

25-25a Neal Street WC2H 9PR: 2024/1828/P; 2024/1867/L; and 2024/1827/A

I am writing on behalf of The Seven Dials Trust in respect of the above-referenced applications. The Trust works in partnership with local authorities, landowners, national agencies and local amenity groups to protect the historic fabric of Seven Dials and the surrounding conservation areas, and to promote and bring about exemplary environmental improvements in the area.

The “Seven Dials Renaissance Study” is the key document in the work of the Trust. It provides a detailed framework for the care and enhancement of the total environment of the Seven Dials area. The first study was published in 1990. The latest revised and updated web-edition from 2023 has been extended across the borough boundary down to Long Acre in Westminster, covers an enlarged area in Camden and has been renamed “The Seven Dials in Covent Garden Study” (<https://sevendialscoventgarden.study>).

The Trust objects to several elements of the above-referenced applications which cause harm to heritage assets without any public benefits to outweigh that harm.

Nos. 25 and 25a form part of a grade II listed block fronting Neal Street (nos. 25 and 25a), Earlham Street (nos. 29–43 odd) and Short’s Gardens (nos. 8-26 even). No. 43 Earlham Street is the side return of no. 25 Neal Street. The block is a handsome and substantially scaled example of 19th century industrial architecture. Built in 1882 as a warehouse for Combe Delafield and Company’s Wood Yard Brewery, the elevation to Neal Street is an austere noble design of stock brick, rising through three, giant stories, comprising three bays with doubled reveals and segmental headed arched window openings at ground floor level and deep, segmental headed arched window openings at first and second floor levels. The cills of the original ground floor window openings including that at the splay corner, have been dropped to floor level and the edges provided with grey granite jambs. There are deeply set, subdivided casement windows at first and second floor levels, with modern, fully glazed windows at ground floor level set in neat, black finish frames. No. 43 has a splay corner to Neal Street, containing large window and door openings serving the retail use within in the same style as those on the Neal Street elevation. Nos. 25 and 25a Neal Street and 43 Earlham Street is a building of special architectural and historic interest and of townscape value, contributing positively to the character, appearance and significance of the Seven Dials Conservation Area. The Trust’s Study notes that “this building is an example of good, understated maintenance which should be continued in the future” and that “surviving external features of historic interest and significance should be retained”.

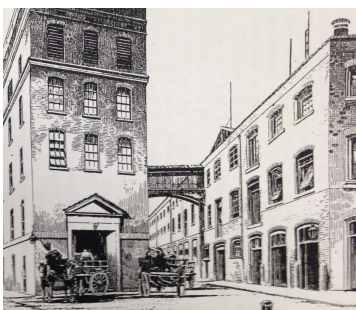
The Trust objects specifically to the the proposed replacement to the ground floor entrance door to No. 25, the proposed replacement of the ground floor windows and the proposed signage. We note that the applications are exceedingly light on detail and do not cover such critical matters as the materials to be used for the replacement door and window frames, nor provide any justification or reasoning as to how the proposed changes will respect the building’s heritage or maintain the character of the Conservation Area.

### **Entrance Doors:**

The applications call for the replacement of the existing entrance doors to be replaced but provides no details as to how the design or materials differs from the existing doors. Any replacement doors should, at a minimum, be timber framed and retain the framing proportions of the existing doors.

### **Ground Floor Windows:**

The applications call for the replacement of the ground floor windows - 3 on the Earlham Street elevation and 2 on the Neal Street elevation but provides no details as to how the materials differ from the existing glazing. The design calls for the removal of the vertical and horizontal glazing bars that break up the large expanse of glass and tie in with the glazing patterns of the windows on the upper stories. We note that on the Earlham Street elevation this glazing pattern has existed since at least the 1880’s (see engraving image below) which can clearly be seen in photographs from 1968 (see photograph below).



### **Signage:**

The applications call for 3 halo lit pin mounted signs and 2 internally illuminated blade style projecting signs to replace the current 2 non-illuminated mounted signs. This is an excessive amount of signage which will cause harm to the listed building and the character of the Conservation Area. There is no need for 2 projecting signs and 3 pin mounted signs - two signs should be sufficient.

We also object to the fact that the signs will be internally illuminated. Signage should not be internally illuminated but should be externally illuminated only.

In the Conservation Area Statement, SD19 states that “shop signage should be appropriate for the Conservation Area, respecting the proportions of the shop frontages, and maintaining the division between units and reflect the plot widths of buildings. Internally illuminated box signs are unacceptable and generally signage should be non-illuminated or externally illuminated. Signage will usually consist of one fascia sign and one projecting sign. Shop signs should not normally be above ground floor level.”

Finally, any projecting signs should be of a hanging sign design and not projecting blade signs which would be more appropriate for the listed building setting within the Conservation Area. With respect to signage, The Seven Dials in Covent Garden Study’s guidance on shopfronts (<https://sevendialsc Covent Garden Study/specifications/shopfronts/fascia-hanging-signs/>) states that: “A well-designed or imaginative sign suspended from a traditional iron bracket can enhance the quality of the shop front and add vitality to the street. Such signs should be related to the character and scale of the building to which they are fixed”. It is unfortunate that in the past some signs have been replaced with projecting models. However, this unsympathetic pattern is generally being reversed in recent years throughout Seven Dials.

We also note that the lantern that is proposed to be re-sited was installed by Camden as part of a community partnership project, initiated and led by the Trust, with Camden Council, the Corporation of London (advisory), Historic England, Westminster City Council, the Mercers' Company and Shaftesbury PLC to replace all lamp columns (except the few remaining historic gas columns) by bespoke facade-mounted lanterns from Shaftesbury Avenue down to Long Acre (the largest area in the West End with facade lighting). Any re-siting of this lantern would need to be agreed with and approved by Camden’s Street Lighting team - we are not aware that this has been done.

For the reasons outlined above, we believe that the above-referenced applications cause harm to heritage assets without any public benefits to outweigh that harm and thus should be refused.

Sincerely

Eric Stuart  
Trustee (voluntary)  
On behalf of The Seven Dials Trust

[Redacted signature]