125 Shaftesbury Avenue

DSDHA

Design and Access Statement

SEPTEMBER 2016

DSDHA

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Executive Summary

This Design and Access Statement sets out the vision for the proposed remodelling, refurbishment and extension of the existing office and retail building (Class B1/A1/A3/Sui Generis) at 125 Shaftesbury Avenue, including terraces, a new public route, a relocated office entrance (Charing Cross Road), rooftop plant and flexible retail uses (Classes A1/A3), along with associated highway, landscaping and public realm improvements.

The existing building is an 11-storey, brick-faced building that was completed in 1982. The site is bounded by Charing Cross Road to the southwest, Shaftesbury Avenue to the southeast, Stacey Street to the northeast and Phoenix Street to the northwest. Through an extensive refurbishment of the existing building, the proposals seek to create a high-quality, mixed-use scheme; reinstate the historic connection between Old Compton Street and New Compton Street, that once ran through the centre of the site; increase active frontage on all elevations, and increase biodiversity through generously planted terraces.

The new pedestrian route through the site will improve the connection to the Phoenix Garden and St Giles High Street, helping to reestablish St Giles in-the-fields Church as the heart of this quarter.

1.0 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report / Scheme Overview

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by DSDHA in support of the application for the remodelling, refurbishment and extension of the existing office and retail building (Class B1/A1/A3/Sui Generis) at 125 Shaftesbury Avenue, including terraces, a new public route, a relocated office entrance on Charing Cross Road, rooftop plant and flexible retail uses (Classes A1/A3), along with associated highway, landscaping and public realm improvements.

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the analysis, objectives, design development and resulting detailed proposals for the redevelopment of 125 Shaftesbury Avenue.

The site is owned by our client, Almacantar Shaftesbury S.a.r.l, who have identified the opportunity to refurbish and extend 125 Shaftesbury Avenue to create a contemporary, high quality, office-led scheme with retail at ground floor level.

Due to the location of the site, the proposed scheme has been carefully designed with an understanding and analysis of the historic context being fundamental to the architectural response. We have taken into consideration the existing building's position within prominent local views, its relationship to neighbouring listed buildings, and its proximity to a number of Conservation Areas.

In conjunction with providing an uplift in high quality flexible office space in this central London location, the scheme will provide greater activation at ground floor level; a new pedestrian route through the centre of the scheme; improved public realm at the junction of Phoenix Street and Stacey Street, as well as on Charing Cross Road; and a sustainable, low energy and responsive building fabric with increased biodiversity through green roofs and generously planted terraces.

The scheme has also been developed in the context of national, regional and local planning policy, and has been informed by a significant number of consultation events with local residents, community groups and stakeholders, and through a series of pre-application meetings with the London Borough of Camden.

A number of elements of the design, including particulars of the cladding, space planning, lighting, security and landscaping will be finalised at the detailed design stage and therefore will be the subject of planning conditions to be agreed with the London Borough of Camden. Where these details are shown within the Design and Access Statement, they are included for illustrative purposes only.

The Design and Access Statement should be read in conjunction with the application drawings and other consultant reports.

The structure and content of this report is designed to:

- Provide a description of the existing site and building, including the challenges and opportunities for development.
- Provide a review of the project's immediate and wider context in terms of its physical, social and economic characteristics and explain how the local context has influenced the overall design.
- Provide a rationale for the development's design based on the above.
- Explain and illustrate the design principles of the proposed alterations, including the proposed layout, uses and appearance.
- Explain how consultation has influenced the design process.
- Illustrate how public/private spaces will be landscaped in the proposed development.
- Explain how future users of the building, including disabled people, will be able to access the development from the existing transport network and why the main access points to the building and the layout of access routes have been chosen.

NOTE:
Unless specifically noted, all images and sketches are for illustrative purposes only and are not verified views.

1.2 Project Team:

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1.0 Introduction

1.3 DSDHA

DSDHA are delighted to be working on this exciting scheme for our client, Almacantar Shaftesbury S.a.r.l.

Founded by Deborah Saunt and David Hills in 1998, DSDHA is an architectural practice founded on a persistent search for new forms of beauty through active design, research and agency. We relish the challenges that projects of any size bring with our determined commitment to quality and creating a sense of place. DSDHA's architecture is always evolving: for us each project is a bespoke response to a unique brief, which develops through dialogue with our clients, stakeholders and collaborators as well as with the ultimate users of our designs. We have built an international reputation, delivering a range of high profile crafted individual buildings, macro-scaled urban strategies and research projects.

DSDHA has established a wide range of experience leading a number of office, residential and mixed-use schemes, as well as public realm and research projects. Our approach explores the opportunity to unlock the potential of highly complex sites with high-quality design.

Research and consultation forms a core feature of DSDHA's approach to developing a design strategy, which is engaged with a thorough understanding of local constraints, history and context. From this informed position, each completed design is conceived with a specificity of place and a respect for local character, while at the same time demonstrating a contemporary response to sustainability and innovation.

DSDHA's work has been recognised with 17 RIBA Awards in the last decade, and has twice been nominated for the European Union Mies Van Der Rohe Prize for Contemporary Architecture.

A selection of DSDHA's recent work is included opposite., which includes the West End Project on behalf of LB Camden.

Charlotte Street, London Borough of Camden

West End Project, London Borough of Camden

Somers Town Masterplan, London Borough of Camden

Cleland House, City of Westminster

1.4 Project Vision

The project seeks to regenerate a prominent building in central London, transforming it and integrating it into the wider public realm to benefit the area as a whole. The project objectives can be summarised as follows:

- Reinvention of an existing building with a high level of architectural quality to create a clear identity for this key location.
- Reinstate the historic route through the site by creating a new pedestrian link through the site, to connect Old Compton Street and New Compton Street.
- Create an enhanced public realm at the junction of Phoenix Street and Stacey Street, adjacent to the Phoenix Garden and the new community building.
- Provision of active public uses at ground floor level to reactivate street frontages with a mix of shops, cafes and restaurants.
- Creation of flexible modern office spaces.
- A sustainable development to create a reinvented, energy efficient building maintaining the existing building's substructure and majority of superstructure.

As illustrated in this document, there are a number of improvements of benefit to the public that can be achieved through the refurbishment and extension of 125 Shaftesbury Avenue. The applicants are keen to maintain dialogue on these potential improvements with the relevant local stakeholders.

View of existing building from Cambridge Circus

2.0 Site Matters

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2.0 Site Matters

2.1 Site Location

The proposed site is located at 125 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H with an approximate grid reference E529955 N181103. It lies approximately 100m south of St Giles in-the-fields Church, 250m south of Centre Point / Tottenham Court Road Station (Central and Northern lines and Crossrail) and 250m north of Leicester Square Station (Northern and Piccadilly lines). The site covers an area of approximately 61m by 52m and is bounded by:

- Charing Cross Road to the south west;
- Shaftesbury Avenue to the south east;
- Stacey Street to the north east; and
- Phoenix Street to the north west.

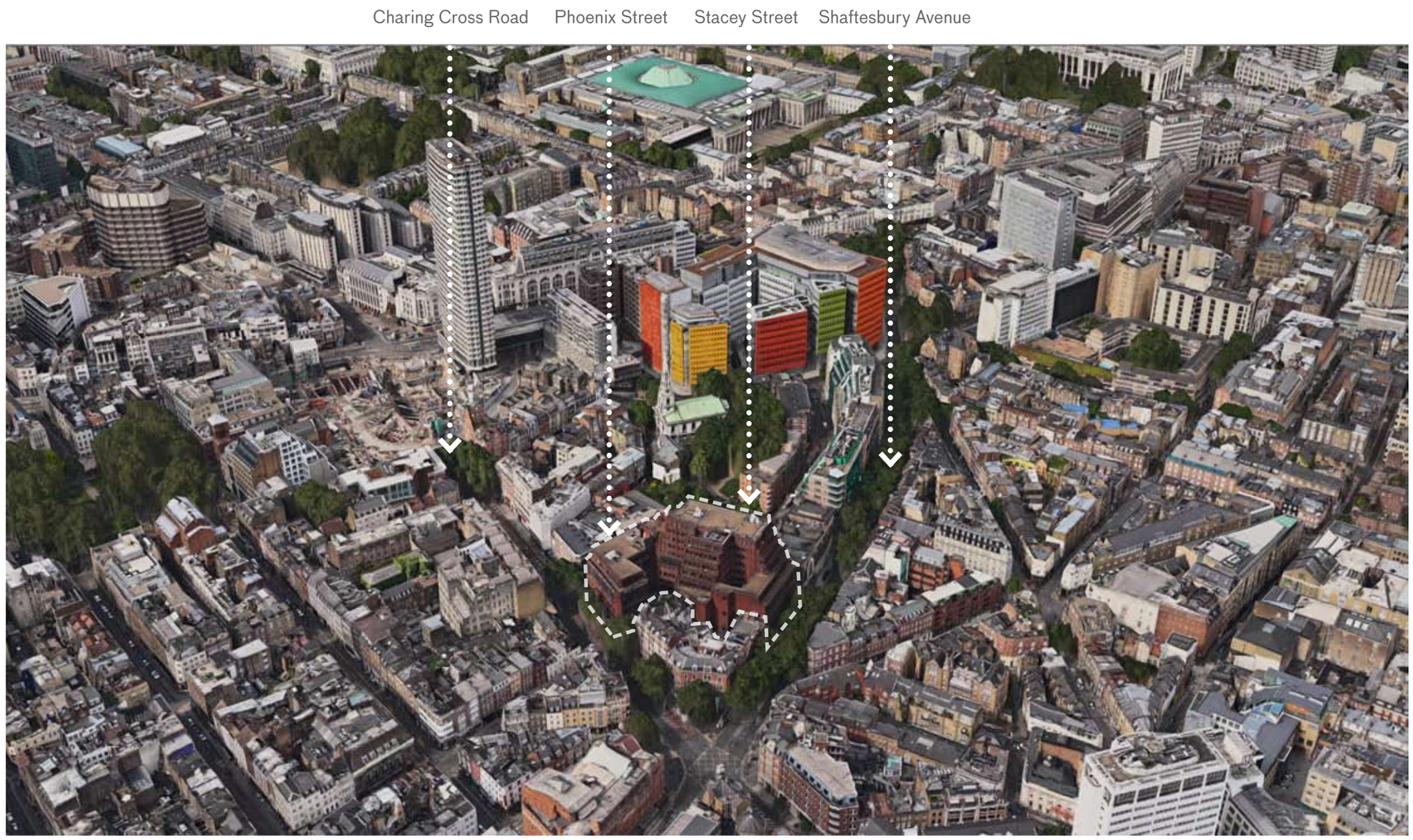
The 0.354ha site lies within the London Borough of Camden and sits between the distinct character areas of Soho, Covent Garden, Seven Dials and Bloomsbury. It is not located within a Conservation Area, but is part of a small urban pocket surrounded by the Soho, Denmark Street and Seven Dials Conservation Areas.

The site is currently occupied by a basement, ground plus 10-storey building designed by Ian Fraser, John Roberts and Partners and completed in 1982. When the building was first completed, a retail arcade occupied much of the ground floor, providing a pedestrian route through the building. This was later closed after it failed economically and replaced by a single large retail unit.

The site adjoins Trentishoe Mansions on Caxton Walk/ Charing Cross Road and 119 Shaftesbury Avenue. The site also shares a light well with 24 Cambridge Circus and 84-86 Charing Cross Road (currently occupied by McDonalds). Tenants of these adjoining buildings currently enjoy rights of escape through the basement of 125 Shaftesbury Avenue.

The landmarks near to the site include St Giles in-the-fields Church, Centre Point, Seven Dials and Central St Giles. The ongoing construction of Tottenham Court Road Station, the West End Project and the opening of Crossrail in 2018 will transform this West End location and attract further significant investment in the area.

The proposed development will contribute to the ongoing improvement and reinvention of this central London location.



2.0 Site Matters

Aerial photograph

2.0 Site Matters

2.2 Existing Building

2.2.1 Overview

The existing building, completed in 1982, currently provides approximately 24,000 square metres of office and retail space across basement, ground floor and ten upper levels.

The ground floor originally accommodated a retail mall providing enclosed access between Caxton Walk and Stacey Street. This was subsequently closed up and the ground floor re-configured as the retail offer proved unsuccessful.

A basement level extends beneath the ground floor with a floor to ceiling height varying between approximately 3.6-4.5 metres. The basement extends beneath the street pavements of Caxton Walk. Current vehicular access from the ground floor to the basement is via a reinforced concrete ramp accessed from Stacey Street.

Beneath the basement lies a disused Thames Water Victorian 'egg shaped' sewer that runs from East to West, under the former New Compton Street. This sits above the crown of Northern line tunnels (approximate 3.2 m below Datum) which run in close proximity to the site along the western boundary.

View from New Compton Street towards loading bay

View from Charing Cross Road towards Caxton Walk

Section through existing building

2.2.2 Superstructure

The existing building was constructed in the early 1980s and comprises a basement, ground and ten upper storeys of concrete structure with a column grid of approximately 7.8m x 7.8m. The plan of the building is of irregular shape with an overall height of 64.325m AOD. Generally the floor to floor height is 3.525m.

The structure is a concrete frame, with reinforced concrete columns and walls which enclose the lift and stair cores, and reliant on the cores for the stability. Two primary lift cores and four stair cores are located within the building providing vertical circulation. The lift cores and parts of the stair cores act as shear walls contributing to the stability of the building.

The concrete frame consists of square and rectangular columns. Band beams supporting ribbed slabs span onto the concrete columns, some areas use a reinforced concrete slab as horizontal structure. Downstand beams are visible around the external perimeter. The structural floor zone appears to be 325mm deep.

The reinforced concrete slab is used where the building steps back from level 6 and appears to act as transfer structure supporting the perimeter columns of the levels above. Plant is located at level 10 and within the basement.

The existing structure places a number of constraints on the current functionality of the space. Office floors are typically characterised by low ceilings, narrow linear office floorplates, inflexibility of layout and inadequate lift capacity.

2.2.3 Substructure

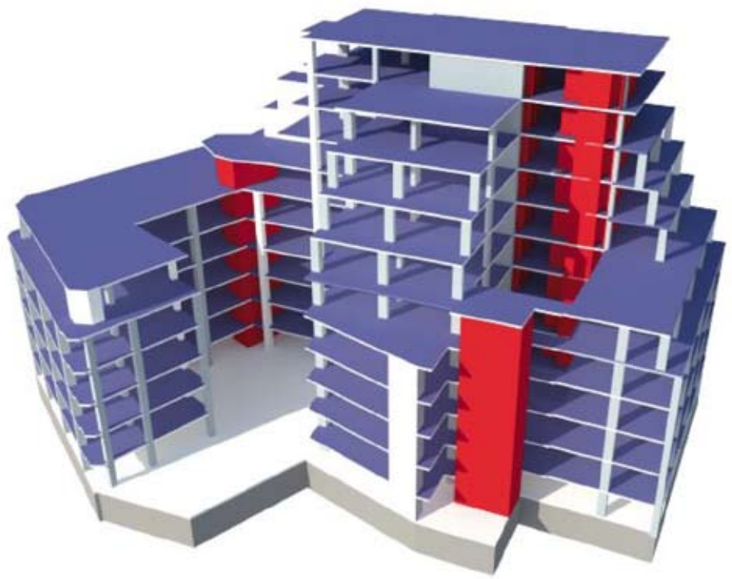
The substructure consists of a single storey basement currently used for ancillary retail, car parking and plant areas. The basement covers the full extent of the site area, is accessible via a ramp, and features different levels to accommodate plant, car parking and ancillary retail and office spaces.

The vertical structure within the basement has the same grid formation as the superstructure and there does not appear to be any transfer structure with the exception of one column above the ramp.

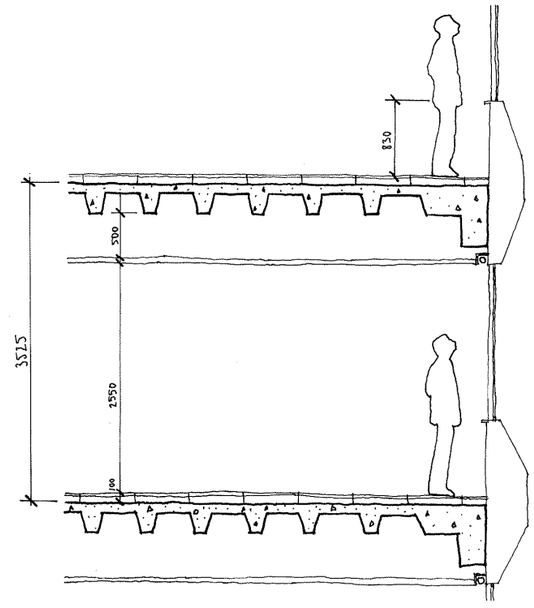
Due to the age of the building it is assumed that the perimeter basement walls were constructed using either embedded construction techniques (i.e piled solution) or as a reinforced concrete retaining wall.

View of typical existing office floor

Existing facade



3D model of existing structure



Existing detail section

2.0 Site Matters

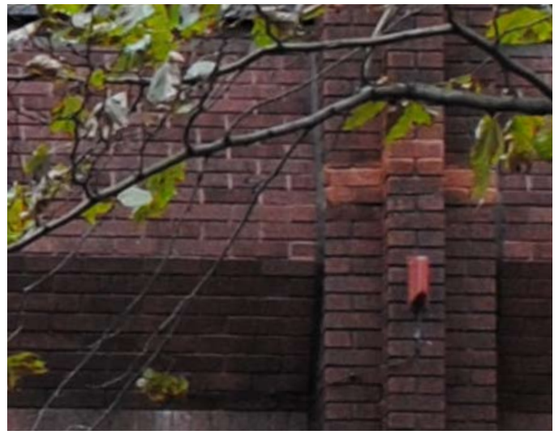
2.2.4 Condition of the Existing Facade

The existing building is a modest commercial building that is fairly typical of its period - conventional layouts, homogeneous materiality and minimal articulation. The impact of its under-articulated architecture is that the building has a very limited street presence, makes little contribution to the street, and does nothing to aid urban legibility. It is of negligible architectural merit.

The existing façade consists of brick clad precast concrete mullions and spandrel beams fixed to the slab edge or concrete columns on primary grid. The precast concrete mullions are typically located at 1.95m centres. The mullions and spandrels are supported at each level and there appears to be a movement joint between floors and a further joint between mullions and the spandrels. Alterations over the years can be read on the facade in the layering and different types of brickwork.

Numerous vertical cracks are visible in the slip brick bonded to the concrete mullions, which are not only of aesthetical concern but in the short term, raises concerns relating to both the security of the brick fascias, and the Health and Safety of pedestrians using the paved areas below.

The façade also performs very badly environmentally; the brickwork does not meet the thermal standards expected for current offices. Whilst the windows were of a reasonable quality 32 years ago, they do not compare favourably with contemporary window systems in terms of water and air penetration as well as sound and thermal insulation.



Photographs showing deterioration of existing brick-faced precast concrete facade

Shaftesbury Avenue - Retail signage currently has a poor relationship with the neighbouring context

2.2.4 Challenges of Existing Building

Challenges with the existing building include:

- Negative contribution to the urban character of the area
- Inactive frontages to neighbouring streets, in particular Phoenix Street
- A poor relationship to surrounding public realm including Caxton Walk and Phoenix Gardens
- Confusing urban legibility in the context of surrounding buildings
- Inefficient and narrow floor plates and poor environmental performance which no longer meet the standards required of modern offices
- A deteriorating façade in need of remedial work
- An inability to address the needs of an area that will see increased activity and demand in coming years, particularly with the introduction of Crossrail in 2018
- Inefficient use of office space due to compromised existing layouts. The site could do more to generate employment use.

Despite all of these challenges, early studies show that a comprehensive redevelopment is not possible, as this would require a very substantial increase in height in order to make it feasible. Such additional height would not have been acceptable in terms of the potential impact on key views.

Cambridge Circus

Old Compton Street

New Compton Street

Raised public space adjacent to Phoenix Street