

RL/P08120  
13 April 2021

London Borough of Camden  
Regeneration and Planning  
5 Pancras Square  
London  
N1C 4AG

Dear Sirs

**41-45 NEAL STREET, LONDON, WC2H 9QF**

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A NEW  
SHOPFRONT**

**PLANNING PORTAL REF. PP-09729388**

On behalf of our client, Shaftesbury Covent Garden Limited, we write in support of an application for planning permission to allow for the installation of a new shopfront an at 41-45 Neal Street to allow for the subdivision of the existing single unit to create three new units (Class E).

In order to assist the Council in the determination of this application, we enclose the following documentation which has been submitted electronically online via the Planning Portal:

- Application Form – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*
- Site Location Plan – *prepared by Fresson & Tee*
- Proposed and Existing Drawings – *prepared by Fresson & Tee*
- Photographic Schedule – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*
- CIL Form – *prepared by Rolfe Judd Planning*

The requisite application fee cheque of £234 has been paid online via the Council's website.

Site Description and Location

This application relates to the ground floor, front elevation of 41 – 45 Neal Street. The existing building comprises retail (Use Class E) at basement and ground floor with office (Use Class E) at first, second and third floors. Access to the existing retail accommodation is from Neal Street. Access to the upper floor offices is provided via an existing entrance to the right-hand side of the shopfront. New access has been created from Shorts Gardens as part of the wider refurbishment of the upper floor office accommodation.

The application site is not statutorily listed, however is located within the Seven Dials (Covent

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Garden) Conservation Area. The conservation area appraisal states that the building is identified as neither preserving nor enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, with 'scope' for redevelopment, subject to an acceptable replacement.

#### Relevant Planning History

Planning permission was recently granted in 2019 for the following development:

*"Installation of new shopfront (including minor increase of ground floor retail floor space) and installation of replacement crittall-style windows on upper floors to front elevation of mixed-use retail/office building (use A1/B1a)" (LPA Ref. 2019/1712/P)*

The application scheme allowed the replacement of a poor and unsympathetic modern shopfront and redundant office entrance to create one new, contemporary shopfront to serve the existing retail unit.

In the determination of the application, officers stated the following:

*"The proposed shopfront at ground floor level is considered acceptable for the age and style of the building. The shopfront would feature stall risers with glazing and double leaf glass doors at the centre of the shopfront and a single leaf crittall-style door at one end of the shopfront. A new cornice would also be formed at other end. Overall, the proposed new shopfront is considered to improve the appearance of the building at street level and would not harm the character and appearance of the building".*

*"Overall, the proposed development would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the application building and this part of the Seven Dials Conservation Area... Internally, the alterations include a minor increase in retail floorspace in which the entrance corridor to the office space above is converted to retail space. This change is considered to be de minimis and would not impact the usable office floorspace or the viability of the office space at first floor level".*

The above planning permission has not been implemented, and instead, the applicant now seeks to convert the existing single unit into three separate units with a traditional shopfront design.

#### The Application Proposal

As part of the overall improvement and refurbishment of the premises at 41-45 Neal Street, the applicant seeks to provide for an improved shopfront to the existing building. This includes the subdivision of the existing single unit to create three separate units.

As demonstrated as part of the previous 2019 planning permission, the existing shopfront is of a poor modern design with little consideration to the existing building or surrounding area. As part of the proposal, the existing shopfront would be replaced with three traditional timber and glazed shopfront.

All replacement shopfronts will include a simple cornice and pilaster detail in reference to those adjoining shopfronts (at 39 and 47-49 Neal Street) and across the wider Seven Dials Conservation Area. New fascia signs will be created in timber and painted in a selected colour to be agreed by future incoming tenants.

The existing (and now redundant) office entrance will be removed to allow for improved

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accommodation at ground floor with future access provided Shorts Gardens (following the refurbishment of the upper floor office accommodation). This will improve the streetscene and create a continuous active frontage for retailers.

Please refer to the submitted drawings for further detailed information.

#### Planning Policy Considerations

The proposed works are considered supportive of those local planning policies and supplementary planning guidance as outlined below.

Local Plan Policy D3 (Shopfronts) states that the Council will expect a high standard of design in new and altered shopfronts. Alongside a number of criteria that development should seek to comply with, all proposals should consider the existing character, architectural and historic merit and design of the building and its shopfront.

The Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area Appraisal states that having regards to works relating to shopfronts, 'proposals for new shopfronts will be expected to preserve or enhance the visual character and appearance of the shopping streets, through respect for the proportions, rhythm and form of the original frontages'. In addition, the appraisal identifies Neal Street as having "many surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century timber shopfronts which typically display classical proportions with pilasters supporting entablature and a projecting cornice".

The proposed works would seek to replace the existing modern shopfront and office entrance which together are considered to be unsympathetic to the host building and unduly dominant along the street elevation. The replacement shopfronts would provide unity at ground floor level through the introduction of traditional solid pilasters and fascia banding which would frame the each shopfront and align with the upper floor windows. The proposal would provide a symmetrical and balanced design which responds to the upper levels of the building, whilst include the subtle use of traditional features such as projecting cornices, stallrisers and pilasters. The proposed use of timber would represent a traditional and durable material, as supported by the Conservation Area and Seven Dials Renaissance documents, and importantly, will not detract from the existing building's character, appearance or historic merit.

Having regards to the impact of the proposal upon the overall setting, character and appearance of the Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area, Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas and listed buildings. The proposed shopfronts would seek to enhance the overall appearance of the unit and the surrounding character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed works would form a simple alteration and improvement upon the existing design through the removal of a poor quality shopfront which detracts from the streetscene. The proposed replacement shopfronts are therefore considered to be acceptable and would importantly enhance the overall appearance and character of the surrounding conservation area.

As demonstrated by the 2019 planning permission, the Council has supported the replacement of the existing shopfront with a modern contemporary design. The updated proposal to create three traditional units would remain supportive of the Local Plan policies and would provide a positive addition to the surrounding conservation area.

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Conclusion

This application seeks the replacement of the existing shopfront at 41-45 Neal Street.

It is considered that the proposed timber shopfronts are of a high quality, traditional design and would provide enhancements to the appearance and function of the existing retail units. The proposal would importantly preserve the historic setting and appearance of the surrounding conservation area. Planning permission was previously consented in 2019 by the Council for similar works and would remain compliant with those existing policies of the Local Plan.

We trust you will find the submitted information sufficient to validate our client's application and we look forward to a swift and positive outcome. Should you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

*Rupert Litherland*

For and on behalf of  
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited