

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		27/11/2009	
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		N/A	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Elaine Quigley				2009/4429/A			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
Donmar Warehouse 41 Earlham Street London WC2H 9LD				See draft decision notice			
PO 3/4		Area Team Signature		C&UD		Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Display of internally illuminated fascia sign with halo-lit lettering above main entrance of theatre (Sui Generis). (ii) Internal and external works to display internally illuminated fascia sign with halo-lit lettering above main entrance of theatre (Sui Generis). 							
Recommendation(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Grant advertisement consent (ii) Grant listed building consent 					
Application Type:		Advertisement Consent Listed building Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		None received					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify		Covent Garden Community Association – supports the application					

Site Description

The application site is located on the north side of Earlham Street and comprises a large three storey warehouse building that is Grade II listed building. The building has two frontages – one at 41 Earlham Street and one at 24 Shorts Gardens. The stock brick building was constructed in the mid-19th century and may originally have been used as a brewery. The building is known as the Thomas Neal Building and has been converted into a number of retail outlets. The application relates to the Donmar Warehouse that is a theatre.

The site is located within the Covent Garden Conservation Area.

Relevant History

25/06/1986 – Advertisement consent was granted for the display of externally illuminated projecting sign measuring 3 feet by 3 feet.

23/07/1992 – Advertisement consent was granted for the display of two neon lit projecting signs at the entrance door and neon lit lettering behind the window over the entrance door (ref 9280078).

Other relevant applications for signage at 41 Earlham Street

AS9804633 and LS9804705 – Advertisement consent and listed building consent were **refused** for the display of an internally illuminated projecting sign above the entrance door, together with an illuminated fascia sign above the archway. The proposed internally illuminated projecting sign and illuminated lettering above the archway was considered to have a harmful impact on the appearance and character of the listed building and the conservation area. An appeal was lodged and under the written representations procedure was **dismissed** on 02/02/1999.

The Inspector noted in paragraph 5 of the appeal decision that there was a sizeable projecting coloured neon sign associated with the theatre company that was unauthorised. From the planning history an application has not been submitted for the retention of the sign and it is still displayed outside the premises.

ASX0104326 and LSX0104327 – Advertisement and listed building consent refused for installation of internally illuminated signage

Relevant policies

Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006

- SD6 – Amenity for occupiers and neighbours
- B1 – General design principles
- B4 – Shopfronts, advertisements and signs
- B7 – Conservation areas

Camden Planning Guidance 2006

Seven Dials (Covent Garden Conservation Area)

Assessment

Proposal

Advertisement consent is sought for the replacement of the existing internally illuminated neon sign above the recessed entrance door to the theatre with internally illuminated halo-lit letters mounted on a solid black background that would be attached to the fanlight window above the entrance doors. The sign would measure 2.4m (length) by 0.8m (height) by 0.1m (width). The letters of the sign would be red painted aluminium letters and would illustrate the name of the theatre "DONMAR". The lettering would be raised 20-25mm on a black painted aluminium background fitted in front of the glass within the fanlight frame.

Existing signage

The existing internally illuminated neon signage was approved in 1992 (ref:9280078). There is also a large internally illuminated projecting sign at first floor level fronting Earlham Street but this appears to be unauthorised (as noted by the Planning Inspector in a 1999 appeal decision for an internally illuminated sign elsewhere on the building ref: LS9804705). Having checked the planning history there does not appear to have been an application for its retention or any outstanding enforcement action associated with the signage.

Amendments

The original replacement sign was mounted on a solid black backing with internally illuminated individual Perspex lettering. Following discussions with the Council the proposal has been revised as the proposed materials and method of illumination was not appropriate on the building as it would have resulted in the building having an overtly commercial appearance. The background material has now been revised to install aluminium background that would be fitted in front of the glass within the fan light frame. The lettering of the sign has also been revised from perspex to aluminium and would be lit by white LED lights concealed behind the individual letters to create a soft halo effect around them.

Assessment

The main issues to consider are:

- Design
- Amenity
- Other issues

Design

The existing warehouse building was originally industrial in terms of its use and traditionally would not necessarily have had any advertising. Consequently any proposed signage needs to be carefully considered in terms of its siting and detailed design to avoid the character of the building being altered to reflect a more commercial character.

The proposal would replace the existing neon sign with a new halo illuminated sign. Whilst the existing neon sign is not particularly attractive its impact is limited by virtue of its slim lettering and transparent background.

There is no objection in principle to the replacement of the sign. The size of the lettering, albeit somewhat larger than the existing, and its position is considered acceptable as the sign would be contained within the existing fanlight window.

The method of illumination has been revised to incorporate individual halo illuminated letters that would be mounted on a thin aluminium black background panel. The existing cable routes would be used to illuminate the new sign. The proposal would not have any further impact on the historic fabric of the listed building. The revised method of illumination would provide a more discrete solution. The detailed drawings do not show how the aluminium background panel would be installed within the existing fanlight window. A condition would be attached requesting this information to ensure that the panel would sit behind the frame of the window.

The proposed sign would be positioned above the recessed entrance doors. Its visibility from longer views along Earlham Street would be limited due to the depth of the recess. Taking this into consideration and the fact that there are a variety of illuminated signs associated with the other units within the Thomas Neal Building, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding conservation area and would be considered acceptable.

Amenity

The character of the surrounding area is mainly commercial. The closest residential premises are flats at 40 Earlham Street that is approximately 70m to the southwest of the site. The proposed sign would be located within the recessed doorway entrance to the Donmar Theatre and as such would not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residents or the safety of pedestrians.

Other issues

The large first floor projecting sign does not appear to benefit from consent and is not considered to set a precedent for this application in terms of method of illumination. Indeed it can be seen to be the exception and its harmful impact is highlighted by its isolation. Having checked the site history there does not appear to be any outstanding enforcement case relating to this sign. This matter has been passed to the Council's Enforcement Team for investigation.

Recommendation

Grant advertisement consent and listed building consent.

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