**Design, Access and** **Heritage Statement**

**Proposed installation of two louvre grilles at 42 Monmouth Street, Camden, London**

**Introduction**

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework that applicants should provide a description of any historic assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting.

The application site is a Grade II Listed Building (listed for group value) sited on the western side of Monmouth Street. It is within the Seven Dials Conservation Area and is described as a shop front of merit in the Conservation Area Assessment. The Heritage Environment Record identifies several other listed buildings close to the site. The listing for no 42 also includes that for nos 44-48. Nos 53-59, 61, 63 and 65-71 on the opposite side of Monmouth Street are also listed as are nos 5-8 Tower Court to the rear. The heritage implications of the proposal on all of these heritage assets are assessed below.

**The Proposal**

The proposal relates to the insertion of two plenum boxes covered by louvre grilles on the exterior of the stall riser linked by two ducts through the stall riser to link to two ventilation units on the interior of the building. They are required to provide a ventilation system for the building.

**Planning Policy**

Policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate enhance, Camden’s rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit development that results in harm that is less than substantial to the significance of a designated heritage asset unless the public benefits of the proposal convincingly outweigh that harm.

Policy D3 relates to shop fronts. It requires a high standard of design in altered shop fronts, security measures and other features.

**Seven Dials Conservation Area**

The conservation area was first designated in 1971 and there have been a number of additions to the area the most recent being in 1998. This part of the conservation area is currently characterised by a mixture of residential, retail and office use, many buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. The Conservation Area Character Assessment sets out a number of issues that can be problematic in affecting the character of the conservation area. These include the introduction of prominent air handling units/ducting. It goes on to state that in assessing applications for such features the Council will be concerned about the siting of the equipment particularly in visually sensitive locations and the proximity of residential accommodation to ensure that local amenity is protected.

In this case the only alteration to the external appearance of the property will be the louvre grilles to be mounted in areas currently occupied by small raised panels in the stall risers. These are on the front of the building but are not in a visually prominent position and involve a minimum amount of alteration to the existing shop front. The shop front is identified as a “Shop Front of Merit” but it is understood that it is relatively new, having been reconstructed to match its neighbours rather than being an original feature. Neither the ventilation unit itself nor the ducting will be visible from the exterior of the building and the grilles, which will be painted black to match the colour of the shop front, will have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Effect on the special architectural and historic interest of 42-48 Monmouth Street**

This building together with the adjoining nos 44, 46 and 48 are a Grade II Listed Building dating from c1792-3. The listing description of the building describes it as a terrace of 4 houses with later shops. It indicates that 42 and 44 have late C19 wooden pilastered shop fronts and panelled house doors with fanlights and then goes on to say that 42 and 48 have C20 shop fronts. It is presumed that the first of these statements are correct as the shop fronts at 42 and 44 are very similar (although not identical) while those at 46 and 48 do show more differences.

The shop front at 42 appears to be a copy of the original shop front rather than being the original 19th century structure. The Seven Dials Renaissance Study published by the Seven Dials Trust in 2023 criticises the stall riser on this shop front as including mouldings planted on plain boarding and the base being wrong: it should be parallel to the stall riser rather being set back and looking as if is not part of the façade. In view of this it would appear that the shop front is not original and that the proposals would not result in any loss of truly historic fabric however small.

The grilles will not be an obtrusive feature, helped by them being small, the same colour as the remainder of the shop front, and will not detract from the historic or architectural character of the building. It must be noted that many of the shops in the vicinity of the site (both listed and otherwise) have small external features that are necessary to meet modern requirements, such as alarm boxes, and external electrical connections on the adjoining public house.

There will be little alteration to the interior of the building. The duct will require a small hole to be formed through the stall riser and the ventilation unit is a small, slim unit attached to the interior wall without requiring any loss of fabric.

The proposal will not involve any harm to the historic or architectural character of the building.

**Effect on the setting of nearby listed buildings**

There are a number of other listed buildings in the vicinity of the site the closest being a number of properties nos 44-48 and properties on the opposite side of Monmouth Street (nos 53-71). The small size of the grilles will not be detrimental to the setting of these buildings. There will be no impact on the setting of buildings to the rear of the application site.

**Other Matters**

The proposal does not involve any change in the use of the building or any alteration to the access into the building. There are residential flats above the ground floor but the small size of the units and the position of the plenum boxes close to the ground will mean that there will be no adverse impact on the amenity (noise and vapours) for residents on the upper floors.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the proposals will be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Seven Dials Conservation Area and will have a minimal effect on the architectural or historic significance of the listed building. There will be no effect on the setting of any nearby listed building.