

Planning and Heritage Statement

43 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1BH



The application property (courtesy Google Maps)

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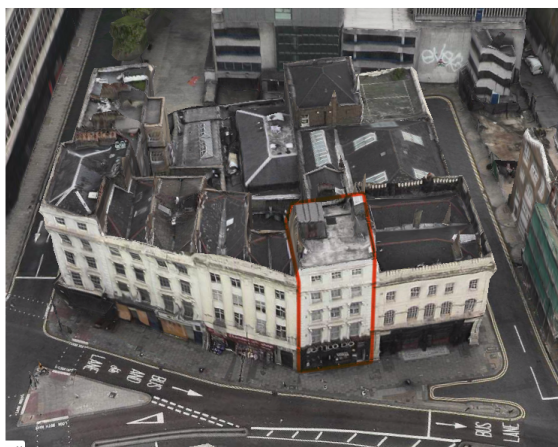


Background

- 1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted to support and provide the background and rationale to the proposed development at this site. It shows that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms and should therefore be granted planning permission and listed building consent.

The Site

- 2.1 The application relates to the ground floor shopfront of a five storey building located on the southern side of New Oxford Street. The building is one of several contained within the block that is bounded by New Oxford Street, West Central Street and Museum Street.



Above – aerial photo showing the site in context (courtesy Apple Maps)

- 2.2 The application building is a Grade II Listed building. It was first listed in 1999 along with 45 New Oxford Street and 61 West Central Street. The listing description is as follows:

“Terrace of shops and offices. 1843-7. Under the direction of James Pennethorne as Architect and Surveyor for Metropolitan Improvements appointed following a House of Commons Select Committee in 1836. Stuccoed brick with banded quoins and rustication, slate roofs. A group of commercial premises on a canted site treated as 2 distinct units. The premises survive well above C20 ground-floor shops, the upper floor having sash windows with small-paned glazing bars in moulded architrave

surrounds, under heavy cornices and parapets, that to No.45 with balustrade. No.45 has arcaded first floor fenestration, which continues along return to West Central Street on ground floor also. Interiors not inspected. The group is the most prominent intact survival of Pennethorne's most important Metropolitan Improvements Commission for the Commons Select Committee. (Tyack G: Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London: Cambridge: 1992-: 50-64)."

- 2.3 The property is also within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, which was designated in 1984, and for which the Council has produced the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (April 2011).
- 2.4 The Appraisal identifies the site as falling within "sub area 8" of the conservation area. It also notes that the building is a listed building and that the adjoining buildings within the block are also positive buildings. However, the buildings opposite the site are not designated as being of any positive value.
- 2.5 The following are extracts from the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy that are relevant to this application:
- 2.6 *"...Bloomsbury Conservation Area covers an area of approximately 160 hectares extending from Euston Road in the north to High Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields in the south and from Tottenham Court Road in the west to King's Cross Road in the east...*
- 2.7 *...New Oxford Street was built in 1840 to ease congestion in St Giles High Street. This cut through a notorious area of slums known as the Rookery. A wide range of shops, offices and banks were then developed...*
- 2.8 *...This sub area is characterised by areas of large-scale, late 19th and early 20th century blocks fronting busy thoroughfares. Development followed the construction of new routes combined with the widening of earlier streets, thereby cutting through the earlier 17th and 18th century street pattern. The narrow back streets in the sub area reflect the earlier layout. The predominant use is commercial, with a range of shops, banks, offices, hotels...*
- 2.9 *East of the junction, on the site of the former Castle Brewery, Nos 33-45 (odd) are a group buildings of three to five storeys which date from the 1840s, with the exception of Nos 39-41, which were re-fronted in an Art Deco style in 1927 for the Hackney Furnishing Company Ltd, by architect Harold Baily (although the shopfront has been altered, the period entrance to the upper floors survives). They are stucco-faced and have classically influenced details, with Nos 33-37 (odd) and No 43 being identical (although the original shopfront has been replaced with a 'chi chi' early*

1960s café front in rusticated render with pantiled weathering). The whole group is unified by horizontal banding at upper floor and parapet level, with taller five-storey units (Nos 33 and 45) marking either end like flanking columns...”

- 2.10 Whilst the above identifies the historic significance of the application site and the surroundings, the application relates solely to the ground floor shopfront of the building. The existing shopfront is not of significant historic or architectural importance having been installed in the 1990’s.



Above – the existing shopfront (courtesy Google Maps)

- 2.11 The shopfront is of wooden construction with a slightly off centre and recessed entrance door that forms an entrance lobby into the ground floor restaurant use. The shopfront is set within the plain (black painted) rendered façade and fascia, which protrudes very slightly from the upper floors. There are no architectural plinths, pilasters or corbels to the ground floor.
- 2.12 The shopfront itself is predominantly glazed with a wooden frame and a low level wooden stall riser with some architectural moulding. The floor level of the restaurant is slightly above pavement level necessitating a small single step to the entrance. There is also a retractable canopy above the shopfront, which is affixed to the fascia.
- 2.13 The entrance to the upper flats is to the right hand side of the shopfront, by means of a single access door, recessed from the front elevation.
- 2.14 To the left hand side of the application site is the entrance to the upper floor accommodation of nos. 39-41 New Oxford Street. To the right hand side is the

larger and more ornate wooden shopfront of No.45, which is contained within detailed stone plinths and pilasters either side. The entrance to the shop at No.45 is to the left hand side of the shopfront, closest to the application property.

- 2.15 Other than No.45 there do not appear to be any shopfronts of particular merit in the surrounding area, the majority being of modern materials and form, and consistent with the more modern buildings in the vicinity.

Planning History

- 3.1 It is considered that there is no recent planning history of relevance to this application. The most recent applications were in 2004 when permission was granted for the change of use of the upper floors from offices to flats.
- 3.2 Prior to this there were a number of applications between 1962 and 2004 for various alterations to the shopfront and in respect of signs and advertisements.

The Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is to replace the existing shopfront.
- 4.2 The existing fascia and surroundings to the shopfront are to be retained unaltered. However, the existing shopfront frame would be removed and replaced with a similar wooden shopfront but with an entrance located to the left hand side of the frontage. It would have a wooden stall riser to the same height as that which exists.
- 4.3 The proposal would enable a level access and provide more comfortable and accessible space within the restaurant area. It would enable a more attractive shopfront that would respect the symmetry of the building, and that would provide a more consolidated and active display from the restaurant onto the street.
- 4.4 Full details of the proposal are indicated on the submitted plans, and in the supporting documentation to this application.

Main Planning Considerations

- 5.1 This Statement is written to support the applications for planning permission and listed building consent and to demonstrate that careful consideration has been given to the design and form of the proposal in the context of its surroundings. Particular attention has been given to the significance of the heritage assets that might be affected by the proposal.
- 5.2 The main issues are considered below, and they conclude that the proposed development is acceptable and that planning permission and listed building consent should therefore both be granted.

The Existing Shopfront – Design and Appearance

- 5.3 The existing shopfront is not of significant historical or architectural importance and it does not contribute or add to the value of the remainder of the listed building or its surroundings. Its removal should therefore be considered acceptable.

The Proposed Shopfront – Design and Appearance

- 5.4 The proposed replacement shopfront would be contained within the extent of the framework of the existing shopfront and would be of wooden construction, with a similar height stall riser to that which exists. The main change in appearance would be in respect of the positioning of the entrance door, which would be located to the side of the shopfront rather than its current, centrally placed position.
- 5.5 It is considered that the relocation of the entrance door would positively enhance the appearance of the property, resulting in the two entrances to the building being at either side of the frontage, with a more consolidated glazed shopfront within the central part of the frontage. The proposal would result in a more symmetrical approach to the shopfront and it would have a better relationship with the fenestration above. It would provide a more consistent and rhythmic pattern of shop entrances along the street, the majority of which are to the sides of their respective shopfronts. It would not adversely impact on the historic fabric of the building or the pattern of development in the surrounding area.
- 5.6 The materials and detailing of the shopfront would be proportionate to the scale of the building and the surrounding streetscape. A large area of glazing would be maintained within a wooden framework, consistent with a traditional shopfront.
- 5.7 The proposal does not affect or alter the existing signage, fascia details or roller shutter.

- 5.8 As such the design and appearance of the proposed shopfront is appropriate.

Heritage Considerations

- 5.9 In proposing this application, the applicant has given consideration to the “heritage assets” of the site and the impact that the proposal would have on the significance of the heritage assets. The heritage asset comprises the Grade II Listed Building and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, together with possible archaeological implications.
- 5.10 In this respect the above description of the site and the surroundings confirms that the existing shopfront is not of significance to the historic fabric of the buildings, or the character of the area. Its replacement should therefore be acceptable.
- 5.11 The proposed replacement is considered suitable in terms of its form, design and materials, and it would not cause any harm to the heritage asset. The materials, detailing and proposed access arrangements are all suitable for the property in the context of the significance of the heritage asset and of the surrounding area.
- 5.12 The nature of the development is also such that it would not impact on any matters relating to Archaeology.

Accessibility

- 5.13 The proposal would enable a level approach into the restaurant, and the entrance door would be capable of accommodating wheelchair users, and allow for better circulation within the restaurant. This must be a material consideration in the determination of these applications.

The Impact on Adjoining Occupiers

- 5.14 The proposal would not have any impact on the amenities of the adjoining occupiers.

Parking and Highway Considerations

- 5.15 The proposal would not have any impact on parking or servicing requirements of the premises.

Sustainability

- 5.16 The proposal would support the continued use of the premises as a viable restaurant consistent with the retail and commercial nature of the area. This in turn

would contribute to the local economy and vitality and viability of the area. It is a sustainable form of development that should be supported.

Relevant Planning Policy

- 6.1 Notwithstanding that the proposed development is considered appropriate to this site, the applicant has also given consideration to the relevant planning policies and guidance that are applicable.
- 6.2 The applicant has therefore given careful consideration to the policies contained within the statutory development plan, which in this case comprises the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the London Plan 2015, and the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework. Particular attention has been given to Core Strategy Policy CS14 (Promoting High Quality Places and Conserving Heritage) and Development Plan Policy DP30 (Shopfronts), together with the guidance on shopfronts that is contained within Camden Planning Guidance 1 (September 2014).
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposal complies with these policies and guidance.

Conclusion

- 7.1. To conclude, the key benefits of the proposals can be summarized as follows:
 - An improvement to the existing shopfront and its appearance in the context of the building and its surroundings,
 - No impact on the historical significance of the building and the surrounding area,
 - Improved accessibility into the restaurant,
 - The continued use of the existing restaurant, thereby contributing to the vitality and viability of the area and the local economy,
 - No adverse impact on the amenities of the adjoining occupiers, and,
 - No parking or highway concerns.

- 7.2. It is therefore respectfully requested that the Council grant planning permission and listed building consent for the proposal.
- 7.3. However, should there be any concerns regarding any aspect of the application the applicant would be willing to address them prior to a decision being made, and would accept necessary and reasonable conditions if appropriate.

End