

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/0482/P	Covent Garden Community Association (Elizabeth Bax, Chair of Planning Subcommittee)	05/04/2020 22:53:40	OBJNOT	<p>Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) strongly objects to this application on the grounds of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inappropriate design which damages a historic building and does not enhance the conservation area. 2. Harm to residential amenity. 3. Danger to pedestrians. <p>We also object to the quality of the applicant's documentation, which is amongst the poorest that we have seen submitted by professional advisors. We ask that you require the applicant to provide revisions.</p> <p>For example, the drawings do not include all dimensions (eg: depth of balcony) or details such as the location / design / materials of hinges. There is not even a full picture of the proposed first floor door. Further, the Planning & Heritage statement does little more than assert that the design is acceptable in the opinion of the applicant, and quote areas of policy - without linking the two to show how the design is acceptable in light of policy.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>1. Design</p> <p>The site at 142 Shaftesbury Avenue was built as the 'Marquis of Granby' public house in the 1880's, and retained that name for 125 years. The applicant calls it 'Marqis of Graby', which is incorrect, and pays no tribute the popular military figure after whom retired soldiers from his regiment named their pubs.</p> <p>The building was designed by Wylson & Long (see, for example, The Survey of London, vol. 33). This architectural partnership was responsible for many famous theatres and variety halls of the time, notably the palatial Alhambra complex at Blackpool. Sadly, the only Wylson & Long theatre that remains in London is the Tottenham Palace, itself considered a 'building at risk' by the Theatres Trust. The only other pub, though, that we can find designed by them was the Cock Tavern, nearby at 134 Shaftesbury Avenue; it was demolished last century.</p> <p>Shaftesbury Avenue was built between 1877 and 1886, cutting through the old Georgian slums of Soho, St. Giles and Covent Garden to Bloomsbury (the area had not been slums prior to that). New buildings were commissioned all along it, and number 142 is one of the few that survive at the Covent Garden end. The tender to build the public house there was published in 'The Builder' in 1886.</p> <p>The building is described in the Seven Dials Renaissance Study planning document as a good example, being part of the architecture of Cambridge Circus.</p> <p>The provenance of 142 Shaftesbury Avenue, and its good condition, lead to our surprise that it is not listed in the Conservation Area Statement. We shall ask that it be added.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we ask "why mess with this lovely Victorian building?" No clear reason is given in the application. Some vague statements are made in the Planning & Heritage statement, such as at paragraph</p>

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6.4 where it is claimed that “the alterations will improve viability and significantly enhance the existing public house and surrounding area by further adding to its character and diversity and also supporting the economy”. Yet no figures are given in terms of additional employment or economic growth, and no reason is given as to why the alterations will significantly enhance anything.

On the contrary, it is our contention that the suggested alterations will significantly detract from the building. For example:

- a) The balcony balustrade, which looks as though it would cover a vast length of about 20 metres immediately above the fascia, formed of over 200 black steel uprights each over a metre high, will cut the front of the building in two along almost its entire length. It will also block the bottom of the first floor sash windows, creating a black gash in front of the red brick and white plasterwork. CPG Design 5.17 states that “balconies ... should complement the elevation upon which they are to be located”, which the applicant has failed to show. None of the other buildings in Cambridge Circus, to which it is tied in the Seven Dials Renaissance study, have any such additions.
- b) Access to the balustrade would require removing one of the 7 sash windows at 1st floor level to turn it into a doorway, altering the balance of the building.
- c) 6 additional doors (in the form of 3 double doors) on Shaftesbury Avenue and West Street would require removal of stall risers and creation of a quasi-fully opening frontage on West Street – both in contravention of the Local Plan’s section 7.77. We believe that this frontage falls into the category referred to in policy D3 where “an original shopfront of architectural or historic value survives, in whole or in substantial part, there will be a presumption in favour of its retention”. Again, none of the other buildings in Cambridge Circus, to which it is tied in the Seven Dials Renaissance study, have several adjacent doors as is suggested in this application.

2. Residential amenity

The alterations to the building, in terms of its day-to-day operation as a pub, are likely to lead to loss of residential amenity.

142 Shaftesbury avenue is flanked on both sides by the 17 family flats that make up Cambridge Court. And directly opposite, on narrow West Street, is Gloucester Mansions with 13 flats.

The increase in activity from more than quadrupling the total width of doors at ground floor level, and from creating enough balcony space for 40 vertical outside drinkers at living room level, could not do otherwise than harm the amenity of residents living in these flats.

Regarding the additional doors: again we refer to the Local Plan’s section 7.77, where it is stated that “opening shopfronts will not generally be acceptable, as they can create a void at ground level that can harm the appearance of a building and can also have a negative impact on local amenity, for example in terms of noise and disturbance”. We also refer to the related CPG 6.16, where it is stated that “when folding shopfronts are open, they erode the appearance of the shopfront, creating a visual void, and can increase noise and

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disturbance to the occupiers of neighbouring properties, particularly in the case of food and drink premises". 142 Shaftesbury Avenue is just such a premises. Enabling what is essentially a fully opening front on West Street, which is currently quiet but narrow and echoey, would have just the unwanted effect of increase noise and disturbance envisaged in the planning guidance. The proposals would more than quadruple the total width of doors onto the pavement from the pub.

Regarding the balcony: the applicant states, for example in the Planning & Heritage statement paragraph 6.15 that "the formation of a balcony at the site will provide an opportunity for external space in the City ... the balcony will be accessible to customers during hours of trading of the public house however the applicant is happy to discuss the implementation of appropriate conditions to ensure that there is no adverse impact on residential amenity." We are not sure what the applicant means by 'the City' – perhaps this is residual text from another application. However, it is clear that the applicant acknowledges the potential for harm to residential amenity and has not, in fact, suggested any conditions to ensure that there is no adverse impact. Indeed, we cannot think of any conditions that could do this. The proposals would allow about 40 people to drink outside, a few metres directly across from first floor living room windows on West Street and within very close earshot of many more residential widows next door on Earlham Street.

3. Danger to pedestrians.

The proposed balcony would essentially be built in the public realm.

It is intended for use by drinkers, and possibly smokers. These people would be standing only 2-3 metres directly above the heads of passers-by on the pavement below, with the potential to drop drinks and cigarettes on them.

We would like to see a risk assessment of the proposed situation, and ask that you require one of the applicant.

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I object to the new door being added to the left of the current door that will open on to Shaftesbury Avenue. The applicant does not state why these changes are being made, but the numerous additional doors will make it much easier for patrons of the establishment to spill out on to the streets in front of the doors. While this might not be a significant problem on West Street, which does not have a high volume of pedestrian traffic, it will be a significant problem on the Shaftesbury Avenue frontage, where the pavement is generally overcrowded with pedestrians and is too narrow to accommodate the current level of traffic. Drinkers and smokers outside the establishment already contribute to making this worse and the proposed design would exacerbate this. Given the high level of vehicle traffic on Shaftesbury Avenue, this presents a real potential danger to pedestrians in a neighbourhood where pedestrian volumes are expected to increase as a result of the opening of Crossrail.

I also object to the terrace. The applicant does not state why the terrace is being added, but presumably it is to add space to accommodate additional drinkers and smoking. There is a real risk that pedestrians on the streets below can be hit by falling drinks or cigarettes and thus the proposal is potentially dangerous. The premises itself is a period building, of a similar period to the other buildings that surround Cambridge Circus, which collectively contribute to the grand layout and scale of Cambridge Circus and make a positive contribution to the Seven Dials Conservation Area. None of the other buildings on Cambridge Circus have a balcony like the proposed design, nor do any other buildings in the Seven Dials Conservation Area (whether of a similar period or not). The terrace will look out of place on this period building which was not designed with the terrace in mind, will cause the building to not fit in harmoniously with its neighbouring buildings in the Conservation Area and will thus harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by introducing a discordant element.
