

Delegated Report

Expiry Date:

28/02/2019

Officer

Application Number(s)

Matthias Gentet

2019/0034/A

Application Address

Application Type:

251 Tottenham Court Road
London
W1T 7RB

Advertisement Consent

1st Signature

2nd Signature
(If refusal)

Conservation

Recommendation(s):

Refuse Advertisement Consent

Proposal(s)

Display of an internally illuminated projecting sign.

Consultations

Summary of consultation responses:

An objection from Bloomsbury Association was received, summarised as follow:

- This proposal fails to meet the issues described in sections 8.5-8.9 inclusive, 8.11-8.14 inclusive, 8.17 and 8.19 of CPG1 (Design).
- In our view, 'public safety' is not an issue in this instance. 'Amenity' is.
- The proposal makes no reference to the six-storey high illuminated public art installation commissioned by Camden Council from the developer and now implemented on the upper floors of the entire Bedford Avenue facade. While the proposed signage will be much smaller, it is difficult to judge comparative levels of illumination and it could well be that the proposed illuminated signage on Tottenham Court Road could conflict with and damage the amenity of the public art, particularly when viewed from the south, at night.
- The projecting sign would have a harmful impact on the architectural integrity and visual amenity of the host building.
- When granted planning permission, considerable care went into the quality and detailing of the stone frame and metal cladding components of 1 Bedford Avenue, which are carefully complemented by the public art installation. The proposed signage disregards this.
- The projecting signs should be omitted and it would be good to see signage design guidelines imposed by the building manager to restrict other shops from doing the same.
- Although reference is made to the proposal being in keeping with other signs existing elsewhere on the street, Tottenham Court Road is renowned for its tat, something the Council's West End Project is endeavouring to alleviate. There are no similar signs on this building. Reference should be made to application 2017/4502/A for the shop Ole & Steen occupying Unit 4 in the same building. This originally included a projecting sign but this was omitted during pre-application discussions prior to the application's approval.
- Reference should also be made to the approved proposals for the redevelopment of 251-258 Tottenham Court Road and 1 Bedford Avenue (2013/3880/P). It should be noted that the computer-generated images provided in support of the application do not show projecting shop signage on the elevation to Tottenham Court Road.

Site Description

The application site comprises an 8-storey building plus basement located on the north-eastern side of Tottenham Court Road, on the corner with Bedford Avenue. It accommodates a mixture of uses including retail at ground floor level. It's located in close proximity to St Giles Circus – forming the junction with Tottenham Court Road, New Oxford Street, Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road to the south.

Although the site is not in a conservation area, it is adjacent to Hanway Street Conservation Area and can be seen in views from within it.

Relevant History

Site History:

2017/4052/A – (granted on 22/08/2017) - Display of internally illuminated lettering fascia sign.

2014/6843/P – (granted on 06/05/2015) - Variation of condition 4 (approved plans) of planning permission ref: 2013/3880/P dated 20 December 2013 for the erection of an eight storey building plus basement level for a mixed use development comprising retail use (Class A1) at part basement and ground floor levels and office use (Class B1) at part ground and first to seventh floor levels with associated plant in basement and roof, following complete demolition of existing retail/office buildings at 1 Bedford Avenue and 251-258 Tottenham Court Road. (namely for the creation of accessible terraces at 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th floor levels on Morwell Street serving offices).

2013/3880/P – (granted on 20/09/2013) - Erection of an eight storey building plus basement level for a mixed use development comprising retail use (Class A1) at part basement and ground floor levels and office use (Class B1) at part ground and first to seventh floor levels with associated plant in basement and roof, following complete demolition of existing retail/office buildings at 1 Bedford Avenue and 251-258 Tottenham Court Road. [THIS APPLICATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH A CONCURRENT APPLICATION AT 24-25 BLOOMSBURY SQUARE REF: 2013/3881/P].

Within 251 Tottenham Court Road

Unit (Samsonite)

2017/5952/A – (granted on 20/12/2017) - Display of internally illuminated fascia sign (lettering only) on Tottenham Court Road elevation.

Unit 2 (Hema)

2017/5067/A – (granted on 04/12/2017) - Display of internally illuminated (lettering only) fascia sign fronting Tottenham Court Road.

Unit 4 (Ole & Steen)

2017/4502/A – (granted on 17/08/2017) - Display of 1 x internally illuminated fascia sign (lettering only) on Tottenham Court Road elevation and 1 x non-illuminated fascia sign on the Bedford Avenue elevation.

Relevant Enforcement Site History:

EN18/0903 - Installation of obscure film to rear of shop unit in breach of condition 15 of planning permission 2013/3880/P – Ongoing.

Adjacent Sites History:

No49 Tottenham Court Road

2011/4639/A – (**refused** on 14/11/2011) - Display of 1x internally illuminated fascia sign and 1x internally illuminated projecting sign at ground floor level in connection with existing shop (Class A1).

Reasons for Refusal:

The proposed fascia sign and projecting sign by virtue of their size, design, positioning and illumination are considered to cause demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the host building, the Tottenham Court Road streetscene and the Charlotte Street conservation area, contrary to policy CS14 (promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy; and policy DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

The London Plan 2016

Camden Local Plan 2017

D1 – Design

D2 – Heritage

D4 - Advertisements

Camden Planning Guidance 2015 (as amended)

CPG1 (Design) – Chapter 2, 3 & 7

Camden Planning Guidance 2018 (as amended)

CPG (Advertisements)

Fitzrovia Area Action Plan Adopted March 2014

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007

1. Proposal and Background

- 1.1 Advertisement Consent is sought for the display of an internally illuminated projecting sign on the left hand side of the grille at fascia level.
- 1.2 The site is one of the units occupying the ground floor part of the building erected in 2016/2017 following approval of the redevelopment of the site referred to as at 251-255 Tottenham Court Road and 1 Bedford Avenue under application reference: 2014/6843/P [See Relevant History above]. The building is of a high quality contemporary design providing a mixture of uses – including retail (Class A1) at ground floor level and office (Class B1) at part ground and upper floors.
- 1.3 The host building has been designed as a single piece of architecture. It has a calm, restrained approach to its detailed design which balances with more expression at shopfront level. . Each of the units are identified by identical shopfronts consisting of a projecting patinated zinc surround, central to the commercial unit elevation, framing window displays on either side with stall risers, double doors entrance with fan light in the middle and louvre grills spanning across the top at fascia level. Internally illuminated fascia signs are displayed within a designated fascia signage area all approved under the relevant consent as listed above in the Relevant History section.

2. Assessment

- 2.1 The principle considerations in the determination of the application are:
- Visual Amenity (Design and Heritage)
 - Public Safety

3. Visual Amenity (Design and Heritage)

- 3.1 Policy D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that '*Advertisements and signs should be designed to be complementary to and preserve the character of the host building and local area. The size, location, materials, details and illumination of signs must be carefully considered.*' The policy further states that '*The Council will resist advertisements where they contribute to or constitute clutter or an unsightly proliferation of signage.*'
- 3.2 Camden Planning Guidance CPG (Advertisements) also states that '*Good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As a general guide, the most satisfactory advertisements are those which take into account the character and design of the property, its surroundings and alter the external fabric of the host building as little as possible.*'
- 3.3 The proposed projecting sign would be affixed to the fascia area parallel to the fascia sign. Although its chosen location would be in line with CPG 1 (Design) which states that projecting and hanging signs should normally be level with the fascia, its display on this shopfront is considered to undermine the architectural integrity of the wider building and uniform shopfronts. There are currently no other projecting signs on the ground floor commercial elevation of the building which comprises five shopfronts in total. Allowing the introduction of such a feature in a piecemeal fashion would create visual clutter and undermine the quality of the building. The signage is therefore considered to be harmful to the uniformity and design of the host building and the wider commercial frontage, contrary to policy D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 3.4 Although the size and style of illumination are typically appropriate for a sign of this nature this does not overcome the in principle objection to a projecting sign in this particular location.

3.5 It must be noted that Tottenham Court Road suffers from numerous unauthorised displays of fascia and projecting signs that have had a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the streetscene. The West End Project, currently underway, is a Council-led scheme seeking to declutter the area and create an improved public realm

4. Public Safety

4.1 Policy D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that with the impact upon public safety with regards to road and highways users should be considered. Advertisements will not be considered acceptable where they result in glare and dazzle or distract road users because of their unusual nature, disrupt the free flow of pedestrians or endanger pedestrians.

4.2 The proposed illumination is typical to this style of signage on commercial frontages and would not result in a level of illuminance that is significant enough to be cause for concerns for the safety of the public. As such, the method of illumination is considered acceptable.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The projecting sign, by virtue of its location on a run of shopfronts free from any other projecting signage, would be an unsympathetic and incongruous addition that is harmful to the uniformity and design of the host building and the wider commercial frontage contrary to policy D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Refuse Advertisement Consent.