



info@CoventGarden.org.uk

www.CoventGarden.org.uk

Thomas Sild
Planning Officer
Regeneration and Planning
Supporting Communities
London Borough of Camden
Floor 2, 5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG

via: Thomas.Sild@Camden.gov.uk
& Planning@Camden.gov.uk

6th March 2020

Dear Thomas,

Re revised scheme for infill and redevelopment at 3-11 Shorts Gardens WC2H 9AT, ref. 2020-0275-P

Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA), as you are aware, has not been supportive of past ideas to infill the space at 3 - 5 Shorts Gardens to a level as extensive as 3 storeys high (comprising ground, first and second floors). We feel that any infill here above first floor level would be overdevelopment in a corner of Seven Dials that is already intensely crowded and shaded, particularly in relation to dwellings at 37-41 Monmouth Street.

Seven Dials Court was designed around the existing extent of the structure, and neighbours will suffer from any increase in mass. Increased mass will increase shade and overlooking to dwellings there, and to dwellings opposite at 10 Shorts Gardens. Increased height will result in loss of character to the street elevation. Increased use will intensify activity beneath dwellings.

CGCA is, however, supportive of solutions to 'design out' the security and safety issues that relate to the steep open stairway entrance to Seven Dials Court, and to the open entranceway to the restaurant next door.

The current context is that consent has been granted for an infill scheme (most recently in 2017 under 2016/6916/P). Prior to consent being granted the scheme was revised to a design more sympathetic to the older neighbouring building at 1 Short Gardens.

The new 2020 scheme, ref. 2020/0275/P, retains some of the features of the previous scheme and develops it more extensively at the rear. This development includes redistributing commercial uses and creating two new 1-bedroom dwellings.

In view of consent having been already granted for some infill and development at this site, CGCA is generally supportive of the 2020 application, as we feel that it improves on the consented scheme in some respects.

We have the following comments to make which are specific to the new application, including some requests for revisions and conditions:

1. We support the general pattern of the external design on the Shorts Gardens elevation, being more sympathetic than the consented scheme. Use of reclaimed brick, and of timber elements, are welcome.
2. We support the division of 2 commercial units on Shorts Gardens into 3 smaller units, more suitable for the context of this conservation area.
3. We support the redistribution of residential, retail and restaurant uses, particularly the switch from restaurant to residential at new Flat 14a in Seven Dials Court. However, we also support comments of residents in relation to the increase in pressure on the courtyard in the context of the consent for more retail units under 2019/2239/P, and ask you to consider ways in which this can be mitigated.

We believe that 2019/2239/P should be reconsidered in tandem with the current consideration of 2020/0275/P, with a view to reducing the total number of units accessed via the communal courtyard.

4. In order to protect residential amenity we ask that a condition be attached to any consented retail units so as to restrict hours of use to:
 - 8am to 9pm Monday – Friday
 - 9am to 9pm Saturday and
 - 10am to 8pm Sunday.

This will go some way to protect against problems that have emerged with intensification of the West End, where, without conditions, previously quiet retail units may turn into busy grocery outlets or cafes which are far more problematic for residents living above and opposite.

5. In order to protect residential amenity we ask that a condition be attached to the retail units excluding any future change of use from A1 to A3 or to A4 notwithstanding any permitted development rights to the contrary now or in the future.
6. While we support dispensing with plant and equipment that the applicant has allowed to fall into disrepair and which causes nuisance, we do not support the extent to which it is proposed to be replaced under this application.

We ask that the council request further revisions to minimise the use of air handling equipment in accordance with its Climate Action Plan and related policies.

We also ask that no units be placed outside, and that the restaurant be required by condition to use a recirculating extraction system. There are a number of these now operating within other A3 premises in the Covent Garden area.

If any external plant is really required as part of air handling in this development then we ask that:

- a) it be housed in acoustic boxes and
 - b) none be located at a high level (for example, above flat 14) but be lowered to a position where it is unobtrusive.
7. We support comments made by residents around the need for some redesign of the entrance to Seven Dials Court and the ground floor area, including:
 - a) eliminating such a tight turn inside the front door,
 - b) creating more accessible cycle storage and
 - c) including more user-friendly and secure cycle racks.
 8. We support comments made by residents in relation to enforceable conditions on their exclusive use of the refuse area, and ask that this be included in any consent. The current refuse arrangements have

been fraught with difficulty for years, despite the applicant’s repeated commitment to sort them out and to prevent abuse by commercial neighbours who show little regard for those who live nearby.

9. We support comments made by residents requesting this work to extend to elements that will ‘tidy up’ the site, including:
 - a) replacement of outdated and/or unsightly emergency lighting elements and ducting,
 - b) removal of unnecessary signs and
 - c) removal of duplicate mailboxes. We ask that you include a requirement for these to be completed in any consent.

10. We object to any increase in height above the consented scheme. We are not sure from the drawings if this is the case, but comparing the two elevations implies that it may be (see comparative extracts from drawings below). If there is a proposed increase in height then we ask that this be looked at again - with a view to reducing it to the level of the consented scheme at least.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Bax
 Chair, Planning Subcommittee

Illustration relating to point 10, comparing heights of consented scheme and new proposals:

