

Design and Access Statement

In support of a:

Full Planning and Advertisement Consent Application

At:

81-89 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3LL

For Leyland SDM

The subject of this application is a former Post Office (Use Class A1) occupying the ground floor and rear mezzanine of 81-89 Farringdon Road, EC1M 3LL. The upper floors, formerly offices, were converted into flats in the late 1990s and reflect the stylistic pre-occupations of that period, but the ground floor still has the framing of a 1960s/70s Post Office and presents a very closed face to the adjoining pavement. The side wall of the shop facing Saffron Street is also visually closed, crudely detailed and unsympathetic.

The ground floor is currently empty, the Post Office having relocated further south on Farringdon Road several years ago. The proposal is for a similar, established local business, Leyland SDM (also A1), currently operating from smaller premises further north at 88-90 Farringdon Road, to relocate to this address, making internal alterations (no increase in gross floor area) and external alterations to the façade, signage, entrance steps and ramp as shown on the attached drawings, as follows:

1109.01.A – Location + Block Plans + Site Photographs

1109.02.A – Plan + Front Elevation as Existing

1109.03.A – Reflected Ceiling + Side as Existing

1109.04.B – Plan + Front Elevation as Proposed

1109.05.A – Reflected Ceiling + Side as Proposed

1109.06.A – Complete Elevations: Existing + Proposed

The Victorian building on the opposite side of Saffron Street at 77-79 Farringdon Road has been modernised and the ground floor fully glazed within the existing dimensional and structural framework. The neighbouring building at 91-93 Farringdon Road has also been modernised and the lower floors fitted with simple planar glazing within the existing window openings. The intention at nos.81-89 is, similarly, to remove the small-scale glazing and solid panels and remodel the ground floor shopfront within the same dimensional framework to create a more open, fully-glazed retail façade to Farringdon Road (with line of manifestation) as shown on drawing 1109.04.B. The existing frame itself will be re-used, subject to the specialist advice of a FENSA-registered contractor, as it is not possible to change some dimensions of the shopfront because of existing restrictions.

The first restriction concerns the location and extent of the existing entrance steps and ramp, which are constrained in position by smoke vents serving the basement of 81-89 Farringdon Road (which is not part of the former Post Office) and by the plinth of the ground floor, which cannot be cut into – also because of the basement. Externally, there is a bus shelter immediately opposite the existing ramp in the pavement, which further reduces the possibility of increasing the width of the access ramp. The ramp appears to meet current standards in terms of slope and length, but

the width cannot be increased, so the ramp remains as existing. The steps will be remodelled, however, to increase the size of the landing at the top of the ramp and provide a more direct route towards a more open and welcoming entrance, while remaining within the dimensions of the existing recessed porch.

The second restriction involves a set of fixed louvres to the lower right hand (seen from Farringdon Road) of the shopfront, which serve a basement-level electricity sub-station. These cannot be moved or altered.

The original Post Office fascia sign was removed some time ago, but old photographs show this as having been a continuous strip of green with regular Post Office logos extending right across the top of the Farringdon Road shopfront, including above the 45 degree splay to the Saffron Street corner. This will be replicated by the Leyland SDM sign to Farringdon Road, which will occupy the same position across the second line of glazing below the soffit of the first floor, retaining the top line of (openable) glazing for natural ventilation. The precise range of trade logos included on the sign is subject to slight variation from the layout shown on drawings 1109.04B + .05A + 06A, but the general appearance will be as drawn.

Unfortunately, much of the fascia signage for nos. 81-89 Farringdon Road is obscured, from the south, by an existing traffic sign serving the junction of Farringdon Road and Clerkenwell Road, which is likely to be fixed in position. This would be a significant problem for any retail operation, but a potential solution is suggested by the unique surroundings of this building.

On the opposite side of Saffron Street, at 77-79 Farringdon Road, the existing Victorian building has a fascia signage strip that turns the corner from Farringdon Road and extends the full length of the Saffron Street frontage of this building. The gable end of nos. 81-89 Farringdon Road, also facing Saffron Street, exhibits a blank concrete elevation to the street, with a feeble painted grey "plinth" to the building. To compensate for the obscured signage facing Farringdon Road, this application proposes extending the signage for the ground floor of 81-89 around the corner onto the gable end, which has the added benefit of creating a more substantial visual "plinth" for this elevation of the building.

The improvement in the overall image of the building at 81-89 Farringdon Road of extending the fascia signage around the corner into Saffron Street is demonstrated by the full elevations – existing and proposed – shown on drawing no. 1109.06.A . The signage is limited to that part of the building occupied by the retail unit on the ground floor and rear mezzanine (the outline shown on drawings 1109.03.A and 1109.05.A) so there is no encroachment on adjoining properties.

To the rear of the property, apart from the repair of 3 no. glazed panels damaged by the insertion of servicing ducts, no external changes are proposed, so these elevations have not been drawn. Internally, new lining to existing windows (for security) is perforated to allow access to existing clerestorey vents, also to encourage natural ventilation as noted above.

All details are open to negotiation and we look forward to the authority's feedback.