



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

**Heritage Impact Statement in respect of the
proposed internal and external changes to
facilitate the new Barbour clothing store at 37
Neal Street, Camden, London**

Written and prepared by Planning By Design

for Studio Exp on behalf of Barbour

Introduction and Methodology:

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Planning by Design and was produced in June 2024. This assessment is intended to accompany an application for listed building consent for the changes proposed to 37 Neal Street, to facilitate its use as a Class E a) retail unit, for Barbour.

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) details how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced. Where proposals affect designated heritage assets or their settings, paragraph 200 requires applicants to “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting”. Its aim is to ensure that applicants take account of heritage assets from the outset so as to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage assets’ conservation and the development proposal. The aim of this report is to satisfy the requirement of policy.

This Heritage Statement has been written to assess the likely impacts of the proposed works on the significance of the Heritage Asset that is the listed Building. The Statement is informed by an analysis of the site, the existing buildings and their environs as well as an analysis of historic maps of the area. The Heritage Statement is based on documentary and photographic evidence and a review of known information about the site from various sources (including the Historic Environment Record (HER)). It should be read in conjunction with the application drawings and the Planning Design and Access Statement.

Heritage Assets

Listed Building

Heritage Category: Listed Building Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1322097

Date first listed: 15-Jan-1973

List Entry Name: 37, NEAL STREET

TQ3081SW NEAL STREET 798-1/105/1181 (Southwest side) 15/01/73 No.37

Terraced house and later shop. c1695. Probably by J Stephens. Restored early C19. Multi-coloured stock brick and plain stucco 1st floor sill band. Slate mansard roof with dormers. 4 storeys and basement. 2 windows. Early C19 wooden shopfront with pilasters carrying entablature with inswept frieze and projecting cornice. Shop window with shutters. House and shop doorways with fanlight and margin lights and partly glazed panelled doors (house doorway now leads into shop). Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows with original glazing bars. Parapet. INTERIOR: not inspected.

Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area

The Seven Dials Conservation Area was designated in 1974. In 1998 a Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) was adopted by Camden Council. The distinct layout around the Seven Dials is the legacy of a building plan devised by Thomas Neale, a speculator and Master of the

Mint, at the end of the 17th century. The plan was unique, the only one of the 17th and 18th century developments in the West End which departs from a grid plan. Instead, a radiating plan of streets was formed around a small central polygonal circus with a Doric column at the centre surmounted by sundials. The column no longer stands believed to have been removed in 1773 to prevent it being a harbour for anti-social behaviour and vagrants.

The site sits within Sub Area One as identified in the CAA. During the 19th century Covent Garden's central market became London's main wholesale fruit & vegetable market. The market dominated the area until the 1970s with the majority of buildings in the surrounding area servicing it. Warehouses were used for storage, in Shelton Street, Neal Street, Earlham Street, and merchants occupied office space.

The special character of the Conservation Area is found in the range and mix of building types and uses and the street layout. The character is not dominated by one particular period or style of building but rather it is their combination that is of special interest. Most buildings appear to spring from the footway without physical front boundaries or basement areas. In this tightly contained streetscape, changes of road width, building form and land-use give character variation, narrow alleys and hidden yards.

The Conservation Area Appraisal notes particularly of Neal Street:

Many of the properties retain the original 17th century plan form but had their facades re-constructed in the early 19th century and panelling replaced. Their narrow width gives a character and rhythm to the street. The original terraced houses on Neal Street are four storeys and basement in yellow stock brick with red brick arches and date from the late 18th century to the early 19th century; Nos.27-37,61,64,78,80, are listed Grade II. During the 19th century shops were introduced at ground floor level and warehouses built. Many 19th century timber shopfronts can still be found along the street. Typically, these shopfronts display classical proportions with pilasters supporting entablature and a projecting cornice. Generally, shops have retained the single property width resulting in numerous small shops with a lively combination of shopfronts both modern and traditional.

Significance of the listed building and its setting:

Paragraph 201 of the NPPF requires that local planning authorities "should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise".

The methodology for assessing the heritage significance of sites is well established. It is clearly set out in Historic England Advice Note 2 Making Changes to Heritage Assets, 2016; Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning, note 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017; and in Historic England Advice Note 12 Statements of Heritage Significance, 2019.

The Proposed Development:

The works proposed have been designed and are being implemented by Studio Exp. Studio Exp are a leader in branding and shop design. They have a fundamental understanding and respect for heritage properties. They work closely with their clients to realistically deliver sympathetic and respectful shop refits that complement the heritage significance of the assets, as well as deliver a high-quality product for the brands they are designing for. One of their core values is that as a business Studio Exp are:

“Responsible. From the materials we use and the way that we work, to the designs we ultimately create, we consider the full lifecycle of our projects to deliver experiences that leave a lasting impression on people, not the planet.”

The changes proposed are predominantly to the interior of the ground floor and basement. The Historic England listing is silent on the interior, it not having been inspected nor recorded. There are limited changes to the shop front, that can be summarised as redecoration and branding. The installation of replacement hanging signage is also proposed. The use as a retail unit is historic, and this application seeks to secure the units use as Class E a) and support the retail area in this busy, partially pedestrianised street. Full details of the proposals are as follows:

Internal Works

The interior of the retail unit is being refurbished and designed in Barbour Heritage branding. The interior has seen many changes over the years, as different leaseholders have adapted and decorated to suit their needs. Studio Exp have assessed the structure and existing interior to design a sympathetic scheme that respects the building, restores period style features, and determines the space to maximise the leaseholders retail needs. All of the works proposed are specifically designed to ensure that, once no longer required for the leaseholders use, it can be returned if desired to the previous state. Barbour have chosen a heritage look for the Neal Street retail unit refurbishment. The palette of traditional colours and materials are complemented with bronze metal work, sanded antique brass, and antique bronze metalwork. The engineered herringbone oak floor will create a durable surface, that is glued down in order to minimise the impact on the fabric of the building, as well as being a floor covering that is easy to clean and maintain. The units and shop fittings are adhered to this flooring, to reduce the need for fixings to the fabric of the building. Full details of the materials and indicative designs are shown in the accompanying “Heritage Store Concept” document.

Ground Floor

At the street level access floor, the comfort of shoppers and staff will be assured through the installation of infrared recessed ceiling heaters. An area to the rear of the shop will have a replacement ceiling, made from plasterboard and installed at 2300mm from floor level, painted matt white. The rest of the ceiling will be painted matt white to refresh and improve the look and feel of the retail unit. The walls are to be painted in limewash in white. The limewash is particularly appropriate for use in a heritage asset, as they allow the

structure to breathe, unlike modern plastic based paint. In recognition of the age of the building and to enhance the heritage aspect of the Barbour brand, Lightweight Georgian style cornicing 150mm high x 196mm projection by WM Boyle will be installed and painted white to match the ceiling.

Basement

The refurbishment in Barbour's Heritage branding continues into the lower ground floor. The cornicing and flooring are as on the ground floor. Heating for the comfort of staff and shoppers will be from further infrared heating panels mounted in the ceiling. Plant for the air conditioning units will be located in the non-publicly accessed undercroft. Three areas of new plasterboard ceilings as indicated on the floor plan drawing will be installed and decorated in matt white, as the rest of the ceilings in the unit. The stairs connecting the ground floor and basement will have glazed balustrade and oak handrails.

Shop Front

At present, whilst the shop unit has been vacant, it has been left in the decorative status of the previous leaseholders. As part of the wider shop fit out for Barbour, the front ground floor shop will be decorated in the Barbour Heritage colour scheme. The original shop front is to be retained and repaired to prepare a suitable base for redecoration and painted in Farrow and Ball "Railings" in eggshell finish. This colour is a blue/black with a soft heritage tone and reflects the historic architectural iron work that the paint takes its name from. This is particularly complementary to the Camden yellow brick of the upper storeys and neighbouring buildings in the road, including 37a Neal Street. The signage on the fascia will be the Barbour name as a logo, in stove enamelled laser cut 8mm metal plate. This will sit slightly proud of the existing refurbished and repainted backboard with 50mm anthracite-coloured pins. Beneath the Barbour logo the words "ESTABLISHED 1894" will be mounted in 4mm thick laser cut brass lettering and numbers, pinned off the fascia by 30mm. The glazing will be retained, with the sash redecorated in Farrow and Ball "Railings" in eggshell finish, to match the rest of the redecorated shop front. The step across the width of 37 Neal Street will be painted black. The proposed heritage palette is particularly appropriate, relating to the use of cast and wrought iron popularised in the beginnings of the industrial revolution in towns and cities. This was due to the development of the puddling process between 1783-84, where the use of a reverberatory furnace enabled significantly less labour-intensive production of appreciable volumes of bar iron. Over many years the shop front has sported a rainbow of colours, changing with leaseholder, fashion and style dictated, as shown in the street view images taken over the last 12 years, below.



Google Street View image taken Jul 2022. 37 and 37a Neal Street, with the shopfront of 37 decorated in the branding of the former retail leaseholder.



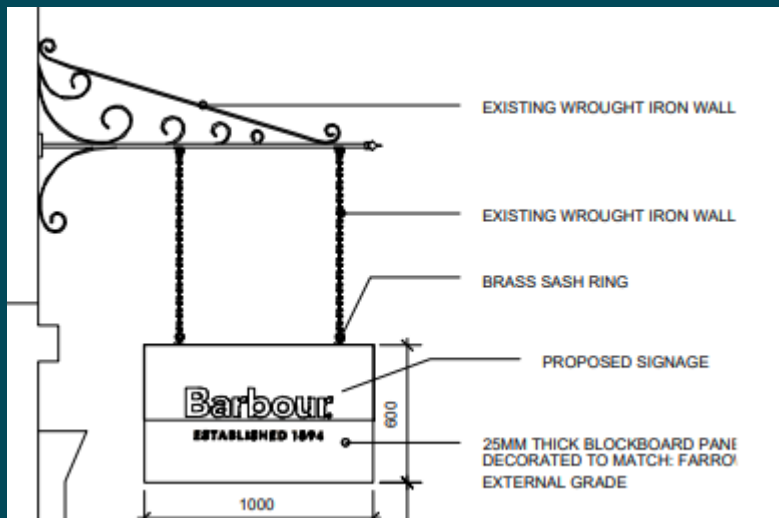
Google Street View image taken May 2015. 37 and 37a Neal Street.



Google Street View image taken Jul 2012. 37 and 37a Neal Street, further evidence of the changes over the last decade to the shop front.

Projecting Signage

The new hanging sign above the shop front, will reutilise the existing wrought iron wall hanger, and hanging chain. The proposed hanging sign will be fabricated in black board and painted to match the refurbished shop front in Farrow and Ball “Railings” in eggshell finish. The edges of the sign will have a brass trim to protect the edge of the signboard and this trim will be affixed with brass fixings. The Barbour logo will be direct printed flat, not 3D, in brass coloured lettering to complement the retained brass door furniture elsewhere on the shop front elevation.



Detail on the hanging, projecting sign.

Materials

As can be seen by the shop fit-out pack provided by the applicant, care and consideration has been paid to ensure the suitability and appropriateness of the materials for the Heritage Asset. Studio Exp are experts in sympathetic and respectful shop design and fit-out. Understanding equally the needs of their retail clients and the value and importance of the heritage buildings that they are designing. As stated, all changes can be reversed if needed, although with no historic records for the internal aspect of the building, it is not possible to definitively label original fixtures and fittings from more modern ones.

Assessment of impacts of the proposals on heritage assets:

Historic England Advice Note 3 observes that “the importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance”. It stresses that the “setting of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance”.

Grade II Listed Building

The greatest risk to heritage assets could be said to be the deterioration that can occur when heritage assets are, effectively, abandoned. When there is no commercial interest in retail units that form part of these heritage assets, and they are vacant for an extended period of time, they fall into disrepair. Long term vacant heritage assets are vulnerable to undetected water ingress, occupation from vermin including pigeons, rats and seagulls, and even unlawful occupation by squatters. All these pose significant risk to the asset. Once an asset has become abandoned, the restoration and repair costs can be seen as prohibitive to prospective leaseholders, and the building owners can feel that the expense to restore the

asset is difficult to justify. This can lead to deterioration of the historic significance that has warranted listing on the Heritage List for England.

Seven Dials Conservation Area

It is evident that the conservation of the Heritage Setting is intrinsically linked with its current role, as a retail centre, continuing a long history of first market stalls, and latterly high-end retail brands occupying this area. Much has been written about the problems caused to areas where empty retail units spread. This leads to a cycle of dilapidation, creating an unappealing location for leaseholders, more empty retail units, reduced vibrancy and ground floor active uses, reducing the investment in the area by existing or new owners, leading to further dilapidation. And so, the cycle continues.

“Vacant retail space has significant socioeconomic consequences for communities. Urban areas with high vacancy rates may lead to lower footfall and therefore lower retail sales. This can be uninviting to new retailers and investors who are less likely to invest in new spaces such as offices, homes, leisure and retail facilities. This downward cycle can have further social repercussions if it then impacts employment and the local economic stimulation”

Study by Landsec and JLL Reimagining empty retail space: transforming UK towns and cities for future communities.

The area has developed and changed significantly since the imaginations of Thomas Neale in the late 17th Century. The most impactful change being the installation on new shop frontages in the early 19th Century. These changes do not particularly impact on the significance of the conservation area, rather, they chart the use and evolution of the area, and the growth in retail shops over market stalls. The use for ground floor active frontages for what we now call Class E uses is well established and forms an integral part of this area’s historic significance. The continuing change to match shop branding and signage is a natural progression in the narrative of Neal Street and the wider Seven Dials Conservation Area.

The refurbishment of the retail unit, particularly in relation to the external shop front will add to and improve the setting of the Seven Dials Conservation Area. The proposed refurbishment will ensure the longevity of the fabric of the frontage, which, whilst sympathetic to the history of the building and wider area, creates an inviting and vibrant new retail store in this shopping area.

The changes proposed to the retail unit will ensure that the unit remains in retail use, following a period of vacancy. Barbour are a high-end brand, keen to support the areas reputation for reliable brands, British quality clothing and high customer service. Barbour is a well-known and highly respected brand, the presence of which in the area reinforces the councils’ aspirations for economic growth for the borough under Policy E1 – Economic Development.

Conclusion

The proposed changes and refurbishment of 37 and 37a Neal Street will conserve and preserve the listed building at 37 Neal Street. A high-end, well respected British brand taking a lease in this unit, with a view to creating a flagship heritage branded store, will ensure the maintenance and longevity of the listed building. The changes proposed are sympathetic and reversible. The ethos of Studio Exp as designers and implementers of the scheme proposed, is to be respectful to the fabric of the building in their design and materials installation and use.

The use of the ground floor and basement for retail supports the viability of the Seven Dials Conservation Area and adds to the vibrancy of the retail zone. Ensuring that retail units are fit for purpose and do not remain vacant further enhances the conservation area and encourages other brands to take leases in the area, as well as building owners to maintain and invest in buildings in the vicinity. The above proposals are, therefore, compliant with section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework which aims to conserve and enhance the historic environment, and the application for planning and Listed Building Consent should be approved.