EXTENSION AT GROUND AND FIRST FLOORS, REPLACEMENT SAFETY RAILINGS, NEW AIR VENTS AND RECONFIGURATION OF APPROVED ROOFTOP PLANT EQUIPMENT AND SERVICING ARRANGEMENTS AT 57-59 NEAL STREET

PLANNING PORTAL REF. PP-12399103

On behalf of our client, Shaftesbury Covent Garden Limited, we write in support of a planning application for full planning permission for external alterations to the front and rear façade and roof level of 57-59 Neal Street ('the site').

In support of this application, the following documents and forms have been submitted electronically online via the Planning Portal:

- Planning Application Form – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*
- Existing and Proposed Plans – *prepared by Fresson & Tee Architects*
- Site Location Plan - *prepared by Fresson & Tee*
- Photographic Schedule – *prepared by Fresson & Tee*
- Design and Access Statement (this cover letter) – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Form – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*
- Environmental Noise Assessment (2020) – *prepared by Quinn Ross Consultants Ltd*

It is confirmed that the requisite application fee of £234 has been paid online via the Council's website.

Site Location and Description

The application site is located on the western side of Neal Street and comprises a traditional four storey warehouse building constructed from cream facing brick with red brick banding. The top floor appears to be a later addition, taking the form of a mansard roof. The existing shopfront at ground floor level is a later addition from the original building with fully glazed units and white plaster surrounds. A separate side entrance door provides access to the upper floor office accommodation.

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The property comprises a single retail unit (Class E) at basement and ground levels with office (Class E) at first to fourth floors. The building is currently vacant. This application relates solely to the ground and basement retail space and shopfront, and the plant equipment and access arrangements at roof level.

The Seven Dials Renaissance Study (1998) describes the property, 57-59 Neal Street, as:

“A somewhat utilitarian late 19th Century building of white brick. The shop window openings are framed by piers and the framework of the modern shop fronts has been kept commendably simple. The bright red of the joinery in the upper windows is a good foil to the pale brickwork and helps enliven an otherwise featureless façade. This shows how a relatively plain building can be given an air of some distinction by well-chosen colours”.

The application site has a number of planning designations including the Central Activity Zone (CAZ) and the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. The property is not statutorily listed but adjoins listed buildings at 55 and 61 Neal Street. The surrounding area is typical of central London and the local shopping district of Seven Dials, with a mixture of town centre uses and residential / office accommodation on the upper floor levels.

Relevant Planning History

The site has been subject to a number of planning permissions which are relevant in the determination of this application. This includes:

- 2022/2396/P - Erection of lift over-run and adapted safety balustrade at roof level, installation of a new timber entrance door on Neal Street, formation of plant enclosure on roof and installation of double glazed timber windows on all floors (latter 2 items previously approved by planning permission 2020/5067/P on 22/06/2021). – Granted 13th July 2022
- 2020/5067/P – Change of use of the 4th floor from office (Class E) to residential (Class C3); installation of new plant equipment and acoustic enclosure at roof level; various alterations to front and rear fenestrations including replacement windows, doors, balustrades and external lighting. – Granted 22nd June 2021
- 2020/4409/P – Installation of replacement shopfront and 2x non-illuminating projecting signs; erection of 2 storey rear extension to infill part of basement and ground floor lightwell; installation of new 1st floor rear window – Granted 15th June 2021
- 2003/2181/P – Retention of shopfront including ramp for disabled access and shutter at front entrance – Granted 13th November 2003
- 2003/0782/P – The installation of a shopfront – Granted 1st August 2003
- PS9904408 – Installation of roof top safety handrailing and related ancillary work – Granted 17th June 1999
- 9500116 – Installation of a new shopfront – Granted 17th March 1995
- 9201021 – The installation of a new shopfront – Granted 12th November 1992

As demonstrated above, the building has undergone a number of alterations over recent years. Various external works have been undertaken, including those works approved by permission 2022/2396/P.

Similar changes to those approved by the 2020 and 2022 permissions (reference 2020/4409/P, 2020/5067/P, 2022/2396/P) are proposed to be undertaken under this application. This application also seeks to amend the configuration of the plant equipment, lift overrun and access hatch at roof level, which were approved by planning permissions 2020/5067/P and 2022/2396/P.

Planning permission 2022/2396/P has been implemented and refurbishment works are currently under

construction. Permissions 2020/4409/P and 2020/5067/P have not yet been implemented, including the change of use to the fourth floor to residential and the new shopfront and rear extension.

The Application Proposal

This application primarily relates to the ground, first floor and roof level of the building. There are only minor changes proposed to the second, third and fourth floors to introduce new air vents on the rear elevation.

Planning permission is sought for a replacement shopfront and a minor rear extension at ground and first floors to allow for an improved internal layout. Amendments are also proposed to the layout and design of the approved plant equipment and servicing arrangements at roof level, including new safety railings. Details of the proposal can be summarised as follows:

The proposed changes are summarised below for ease:

- *Replacement shopfront;*
 - The existing modern shopfront and security shutter (previously consented in 2003) will be removed, including the existing entrance recess and ramp (additional 2.6 sqm of Class E floorspace created through infill of recessed entrance);
 - Installation of a new traditional glazed timber shopfront comprising a painted timber frame stall riser with traditional mouldings and a new glazed double entrance door. Two painted louvres will be designed into the louvre;
 - New fascia panel above shopfront and one projecting sign (non-illuminated) supported by a wrought iron bracket, both benefiting from 'deemed consent' (fascia and projecting signs previously approved under 2020/4409/P);
 - A replacement office entrance to the upper floors with a new timber door (a similar entrance door was approved under ref: 2022/2396/P) and signage panel above;
 - New lead capping above shopfront.
- *Rear lightwell infill extension*
 - A small two storey extension will be formed on the rear elevation at ground and first floors above the existing lightwell;
 - The existing modern 'bay window' on the rear façade currently comprising a staircase from ground to first floor is proposed to be removed (removal of this bay was approved under 2020/4409/P). The extension will extend no further than the existing projecting bay window;
 - The extension will allow for additional retail floorspace at ground floor, as well as the creation of a new accessible WC and shower at first floor;
 - The rear extension will be constructed from matching brick and finished with a sloping felt roof covering to match the existing exterior;
 - An additional 2.7 sqm of Class E floorspace will be created from the extension at ground floor (no change to the floorspace area at first floor as the extension will have the same footprint as the existing bay extension);
 - New air vents for ventilation to the WC's are proposed at ground to fourth floors.
- *Changes at Roof Level*
 - The lift overrun approved by ref: 2022/2396/P is proposed to be increased in size to meet current DDA standards;
 - The access hatch approved under re: 2020/5067/P is proposed to be relocated on the roof;
 - Rearrangement of the 5No. condenser units approved under 2020/5067/P within the approved acoustic enclosure;
 - New replacement safety railings.

To confirm, only the new timber shopfront at ground floor, the rear extension, replacement railings and air vents are 'new' changes – the other alterations proposed at roof level are minor reconfigurations of existing servicing equipment and access arrangements as consented previously in June 2021 (reference 2020/5067/P) and July 2022 (reference 2022/2396/P) but have not been implemented. The proposed signs are all non-illuminated and benefit from 'deemed consent' and are therefore included for information only to confirm signage locations.

For further details, please refer to the submitted drawings from Fresson & Tee.

Design and Access Statement

The proposed work involves the replacement of existing access doors to improve the overall aesthetic of the unit. The entrance location to the ground floor retail unit and the upper floor office levels will remain as per the existing situation. It is noted that the ground floor level will be lowered to achieve a level access at both entrance points which is a positive amendment.

The external design changes will utilise traditional timber and glazing materials for the shopfront, as well as brick cladding and a sloping felt roof which will match the existing materials on the building. The design and appearance of these changes are discussed further below. No other external design changes are proposed.

Planning Policy Considerations

Replacement Shopfront

Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) states the Council will require that development within a conservation area preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area.

Local Plan Policy D3 (Shopfronts) highlights that the quality of shopfronts and the way in which they relate to their surroundings make an important contribution to the character and attractiveness of an area. If a shopfront is replaced, the design should respect the characteristics of the building and, where appropriate, shopfront windows and framework features, such as pilasters, fascia's and console brackets, should be retained or restored. CPG 'Design' further provides a number of design principles which all new shopfronts and alterations should consider.

The Seven Dials Conservation Area Appraisal recognises that a wide variety of design has taken place during the late twentieth century. Such design has been both modern and traditional, which together in combination has mostly enhanced the character and appearance of the area.

The existing shopfront is dated and in need of refurbishment. As demonstrated through the planning history, the unit has been subject to numerous shopfront applications which have 'chopped' and 'changed' the current ground floor elevation.

The proposal will see a new traditional timber painted shopfront installed which will incorporate a low timber stall riser with traditional mouldings, two of which will have louvres. The old fascia will be removed to reveal the original brick cornice and corbel design. A replacement fascia will be installed between the original features and decorated by the prospective tenants. A new hanging projecting sign with a wrought iron bracket will be securely bolted to the pilasters which will be of similar design to other signs within Seven Dials. A replacement timber door for the office entrance to the upper floors will also be installed being of a complementary finish and design.

The proposal has taken into consideration the design guidelines of both the CPG and conservation area

appraisal, to ensure a sympathetic and traditional shopfront design is proposed. The louvres have been designed into the stall riser to ensure these do not appear out of context. It is considered the proposed shopfront design remains appropriate and in line with other shopfronts within the conservation area.

We note that a replacement shopfront was approved under ref: 2020/4409/P when it was previously intended to subdivide the retail unit into two units. This shopfront design featured aluminium metal frame and glazing units, which was reflective of a more modern and contemporary design. Whilst both shopfronts are appropriate in the surrounding context, the current proposals are reflective of a more traditional shopfront materiality and design and will enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposed changes are therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy D2, D3 and the CPG.

Rear Extension

Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) states the Council will seek to secure high quality design which respects the local context and character and utilises high quality materials and details. CPG 'Design' further provides a number of design principles relating to alterations and extensions in non-residential development.

As part of the minor rear extension, a non-original and modern 'bay window' with an exposed staircase below will be reconstructed to create a new accessible WC and shower at first floor, and the floorplate at ground floor level will be extended to align below. The existing window, which is strange in its conception, forms no purpose other than to accommodate the existing redundant internal stair from ground to first floors.

The extension will be constructed from brick and will include a sloping felt roof to match the existing roof design and materiality. Given the location of the extension, it will not be seen by from any public vantage point or from the surrounding conservation area. The design of the extension will be more congruent with the rest of the building and will remove the bay window which currently detracts from the overall character and appearance of the building.

The proposed air vents at ground to fourth floors will be in brick or tile materials to match the existing façade and will be located in an inconspicuous position on the rear elevation. There are already two air vents at second and third floors (the existing vents will be used if possible) therefore these interventions are not considered to impact on the overall character of the building.

Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) states that the Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours and will consider the impacts of (inter alia) sunlight, daylight and overshadowing, and outlook.

The rear extension is small in scale and will protrude no further from the rear elevation than the existing bay window. The existing lightwell is within the application site boundary and no other adjoining buildings rely on this space daylight/sunlight admission. The windows at basement level which overlook the lightwell relate to the stair core, a void space, and the retail floorspace. The lightwell is already partially overhung by the bay window, therefore the extension at ground floor will likely result in marginal reduction in light admission as a result. The basement level commercial floorspace is already subject to low levels of natural light and offers no outlook, therefore the proposed change will be negligible.

The proposal, in its form and use of materials, will ensure the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation area in accordance with Section 74 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 (as amended) and will use high quality materials to respect the local context in line with local policy.

Reconfiguration of Rooftop Plant and Access Arrangements

The site is within Seven Dials Conservation Area. Policy D2 (Heritage) of the Local Plan notes that the Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset (including conservation areas).

The proposal involves very minor changes to the approved arrangement of plant, the access hatch and the size of the lift overrun. The increased size of the lift overrun is required to meet current DDA standards and will not be visible from street level. Likewise, the new access hatch location will not be visible externally to the site. The existing railings have been removed, and it is proposed to install new metal railings around the edge of the mansard roof for safety purposes. The new railings will be similar in design to the previous railings, and in a relatively similar position on the roof, such that the change will be imperceptible above the existing situation.

These changes at roof level therefore accord with Policy D2.

Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) states that the Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours from (inter alia) the impact of noise and vibration levels.

The previous application from 2020 (reference 2020/5067/P) included an Environmental Noise Assessment from Quinn Ross which confirms that the proposed plant and acoustic enclosure meets the Council's requirements at the nearest noise sensitive property (68A Neal Street). This application seeks to relocate the 5 approved condenser units within the acoustic enclosure with no noticeable changes external to this. For clarity, the equipment and enclosure is the same as that proposed previously and as such the proposals remain acceptable in this regard. A copy of the acoustic report is enclosed with this application.

Summary

This application seeks full planning permission for a replacement shopfront, a minor two storey rear extension at ground and first floors, new safety railings, air vents and amendments to approved plant and structures at roof level.

The shopfront works would restore the original ground floor frontage with a sympathetic traditional shopfront design. The works would be complementary to the host building and consistent with that which is already seen within the conservation area.

The rear extension will accommodate necessary internal changes and improve the floorplate layout, and will be constructed from matching and traditional materials. The minor works would not be seen from the surrounding vantage points and therefore would ensure the preservation of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The changes at roof level are minor and will be imperceptible from the approved design as there is no visibility of the plant and lift overrun from the road. The new railings match the existing railings in terms of design and will ensure the area is safe for maintenance access. These changes are not considered to be detrimental to the building or the wider Conservation Area and as such are compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and strategic and local policies.

We trust that the enclosed information is sufficient for you to validate our client's planning application and we look forward to a swift and positive outcome. Should you require any further information and would like to arrange a site visit please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

Ailish Collins

For and on behalf of
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited
12 September 2023