

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/3310/P	Covent Garden Community Association (Elizabeth Bax, Chair of Planning Subcommittee)	25/09/2023 03:56:01	OBJNOT	<p>As the amenity society for the area for over 50 years, Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) objects to this application.</p> <p>Please note that this is not an objection to the café operation itself, but to the physical changes that the applicant proposes in the particular context of this site. We note a number of letters of support that the applicants have asked customers of their businesses to submit, but none of these mention the relevant issues which we outline below.</p> <p>CGCA would ourselves also support the operation of a well-run café in this location, but at the same time we cannot support these alterations to the shopfront. We ask you to reject the application as it stands, and/or request amendments as suggested in our final paragraph.</p> <p>The relevant issues are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The replacement of a wooden shopfront window on Endell Street with a metal framed set of sliding windows in the conservation area. 2. Creation of a servery on Betterton Street by punching through the wall immediately adjacent to residential units. 3. Obstruction from customers queuing at the servery on the narrow pavement. <p>-----</p> <p>It should be noted that CGCA met with the applicants in June. We pointed out that any shopfront alterations should involve a planning application. So they knew at an early stage that this was needed. We also pointed out that wooden shopfronts were policy in the conservation area.</p> <p>At a subsequent meeting with us and with a neighbouring resident it was pointed out that people did not wish to live next door to a servery hatch.</p> <p>However, the applicants went ahead with the work in any case and were then subject to an enforcement case. We have asked them why they behaved as if they were a special case that did not need to follow the rules, but they have not to date replied.</p> <p>We believe that, even if the policy considerations were not present to reject the application as it stands, it would be a bad precedent to give consent to alterations clearly carried out with so little respect for due process.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>CONTEXT</p> <p>The site is on the corner of Endell Street and Betterton Street. The unit was previously a shop, with a door and traditional wooden shopfront on Endell Street, and no longer any openings on the Betterton Street side.</p> <p>Immediately adjacent to the unit, on the Betterton Street side, is a building with flats at ground floor to 4th floor levels, with 30 more flats at Betterton House in the next-but-one building. The pavement is very narrow and busy outside the unit on the Betterton Street side.</p>

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POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, SHOPFRONTS & WINDOWS

Camden's Local Plan, Design & Heritage states at 7.76 that:

"If a shopfront is replaced or altered, the design should respect the characteristics of the building and, where appropriate, shopfront windows and framework features, such as pilasters, fascias and console brackets, should be retained or restored."

Unfortunately, the proposed design does not respect the characteristics of the historic building of which the shopfront is a part, because of its modern proportions, its obvious slider runnels, and its coated metal frame. A design that retains the previous framework features would be acceptable, using a sympathetic wooden frame.

Camden's Local Plan, Design and Heritage states at 7.77 that:

"Folding or opening shopfronts will not generally be acceptable, as they can create a void at ground level that can harm the appearance of a building and can also have a negative impact on local amenity, for example in terms of noise and disturbance."

The proposed design is fully-opening. It does not go all the way down to ground level, but is still likely to have the same negative impact on local amenity. We ask that any consent for this type of openable design be subject to a Planning condition requiring no music or similar to emanate.

The Seven Dials Study planning policy document states in the 'Shopfront Windows' section that:

"Modern flat sectioned glazing bars are not appropriate in a conservation area. Windows should always be made of timber."

(see <https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/specifications/shopfronts/shopfront-windows/>)

However, these proposals involve modern, flat sectioned glazing bars and are not made of timber.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, OBSTRUCTION

Camden's Tables & Chairs policy, and Pavement Licensing policies, require an absolute minimum of 1.8 metres clear width of pavement to be left clear for pedestrians and wheelchair use. TfL's comfort guidance requires at least 2 metres.

This pavement is already too narrow to accommodate the required minimum. The presence of a service hatch, with customers standing to be served, and to queue, will reduce the width even further. The applicant's cover letter states that "The applicant will try to manage any queues by trying to adhere to only 5 persons waiting on the pavement at any one time to try and manage any congestion", but this is merely a statement of hope, it is not an enforceable condition. This part of the pavement is not clearly visible nor easily accessible to staff. In any case, 5 people would still reduce the clear width to almost nothing.

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POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, AMENITY

Camden's Local Plan, Protecting Amenity, at 6.4 seeks to protect visual privacy and at 6.19 seeks to avoid noise impact on neighbouring amenity.

The presence of customers at a serving hatch within a few inches of a residential living room, and facing the window of that room, will clearly destroy the privacy of those living there.

The presence of an open serving hatch with clattering crockery etc., and the presence of groups of customers talking as they wait, immediately outside family flats, will clearly create noise impact on those living there throughout the day.

REQUEST FOR REVISIONS TO THE APPLICATION

We ask that the design of the shopfront be revised to use:

- a) Wooden mouldings of the appropriate design for the age and other architectural detailing of the building;
- b) A more traditional window design and a mechanism that eliminates the need for sliding runnels.

And that if the windows are openable then any consent be subject to a Planning condition requiring no music or similar to emanate.

We ask that consent for a serving hatch be refused altogether on the elevation adjoining the narrow Betterton Street pavement.

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