

Design & Access Statement

In support of a planning application for 19 shorts gardens, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9AW.

The existing retail shop at 19 Shorts Gardens has concertina folding doors to the frontage facing Shorts Garden and in part on Neals Yard. These doors were installed by the previous occupier of the building in 2005 and were the subject of retrospective planning application Ref 2005 / 4819 / P which was granted with conditions on 31st March 2006.

One of the conditions on the planning approval was that the folding doors should be 'fixed shut and permanently retained and maintained as such'.

Benefit cosmetics subsequently leased the retail area at ground floor and now operate a retail store in the premises. Benefit were not made aware that there was any restriction on the opening of the folding doors and commenced opening the doors (as they were designed to be) during the day on some warm days in order to improve trade.

Last year a planning officer visited the store and told the staff to shut the doors forthwith because of the planning restriction imposed on the property. This was done.

Benefit have suffered significantly from the loss of trade which occurs when the doors are closed. This application has been submitted to allow the removal of this condition which will allow the store to be used with the doors open from time to time.

There is no building or construction work required to allow the building to be used in the way proposed. All of the construction work was carried out by the previous tenant so there is no 'development' as such other than the use of the doors as they were intended to be used.

There are many premises in Covent Garden and Neals yard with the same concertina doors arrangement which is used to open up the stop front during trading hours when the weather permits and this is both visually attractive and good for business. This is not an unusual method of use for retail shops in the

area and there are many examples of this type of design which enhance the shopping experience in Covent Garden.

It would seem that the previous tenants undertook the construction work for the new doors without permission which was clearly in breach of planning controls. The installation work was subsequently approved and retained and still exists there is no intention to change or alter the doors, only to open them. The design of the shop and its façade will not alter.

The previous use of the building as a Café / Bar would have been considered against the possible nuisances of the noise and cooking smells which would have been made worse by having an open frontage. A cosmetics shop does not have the same problems with antisocial issues.

Access to the store would be improved by allowing the customers to enter from the pavement directly into the rental space this will improve the ability of customers to enter the shop which is the purpose of this application.

In conclusion, the reason for the imposition of the previous condition was because of design and this application does not propose any construction work which will change the approved design the nuisances which could have resulted from the café use no longer remain. The loss of trade being caused by the restrictions in use is a real concern with regards to the viability of the unit as a retail store. The use of the store with the doors open would be an asset to the commercial centre of Covent Garden.