

# HERITAGE, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Project: Listed Building Consent for internal alterations

At: Unit R07, Centre Point, 101-103 New Oxford Street, 5-24 St Giles Street, London WC1A 1DD

For: Conilon Ltd t/a Black Sheep Coffee (Occupier)

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## Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Conilon Ltd to accompany the full planning application and an application for listed building consent for the internal fit out comprising minor alterations to, and installation of fixtures and fittings within Unit R07. The document is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Site Location Plan
- Existing Plans
- Existing Elevations
- Proposed Plans
- Proposed Elevations
- Proposed Reflected Ceiling Plan
- CGI's

## Statement Of Intent

This Heritage and Design and Access Statement comprises a description of the site, the planning context and Listed Building Entry relevant to the proposed works. It seeks to demonstrate that the proposed works are sympathetic to the building and that there is no harm to the Listed Building.

## The Site

The site subject to this application is situated on the GF level of the Centre Point building, 101-103 New Oxford Street and 5-24 St Giles Street. WC1A 1DD.

Unit R07 comprises a self contained retail unit facing on to St Giles Street. The unit is to be occupied by an artisan coffee company, Black Sheep Coffee.

Centre Point was built in 1966 and is one of the great works of modern architecture. The building was commissioned by renowned developer Harry Hyams and designed by Richard Seifert. When it was created it captured the adventurous spirit of 1960's London, which has inspired the design of Centre Point's transformation.

Planning and Listed Building Consent was granted in 2014 for the change of use from office accommodation to provide residential accommodation and commercial use on the ground first and second floors and redevelopment of a public house to provide an 11-storey building providing affordable housing, with commercial uses to the ground floor.

## Listed Building Description

Centre Point was listed as a Grade II building on 24th November 1995. The Listed Building Entry is as follows:

### List entry Description

### Summary of Building

Offices, flats and shops complex built 1961-66. Designed by Richard Seifert and Partners for the developer Harry Hyams; leading design partner George Marsh. Ground floor of tower remodelled 2000.

### Reasons for Designation

Centre Point is designated for the following principal reasons:

\* Architectural interest: the slender tower, with its delicately modelled surfaces, carried on the very visible pilotis, is one of the most distinctive high-rise compositions of the 1960s and a major London landmark. Attention is given to detail in the way the brise-soleil expresses the width of the link on the other side. The link provides an elegant transition between the high and low-rise elements, its huge expanse of glazing forming a dramatic contrast with the lively rhythm of the tower elevation. The east block, while of less intrinsic design merit, nonetheless forms a key component of the ensemble and is integral to Centre Point's planning interest. Its brise-soleil, expressing the office tier, is again a distinctive use of this feature, forming a strong, horizontal continuum with the glazed link \* Planning interest: the relationship of tower, link and east block is a notable instance of Le Corbusier-inspired planning in London. The combination of, and contrast between, these elements is thus of note, not just the principal tower \* Technological innovation: for the ingenious use of pre-cast panels, which were hung from the frame without the use of scaffolding: the first tall building in London to be constructed this way, and for the link block, a very early use in Britain of armour-plate glazing with metal fixings \* Interiors: while the majority of the office, retail and residential interiors lack special interest, the tower, link and east block do each possess specific interiors of note which are specified in Details; \* Historic interest: . Centre Point, now seen as a symbol of 1960s 'swinging London', is one of the most important speculative developments of its period in Britain, the most notable work of Seifert and Partners, one of the most prolific commercial practices of its day, and an early mixed-use development. The inclusion of shops, and especially housing, was a response to preserving these uses at a time when central London was becoming saturated with new offices

### History

St Giles's Circus, one of London's most congested intersections by the 1950s, was earmarked for redevelopment by the London County Council (LCC) for the creation of a gyratory system. In March 1957, Hubert Bennett, the new LCC Chief Architect, produced a design for an 18-storey building, with nine and eleven-storey blocks to the east to rehouse the people living on the site. Legal disputes between the LCC and landowners over compensation were circumvented by Harry Hyams' Oldham Estates Co, which purchased the land as a speculative undertaking whereby the LCC would receive the land required for road widening in exchange for a higher development than would normally be allowed under the LCC's 'plot ratio' regulations. Hyams engaged Richard Seifert and Partners as his architects. Seifert's leading design partner was George Marsh, who had previously worked for Burnet, Tait and Partners. In

November 1959 an application for a 29-storey office block, with an 8-storey block of shops and flats, linked by a bridge over a gyratory, received outline planning permission from Camden Council, and designs for a 31-storey curtain-wall tower with a lozenge-shaped plan, closely resembling the Pirelli Tower, Milan (1955-60 by Gio Ponti, Pier Luigi Nervi and others), were drawn up. Further modifications were required due to the LCC's demand for wider roads, and Seifert negotiated a reduction in the tower's footprint in return for two more storeys, plus an extra storey on the link; the lower block was subsequently widened. Work began on the lower block in 1961. A revised application for the tower received planning permission in January 1963, and the scheme was completed in 1966. The pond and fountains in the open area to the front of the tower, designed by the German émigré artist Jupp Dernbach-Mayen (1908-1990) were removed in 2009 as part of the Crossrail development.

Centre Point received limited but mainly enthusiastic reception. The design of the tower, which shows a deliberate move from the smooth regularity of International Modernism towards a more inventive, sculptural approach with strong contrasts between light and shade, was admired at the time and since for its confidence and originality. It rapidly becoming a symbol of the sixties: Ernö Goldfinger dubbed it 'London's first pop art skyscraper while Building (24 May 1968) enthused that 'like the Beatles and Mary Quant, this building expresses the supreme confidence of sheer professionalism... more than any other building Centre Point made London swing, it backed Britain, a product of real team work which must figure as an invisible export.' By 1966 however the market was saturated with new offices and Hyams, who had assigned the freehold to the LCC in return for a 150-year lease at low rent, chose to hold on to his portfolio until he could get a better price. Centre Point, including all the flats, thus gained notoriety for standing empty for many years at a time of housing shortage. It was not unique in this respect, but it was the most prominent empty high-rise and came to symbolise 1960s speculative greed. It has been more fully occupied since 1987 when it was sold and refurbished. In 2000 the area at the base of the tower was adapted to create a new entrance hall.

## Details

**MATERIALS:** reinforced pre-cast concrete. Tower clad in polished Capstone pre-cast concrete mullions. Armour-plate curtain-wall glazing to link block. Rear block faced in panels of grey glass. Polished 'blue pearl' granite to part of ground floor. Metal-framed windows throughout, some replaced.

**PLAN:** Centre Point consists of three elements: a 33-storey tower to the west; a 9-storey rectangular block to the east, aligned north-south, comprising a former bank, shops and pub at ground floor; offices at first and second, and maisonettes above (Centre Point House), and a link over St Giles High Street connecting the two blocks at first-floor level.

## EXTERIOR

**TOWER:** slender tower with slightly convex faces; the narrow side elevations are recessed at the centre with slightly canted projections on either side. An open-tread concrete staircase leads from the left of the west elevation up to a projecting platform to the original entrance (similar stair on E elevation of tower). First floor is double height and carried on a base in the form of a zig-zag valance. To left of west elevation is a vertical concrete 'brise-soleil' with hexagonal terminations to top and bottom, expressing the junction with the link block. The tower has pre-cast external faceted mullions in the form

of 'H' turned on its side, which are partially load bearing and decrease in depth from bottom to top. This shape allowed the reinforcement of each unit to be bolted to that of the one above from within the building, which had to be erected without scaffolding due to space restrictions, and also enabled rainwater to be thrown clear of the structure without use of flashings. Thermal expansion joints are expressed between each mullion. Above the top storey is an open viewing gallery with the words 'CENTRE POINT' in neon-lit capital letters running along either side; these are a later addition. Above is a zig-zag cornice which projects to the building edge and has a faceted edge, picking up the rhythm of the structural frame below. The tower is supported on distinctive paired 'wasp-waisted' pilotis, eight in number. These are slightly faceted and clad in grey glazed mosaic tiles; those to upper facet in contrasting darker mottled grey.

LINK: this is supported on mosaic-clad pilotis to either side of the roadway. The underside has the exposed soffit of the inner staircase. Full-height armour-plate glazed curtain walls to both levels with steel patch-plates at intersections. The set-back clerestory has a very shallow pitched central apex.

EAST BLOCK: former bank at N end with original frontage; shops along W elevation with later shop fronts (not of special interest), together with the entrance to the maisonettes. Utilitarian service bays on east elevation to Earnshaw St. South end of the block has a remodelled pub front at ground floor (not of special interest). Above is a 2-storey tier containing offices. This is of equal height to the link, and is accentuated by a pre-cast concrete brise-soleil to E and W elevations forming a staggered rectangular pattern in front of the recessed windows (the S end is glazed). The upper level, placed above a set-back intermediary space, comprises a contrasting 6-storey section with 3 tiers of projecting rectangular balconies faced in grey geometric mosaic, alternating with sections of metal-framed curtain wall glazing with opaque glass panels beneath the windows. At either end of the block is a glazed stair compartment.

INTERIORS: the majority of the office, retail and residential interiors lack special interest. The following are of note, however: TOWER: the main entrance, originally at mezzanine level accessed by the external staircase, is now in the glazed entrance hall on the ground floor created in 2000; the lobby is thus now on two levels linked by a stair installed in 2000. The lobby is paved in a distinctive manner with alternating long-and-short strips of white marble mosaic tiles set within a field of black terrazzo. The space is dominated by the exposed upper sections of the pilotis. At either end of the tower are granite-faced lift shafts, and a staircase with balustrades of thick cast-glass sheets set below heavy metal handrails. The rest of the tower comprises functional offices which were designed to be adapted, as has been the case, and is not of special interest. The only exception is the surviving staircase between the 31st and 32nd floors, which was intended to serve a restaurant (which was never installed).

LINK: a stair with heavy timber staggered handrails leads up to link; at its foot is a pair of copper-clad columns. The main space to the link has a central longitudinal mezzanine floor accessed by open stair at W end, and modern ramp at E. Mosaic floor matches that of tower lobby. Curtain-wall glazing on each side has a series of tapering glass fins which project upwards to the ceiling from the central steel patch-plates. Along each wall is a timber cill carried on a series of glass cross walls aligned with the glazed panels above; mezzanine has balustrades of similar design. At the E end is a further stair to the upper level of offices in the east block; mosaic floor to lobby.

EAST BLOCK: the former bank has a mosaic floor matching those of the tower lobby and link. Mezzanine level has a glazed timber balustrade, similar to that of link, supported on concrete piers clad in grey mosaic tiles. On the stair wall is an openwork sculptural metal relief by Jupp Dernbach-Mayen depicting banking motifs, currently (2012) in storage pending conservation work; on wall behind is a decorative panel of red and gold mosaic tiles on a grey tile background. The pub, shops, offices at intermediary level, and maisonettes above, are without internal features of note and lack special interest.

### **Assessment of heritage importance in reference Unit R07**

Unit R07 is offered in shell condition with newly installed shopfront and contains no elements listed or of architectural or historic interest. The listing is therefore not relevant to the application site

## Planning History

A planning history search identifies the a plethora of planning application and approval of details in relation to the Centre Point Building all of which are available on the Local Authority Web site and which the planning officers will be more than familiar with.

## Application proposal

This application is for Listed Building Consent for internal fit out of a shell retail unit for the incoming tenant, Black Sheep Coffee.

The application does not seek permission to the exterior of the building in any way with the proposed works being contained within the building envelope.

The unit is to be offered in shell condition with new glazed shopfront with louvre panels over. The internal floor and ceilings are newly cast concrete and the internal walls newly erected stud and block-work.

The proposed internal fit out is detailed on the accompanying drawings and the proposals include minor modifications to newly installed internal partitions, the installation of internal fixtures and fittings including signage. The unit is to subject to new electrical and plumbing installations.

The unit benefits from access to landlord services within the building including cycle storage, WC's and shower rooms and refuse storage. Due to the diminutive nature of the application site, WC accommodation is not proposed within the unit with staff utilising the communal facilities.

The unit will provide takeaway coffee along with a small selection of ancillary chilled and ambient foods. A customer WC is therefore not required.

## Design approach

The proposed design features and structural steel frame with timber and steel mesh infill panels forming counters, storage and display. The steelwork construction enables long spans to the structural elements thereby maximising site line in to the unit and .

## Layout

The layout of the unit is dictated by the equipment requirements of the incoming tenant. Level access is provided via an existing set of inward opening double doors from St Giles Street. No modifications are to be made to the doors. The internal floor level is to be made up to be level with the external pavement height.



## Appearance

The proposals are for an internal fit out only, however, due to the position of the site and the predominance of full height glazing to the facade the internal fit out will be highly visible in particular from the passageway linking St Giles and Centre Point square.

The proposed method of construction will mean that the structure will be demountable and can easily be removed at the end of the lease term.

The wide spans on the steelwork frame minimise the impact on the glazing and allow for access to the glazing for cleaning.

The scheme is dramatic but practical and meets the operation requirements of the incoming tenant.

## Heritage

The application site is within a building which is subject to a Grade II listing.

The application site however has no listed features or specific elements of historic or architectural interest.

Accordingly the proposals are judged to have no adverse impact and will cause less than substantial harm to the listed building.

The internal works seek to install fixtures and finishes to enable a visual impressive and operationally robust fit out of the retail unit.

## Benefits of the proposal

No elements of the unit are considered listed features or are of architectural interest.

The proposed fit out is demountable and can be removed at the end of the tenant's lease term without interference with the historic fabric of the building.

The design is of high quality, visually appealing and communicates the Black Sheep Coffee brand.

The opening of a Black Sheep Coffee outlet will add to the vibrancy of the area whilst providing additional employment and offering a premium coffee offering to residents, visitors and local workers.

## Summary

The application seeks Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to Unit R07 at the Ground Floor level of Centre Point.

The application site which faces on St Giles Street has no elements internally which are listed or are of historical or architectural interest.

The plans and statement demonstrate that the proposed internal works will not have any detrimental impact on the listed building, and it is therefore requested that Listed Building Consent is granted,