

LABS HOLBORN ESTATE

SICILIAN AVENUE

Units 2-4-6 and 29 Southampton Row

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the initial proposals for works to the corner unit known as 2, 4, 6 Sicilian Avenue and 29 Southampton Row. These are two existing retail units, part of the historic development of Sicilian Avenue in Holborn.

Listed building consent is sought for minor internal works to the basement and ground floor of the retail units, in order to link them and upgrade the premises. The limited size and constrained shape of the units have proved difficult to let in recent years. Several units on Sicilian Avenue, besides the subject site, are currently empty. There are no historic or architectural features of interest at either level.

The proposals seek to retain the existing planning uses (class A1 & A3) updating the interiors and adding internal openings, to enhance the space quality of the existing restaurant.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sicilian Avenue was designed for the Duke of Bedford in 1906 by the architect R.J. Worley; it was completed in 1910. It was created as a pedestrianized shopping street, linking Southampton Row and Vernon Place, with a Classical screen of 3 Ionic columns on plinths carrying an entablature topped with a balustrade at both ends.

The buildings are made of red brick with white terracotta dressings, five stories high over shops on either side of the arcade.

In 1975 planning permission was granted for the erection of a new extension at roof level to the north side of the avenue, where the subject site is located, to provide 4 residential units and ancillary plant rooms, the erection of an extension to the building on all floors within the existing light-well, the provision of new shopfronts and a new office entrance.

The interior of 31 Southampton Row in general has been refurbished in recent years, losing most of its character and historic features. The space can be defined as a generic contemporary interior. The upper floors are used as offices, while the top floor – although currently vacant - is used as residential accommodation with access through the office reception.

Units 2-4 have been merged already to no. 6 and 27 Southampton Row through application 2007/1201/L. The proposal included the repositioning of the basement stair and internal strip out of shop fittings, removal of security grills, repair and cleaning of shopfront.

The heritage significance (or its special architectural and historic interest) of the listed building now lies almost fully in its external appearance and the architectural design of its facades, and in the evident contribution that it makes to the character and appearance of Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

PROPOSALS

Careful consideration of the heritage of the site was fundamental during the design of the proposals. The intention is to not only preserve, but to future-proof the Avenue, and keep it thriving as a rich, historic streetscape.

Although the Grade II listing of Sicilian House focuses on the external appearance of the Avenue, internal alterations have been carefully considered in their historical context.

The current proposal is to remove some of the modern partitions and creating two new openings in the basement to improve the layout at this level, to introduce a new opening in the wall between the units a ground floor, to relocate the existing ground floor toilet to create a DDA ambulant one, and to generally refurbish and redecorate the site.

The openings proposed seek to increase the functionality of the units whilst respecting the existing historical fabric. Careful consideration has been given to the size of the openings and their locations. The external appearance will remain unchanged, and the interior spaces will retain their inherent separation.

The new opening between units 2-4-6 and 29 Southampton Row will result in better flow and occupation of the spaces, given the complicated nature of the triangular site, ensuring that the restaurant can operate successfully. The openings will be located between structural columns; they will be of a maximum width of 2.5 metres, so the units will not become open plan.

Access and stairs, both of the later modern features, will remain as existing.

Historically Sicilian Avenue was arranged to suit very small retail vendors. Over time units have been evolved to suit the demands of tenants. Openings between units have been created in numerous cases, and redundant staircases have been removed. This has allowed for a more successful utilisation of internal space. As the openings have remained modest in relation to the scale of the rooms, the external appearance of cellularization has not been compromised, and the avenue continue to look as it did originally.

USE

Unit 2-4-6 has been in A3 use for several years. Patisserie Valerie occupied the site between 2009 and 2017; the unit has remained vacant since 29/12/2017.

29 Southampton Row last tenant was RG Lewis, an independent camera store, which closed on 25/09/2015.

The existing uses will be retained.



2-4-6 in 2016



29 SHR in 2015

AMOUNT

The proposals subject of this application do not add any internal or external built areas. There will be no increase in the existing square footage of the building.

LAYOUT

The proposed layout retains the principal walls, creates one opening between 2-4-6 Sicilian Ave and 29 Southampton Row at ground floor and two at basement level, relocates the ground floor toilet to 29 Southampton Row to convert it into DDA ambulant compliant, removes two later partitions in the basement to reorganise and improve the internal distribution of the units.

SCALE AND APPEARANCE

No change is proposed to the external appearance and scale of the listed building.

LANDSCAPING

There are no open spaces requiring landscaping within this application.

HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

Significance Assessment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines 'Significance' as 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'. 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment', describes instead a range of heritage values, arranged in four groups, which may be attached to places as follows:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Sicilian Avenue is listed as a shopping parade with offices above. As such, its main value is placed on their historic and architectural contribution to the area at large. The interior of the building has been largely altered and stripped of original features.

The significance of the avenue as a whole is considered high, given the role the complex has played in the character of this particular area of Holborn since its inception at the beginning of the 20th century.

1. Proposed works and impact on the significance of Sicilian Avenue

The proposals aim to merge and refurbish two units on the north side of the shopping parade. The works include:

- a. Connecting units 2-4-6 and 29. The openings at ground and basement levels are proposed between structural columns and are of relatively modest size in relation to the scale of the room. The retail units would retain their cellular appearance as the separating walls would remain mostly intact. The new openings will optimise the use of space therefore expanding the retail offer and granting continuity of use to the currently semi-vacant units.
- b. Relocation of toilet at ground floor. The new location will allow to provide the premises with a DDA ambulant toilet, currently lacking. No historical features will be affected by these works.
- c. Removal of redundant fittings and services. None of the existing fittings or decorations are of heritage value, therefore the removals are considered to not cause any impact on the significance of the asset.

All the works will be carried out under strict conservation standards.

Research and professional judgement have been used to determine the significance of the assets. The values have been defined using the following grading scale:

VERY HIGH/HIGH: Elements belonging to the original concept and design, fundamental part of the building typology and contributing to its townscape presence. These parts should be retained.

MEDIUM: Internal elements that belong to the original structure, concept and design and still possess some original features, i.e. possible remains of fireplaces. This category also comprises those ensembles that represent very good surviving examples of spatial organization of the original structure. For these parts alterations, changes or removals have to be treated with particular attention.

LOW OR NEGLIGIBLE: Internal elements that remain from the original plan-form but do not have any value per-se and, due to later alterations, have lost their contextual meaning. These parts can be removed according to new design decisions.

The impact of the proposed works on the individual architectural elements was assessed following the BS 7913:2013 table 'Magnitude of impact plotted against value'; the magnitude of the impact may be either adverse or beneficial.

VALUE	VERY HIGH	NEUTRAL	SLIGHT	MODERATE/LARGE	LARGE/VERY LARGE	VERY LARGE
	HIGH	NEUTRAL	SLIGHT	SLIGHT/MODERATE	MODERATE/LARGE	LARGE/VERY LARGE
	MEDIUM	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL/SLIGHT	SLIGHT	MODERATE	MODERATE/LARGE
	LOW	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL/SLIGHT	NEUTRAL/SLIGHT	SLIGHT	SLIGHT/MODERATE
	NEGLIGIBLE	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL/SLIGHT	NEUTRAL/SLIGHT	SLIGHT
	NO CHANGE	NEGLIGIBLE	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	
MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT						

The schedule lists some of the existing and altered elements remaining in the building, which are probably original or later work of architectural interest and significance. It is not intended to be fully

comprehensive, but to give sufficient guidance on the preparation of proposals for repair and alteration.

Summary Impact appraisal of Works

Note: Principal works only. This is not a fully detailed schedule of works.

UNIT	PROPOSED INTERVENTION	IMPACT
Unit 2-4-6	New opening to No 29 at Ground Floor	MODERATE/LARGE
No 29	New opening to Unit 2-4-6 at Ground Floor	MODERATE/LARGE
Unit 2-4-6	New opening to No 29 at Basement level plus additional opening in middle wall	MODERATE
No 29	New opening to Unit 2-4-6 at Basement level	MODERATE
No 29	New DDA toilet at Ground Floor	SLIGHT

Although the impact of the proposed opening between the units is considered moderate to large, the benefit of increasing the letting opportunities of these long-term vacant units is considered to justify the intervention.

Historic England Conservation Principles accepts that change is part of the life of heritage assets: 'Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people's responses to social, economic and technological change'. We believe that the proposed works are necessary to facilitate the full occupancy of the building in the short and long term, and the impact is considered generally beneficial.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides supplementary information about the extent of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage assets affected in accordance with National and Local Policies.

Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act - Section 66 & 72

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the decision maker shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possess. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also provides that, in respect of development affecting conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

- No changes are proposed to the exterior of the units; therefore, the character and appearance of the building and conservation area will not be affected. No historic or architectural features of interest have remained internally at either level.
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126 - Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

128 - In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance [...]

131 - In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

132 - When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. [...]

134 - Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

- The units have been vacant for over one and three years; the successful reopening of the restaurant will contribute substantially to the revitalisation of the avenue, and therefore to the economic vitality of the area.
- No external works are proposed, hence there will be no impact on the exterior fabric of the building and the character of conservation area as a whole.
- It is our belief that the new layout reorganization will lead to a most effective use of the units, therefore securing their future.

The London Plan defines the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years.

Policy 7.8 - Heritage assets and archaeology

Strategic

A - London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.

B - Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.

Planning decisions

C - Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

D - Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

E - New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.

Supporting text

4.29 - London's built and landscape heritage provides a depth of character that has immeasurable benefit to the city's economy, culture and quality of life. [...] Ensuring the identification and sensitive management of

London's heritage assets in tandem with promotion of the highest standards of modern architecture will be key to maintaining the blend of old and new that gives the capital its unique character.

4.30 - Crucial to the preservation of this character is the careful protection and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and their settings. [...]

7.31A - Substantial harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset should be exceptional, with substantial harm to or loss of those assets designated of the highest significance being wholly exceptional. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimal viable use. [...]

- It is considered that the proposed openings and internal refurbishment of the units will bring new possibilities for their use; and given the lack of historical features, no significant harm will be caused to the heritage asset*

Draft New London Plan

Consultation for the Draft New London Plan ran from 1 December 2017 to 2 March 2018. The Examination in Public (EiP) is targeted for autumn 2018, and adoption of the plan in autumn 2019. Although not yet adopted, the Draft Plan policies are a material consideration as they hold weight, albeit limited weight, in decisions going forward. As such the proposal has taken into account the Draft Plan policies. Policy HC1 Heritage Conservation and Growth

(c) Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings, should also be actively managed. Development proposals should seek to avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

(d) Development proposals should identify assets of archaeological significance and use this information to avoid harm or minimise it through design and appropriate mitigation. Where applicable, development should make provision for the protection of significant archaeological assets and landscapes. The protection of undesignated heritage assets of archaeological interest equivalent to a scheduled monument should be given equivalent weight to designated heritage assets.

Supporting Text

7.1.3 Ensuring the identification and sensitive management of London's heritage assets in tandem with promotion of the highest standards of modern architecture will be essential to maintaining the blend of old and new that gives the capital its unique character.

7.1.7 Heritage significance can be represented in an asset's form, scale, materials and architectural detail and, where relevant, the historic relationships between heritage assets. Development that affects the settings of heritage assets should respond positively to the assets' significance, local context and character to protect the contribution that settings make to the assets' significance. In particular, consideration will need to be given to impacts from development that is not sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, details and form.

Camden Local Plan 2017

The Camden Local Plan sets out the Council's planning policies and replaces the Core Strategy and Development Policies planning documents adopted in 2010. The Local Plan will cover the period from 2016-2031.

Policy D2 Heritage

The Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens and locally listed heritage assets.

Designated heritage assets

Designated heritage assets include conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas and Listed Buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss [...]

Policy D2 Listed Buildings

To preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings, the Council will:

i. resist the total or substantial demolition of a listed building;

j. resist proposals for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building; and

k. resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

- The proposals have been designed taking in consideration the above policies and guidance. The significance of the assets has been assessed according to BS 7913:2013, and the Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment, HE 2008.
- It is our belief that the proposals are generally beneficial, improving the condition of a valuable heritage asset, and granting the building a suitable use hence safeguarding the significance that the shopping parade holds for present and future generations.
- It is considered that the proposed alterations do not affect the special interest of the building; the level of proposed intervention is acceptable in conservation terms and is substantiated by the research undertaken.

APPENDIX I

PROPOSED DRAFT SCOPE OF WORKS - UNITS 2-4-6 Sicilian Avenue and 29 Southampton Row

Ground Floor:

- All redundant services to be removed
- Remove existing fitted furniture and modern wall panelling. Wall surface made good to receive paint finish.
- Remove wall shelving and make good plastered walls.
- Remove all surface fittings including mirrors etc. to all areas.
- Check all services to be retained for continued use and ensure compliance with current regulations.
- Check existing smoke detection system for continued use and ensure compliance with current Building Regulations requirement.
- Existing light fittings to be checked for continued use, repair, clean and re-bulb as necessary.
- Check all door ironmongery for continued use.
- Prepare all walls/ceilings/skirting to receive paint finish.
- Form new opening between Units 2-4-6 and 29.
- Dismantle existing toilet, make good and rebuild in unit 29.
- Make good opening with matching plaster surround and prepare for paint finish.

Basement Level:

- Remove all redundant cables/conduits/wall mounted electrical panels etc.
- Remove all existing floor finishes within the units.
- Check pavement lights for leaks and repair as necessary.
- Check existing mechanical ducted supply/extract system for continued use.
- Check existing smoke detection system for continued use and ensuring it compliance with current regulations.
- Check existing gas service and meter for the units for re-use by tenant (TBC).
- Prepare all existing surfaces and to receive paint finish.
- Make good all openings in wall/ceilings where redundant services have been removed.
- Form two new access openings to Unit 29.

APPENDIX II

LIST ENTRY

Historic Information

NUMBERS 25-35 AND 35A AND ATTACHED SCREEN TO SICILIAN AVENUE

List Entry Summary

List entry Number: 1378787

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-May-1974

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3081NW SOUTHAMPTON ROW 798-1/100/1480 (West side) 14/05/74 Nos.25-35 AND 35A (Odd) and attached screen to Sicilian Avenue

GV II

Shopping parade with offices, formerly flats, over, forming the north-east return to Sicilian Avenue (qv). 1906-10. By RJ Worley. For the Bedford Estate. Red brick with white terracotta dressings and 1st floor. EXTERIOR: 5 storeys 8-window bays plus a 4-storey tourelle, with 2 light transom and mullion windows, from 2nd floor level on the left hand return to Sicilian Avenue. Ground floor with later C20 shopfronts separated by Corinthian columns on plinths carrying an entablature with plain terracotta frieze at 2nd floor level. Pilasters at angles. 1st floor with square-headed 4-light casement windows. 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors some canted 5-light bay windows and some groups of square-headed windows, all with terracotta transoms and mullions. All windows with small, leaded panes, some with shields. Central pedimented gable with, to either side oriels rising from the 3rd floor. Modillion cornice. The 4th storey of the tourelle is above the cornice and topped with a conical roof. INTERIORS: not inspected. Attached to No.25 is a Classical screen across Sicilian Avenue. 3 Ionic columns on plinths carrying an entablature with the words "Sicilian Avenue" on the frieze, surmounted by a balustrade with urns on the 2 central piers. Nos 25-35 (odd) and 35A Southampton Row form a homogeneous development with Nos 1-29 (odd) and 6-20 (even) Sicilian Avenue (qqv), Nos 15-23 (odd) Southampton Row (qv) and Nos 1-6 (consec) Vernon Place (qv). (Harwood E and Saint A: Exploring England's Heritage, London: -1991: 121-22).

Tng Listing NGR: TQ3045681639