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Fielding Court Retail

for Shaftesbury

Design & Access Statement

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Annex I: Existing & Proposed Drawings

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EX12_Elevations & Shop Front Details - As Existing_1:100 & 1:20 @A1

PL11_Ground Floor Plan - As Proposed_1:50 @ A1

PL12_Elevations & Shop Front Details - As Proposed_1:100 & 1:20 @A1

Summary

This document explains the rationale behind the proposals to replace the existing shop fronts to Fielding Court. The existing building comprises retail at ground floor and basement level and residential accommodation split over 4 upper floors.

The proposals are driven by a desire to improve the design quality and appearance of the building in a way which is sympathetic to the Seven Dials Conservation Area and which respects the architectural integrity of the existing building.

The Existing Building

Constructed in the late 1980s to a design by Scott Brownrigg Architects, the building elevations employ a language of fragmented classical forms in a manner typical of the postmodernist architectural style. Whereas the recently listed 45-51 Monmouth Street has been hailed for its contextual place-making and 'bold form and detail, ...interpreted in a witty postmodern idiom'¹, Fielding Court could be criticised for neglecting sensitive place-making in favour of bold formalist gestures.

The Seven Dials Renaissance study believes that the building undermines the quality of surrounding groups of urban buildings due to inappropriate details² and describes the shop fronts as "less than ideal".

Facing the Seven Dials Monument, four storeys of coursed ashlar stone cladding create the appearance of an over-scaled plinth, crowned with an ashlar stone cornice above 3rd floor level. At ground level the effect is austere, having a negative impact on the quality of public space, and consequently reducing the desirability of the ground floor retail units.

These shortcomings are in a large part caused by the lack of a horizontal delineation between the ground and upper floors of the building. This is particularly apparent on the corner elevation where ashlar stone coursing is unbroken from pavement level up to the fourth-floor level cornice.

Shop fronts on and adjacent to the corner elevation are disproportionately narrow, having wide stone piers aligned to punched window openings above, rather than respecting the rhythm of adjacent shop fronts. Furthermore, heavy stone piers and shop fronts set into deep reveals reduce the opportunities for visual connections across the corner of Earlham Street and Monmouth Street.

¹ Listing Entry for 45-51 Monmouth Street and 29-31 Mercer Street, Historic England, 08/11/2016. (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1434006>)

² The Seven Dials Renaissance Study, page 46, Seven Dials Monument Charity.

Summary

The Proposals

The proposals create a clear separation between the ground floor street frontage and the upper floors by introducing a new cornice to match the distinctive post-modern detailing of the existing building.

By reducing the width of the heavy masonry corner piers, the rhythm of adjacent shop fronts is no longer broken and the quality of the public space facing the monument is greatly improved.

Carefully detailed hardwood framed shop fronts provide a sense of quality and are consistent with the scale and proportions of the existing building and adjacent shop fronts.

Urban Context



Earham House occupies a corner plot to the south-western side of the Seven Dials Monument between Earham Street & Monmouth Street.



The building comprises one of the seven facades which directly address the Seven Dials Monument, at the focal point of Seven Dials. The facades of the concrete frame building are faced in red brick, reconstituted bath stone and portland stone.

Fielding Court viewed from the north-east side of the Seven Dials Monument

Urban Context



Bath stone cladding with rusticated horizontal joints has been painted at ground floor level. The composition of the corner elevation has a strong vertical emphasis.



On Earlham Street, an inset doorway with a vertical louvred panel and night-shutters creates a poor impression of the existing cafe unit. The existing residential entrance has an original hardwood framed screen.

Urban Context



Wide stone piers at ground level limit views into and out of the existing retail unit

Shop front Design

Comparison of the existing and proposed elevations demonstrates how the new design balances the building elevations by creating a clear separation between the ground floor street frontage and the upper floors of the building.



Monmouth Street / Corner/ Earham Street Elevations As Existing



Monmouth Street / Corner/ Earham Street Elevations As Proposed

Shop front Design

The existing shop fronts are to be re-framed with a durable, smooth-troweled finish render painted mid-grey, above which sits a new cast stone cornice in Bath stone to match the existing building in colour and texture.

Shop fronts are to be constructed from a durable blonde hardwood such as White Birch and clear finished with a matt lacquer. The configuration follows the conventions of traditional small-scale shop fronts, characteristic of Seven Dials, whilst adopting contemporary detailing and working with the dimensions of the structural framing of the existing building.

Windows cills are set at a conventional stall-riser height of approximately 700mm above floor level and reach up to meet a mullion set at door head level. The new design provides for a fascia signage band approximately 440mm in height, consistent with the face dimensions of the columns/ piers.

Access

The existing inset doorway giving access to Cafe Nero on the Earlham Street Elevation is to be removed as part of the shop front improvements. The current configuration is difficult to maintain and has been fitted with concertina shutters which are closed at night. This is a secondary access to a small retail unit and is no longer required. It is considered that its removal will improve the appearance of the shop fronts and simplify access arrangements into the retail unit.

All other arrangements for access to the building will not change as a result of the proposals. With the exception of the inset doorway to Cafe Nero on the Earlham Street Elevation, new access doors to the retail units will be provided in the same location and to a similar size to existing doors.

Access to the residential lobby will not be affected by the proposals.