

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		25/01/2022	
		N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:		18/09/2022	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Matthew Dempsey				2021/5885/P			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
307 Gray's Inn Road London WC1X 8QS				Refer to draft decision notice.			
PO 3/4		Area Team Signature		C&UD		Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)							
Replacement shopfront, residential entrance and access steps with covering over of light-well.							
Recommendation(s):		Refuse Planning Permission					
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
Summary of consultation responses:		<p>A site notice was displayed 17/08/2022, which expired 10/09/2022. A press notice was published 18/08/2022, which expired 18/09/2022.</p> <p>No comments were received during public consultation.</p>					
CAAC comments:		<p>The King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee objected to the proposal. Their concerns can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infilling of the light well. • Detailing of the proposed shopfront. • Loss of character. • Negative impact on the Conservation Area. 					

Site Description

The host property is a well proportioned three storey, plus roof space, London stock brick building fronting Gray's Inn Road, near to the corner of St Chad's Street on the west side of the road. There is an existing shop at ground floor and basement levels with a frontage of traditional appearance, which is accessible up three steps and via the main entrance door to the left hand side. There are residential spaces to the upper floors, which are accessible up three steps and through the door to the right hand side. Separating these entrances is a light well which is enclosed by black metal railings. The shop front is painted yellow in colour, the residential door is painted white. Above the entire frontage is a plain fascia panel which is displaying no signage.

The site is not listed, but is within the King's Cross St Pancras Conservation Area and also in close proximity to listed buildings opposite the site on Gray's Inn Road and also at St Chad's Street nearby.

Relevant History

2020/1648/P - Installation of replacement shopfront, residential entrance and access steps with covering over of light-well. **Refused 18/01/2021.**

Reasons for refusal:

1. The proposed shopfront, by virtue of its size, design and location, would result in an unsympathetic and incongruous frontage that would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the host building and wider Kings Cross conservation area, contrary to policies A1 (Impact of development), D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and D3 (Shopfront) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
2. The proposed infilling of the light-well and removal of railings would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the host property, the wider area and Kings Cross Conservation Area contrary to policies A1 (Impact of development), D1 (Design), D2 (Heritage) and D3 (Shopfront) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

APP/X5210/W/21/3268650 Appeal Dismissed 20/10/2021.

Reasons for dismissal:

"Therefore, although I do not find harm would be caused due to the removal of the lightwell and railings, I find that the proposed shopfront, due to its overall design, would cause harm, and thereby fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the KCCA. It would be contrary to Policies D1, D2 and D3 of the Camden Local Plan (2017). Collectively, these policies require that development is of high-quality design, that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area, and for shopfronts, that these are of a high standard of design". (Appeal Decision, para 13, page 2)

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The London Plan 2021

Camden Local Plan 2017

A1 – Managing the impact of development

C6 – Access for all

D1 – Design

D2 – Heritage

D3 – Shopfront

Camden Planning Guidance

Amenity (2021)

Design (2021)

Town Centres and Retail (2021)

King's Cross / St Pancras Conservation Area Statement 2003

Assessment

1.0 Proposal:

1.1 Planning permission is sought for alterations to the shopfront, residential entrance and access step at ground floor including installation of:

- i) Glazed shopfront with painted timber frame, with render to pilasters and stall riser.
- ii) Glazed door to commercial entrance, and; glazed door to residential entrance with stainless steel handrail, standards and spindles to sides.
- iii) Pavement lights to new stone stair landing, with stone treads and risers, to cover existing light well, also with removal of metal railings and installation of aluminium louvre.
- iv) New decorative numbering above each new door '307'.
- v) Creation of new fascia level 'sign zone' spanning width of shopfront (intended for future occupant).

2.0 Assessment:

2.1 The principal considerations material to the determination of this application are:

- i) Design & heritage,
- ii) Access,
- iii) Amenity, the impact on neighbours.

3.0 Design and Heritage:

3.1 Policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that 'Good design takes account of its surroundings and preserves what is distinctive and valued about the local area. Careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development which integrates into its surroundings. The Council will seek to secure high quality design in development and will require that development respects local context and character, preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets.'

3.2 Policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that 'The Council places great importance on preserving the historic environment. Conservation areas are designated heritage assets. The Council will require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area and will seek to manage change in a way that retains the distinctive characters of our conservation areas and will expect new development to contribute positively to this.'

- 3.3 Policy D3 (Shopfronts) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 also states that 'Shopfronts contribute greatly to the character of centres and their distinctiveness. The Council will expect a high standard of design in new and altered shopfronts and other features. When determining proposals for shopfront development the Council will consider the design of the shopfront or feature, including its details and materials, the existing character, architectural and historic merit and design of the building and its shopfront'.
- 3.4 It is noted the proposed shopfront and alterations under consideration here follows a broadly similar scheme which had been refused and dismissed at appeal, as recorded in the planning history section above.
- 3.5 The proposal is to replace an existing shopfront in the same location. The existing shopfront in place, although in need of some attention, is of a design style considered appropriate for the host building. The proportions of the existing shop and residential entrance are considered suitable for a building of this type in the conservation area.
- 3.6 The replacement shopfront proposed here, is considered to be out of character with the host property and unsuitable for the terrace in which it sits, as well as the wider conservation area. The proportions of the proposed alterations are not suitable for the shopfront and host building. It is noted in this re-submitted scheme, the proposed fascia 'sign zone' would remain of a similar scale to the existing arrangement which is an improvement on the design of the refused application; nevertheless, the detailing of this new proposed fascia 'sign zone' is considered poor, as highlighted by the Kings Cross St Pancras Conservation Area Advisory Committee objection.
- 3.7 The removal of railings and creation of a stone landing covering the light well is considered to entirely change the character of the shop frontage in such a way as to have a negative impact on the host building and street scene. The proposed main display window would benefit from stall risers and fanlight detailing; which is acknowledged to be an improvement on the refused scheme, however the extensive glazing is also considered overly dominant for the shop in question. The new proposed doors to either side exacerbate this issue and their design not considered to be appropriate for the character of the host property. Although the existing shop front is not original, it is considered to have a sense of propriety within the street scene and as part of the host building. As confirmed within the Conservation Area Statement, new shop fronts are expected to preserve or enhance the visual character of the area, and Officers consider that this proposal fails to achieve this.
- 3.8 The proposed covered landing also mixes the private and public entrances in an undesirable manner, removing a sense of privacy currently enjoyed by those accessing the residential space, i.e.) residents/ visitors to the flat are currently segregated from the general public by virtue of the railings arrangement, but the removal of railings would remove the sense of security they provide.
- 3.9 It is noted that the Planning Inspector did not consider the proposed covering of the lightwell to be harmful when deliberating their dismissal of the previous application; however it is considered that the lightwell here is a significant feature of the street scene alongside the neighbouring property no.309, which also benefits from a traditionally arranged frontage with lightwell and basement surrounded by metal railings. This pair of properties sit in a very prominent position within the Kings Cross St Pancras Conservation Area, on the corner of Gray's Inn Road and St Chad's Street. Furthermore the immediate neighbour to the other side, no.297-305, although a modern building, has been designed to feature balustrading to the front which is in-line with and at the same height as the traditional railings to the host property to be in keeping with the street scene and character of the conservation area.
- 3.10 As highlighted by the Inspector in their dismissal of the previous scheme, it is acknowledged that in CPG Design, Section 6 – Shopfronts, the Council discourages the

creation of new lightwells in front of a shop front; however the host site here benefits from an existing lightwell, and the CPG also highlights that shopfronts which contribute to the townscape should be retained.

- 3.11 Council Conservation and Design Officers stated that they considered the proposed design of the re-submitted scheme to be inappropriate for the host property, street scene and unsympathetic to the wider conservation area.
- 3.12 The site is both within a conservation area and in close proximity to listed buildings at; Willing House, Nos.356-364 Gray's Inn Road, and ; Nos.1-7 St Chad's Street. This proposed development is considered to neither preserve or enhance the character of the King's Cross/ St Pancras Conservation Area. Although there are listed buildings as noted above in close proximity, it is not considered that the impact to their setting would be a reason for refusal in and of itself.
- 3.13 In terms of size, design and materials to be used, the proposal provides no improvement on the current shopfront. It is unsympathetic and detracts from the conservation area, contrary to policies D1 and D2, and is also contrary to policy D3.

4.0 Access

- 4.1 Policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan 2017 states that 'The Council requires new buildings and spaces to be inclusive and accessible to all. As accessibility is influenced by perceptions as well as physical factors, buildings should also be designed to appear, as well as be, fully accessible.
- 4.2 Policy C6 (Access) also states that 'The Council will seek to promote fair access and remove the barriers that prevent everyone from accessing facilities and opportunities. The Council will expect all buildings and places to meet the highest practicable standards of accessible and inclusive design so they can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all.'
- 4.3 The new shopfront should ideally be step-free access to be DDA compatible and in line with CPG1 (Design) whereby 'Entrance doors should be accessible to all, particularly wheelchair users and people with limited manual dexterity. 1000mm minimum clear door width in new buildings and 775mm door width in existing buildings where a new shop front or alterations to a shop front are proposed.'
- 4.4 The proposed doors are both approximately 1000mm in width, and being an existing building, meet the requirement of CPG (Design). The existing stepped entrance would be made no worse by the new stone steps and landing, as such the proposal is acceptable in terms of access.

5.0 Impact on Amenity:

- 5.1 Due to the nature of the proposal, replacing an existing arrangement in the same location, this proposed development is not considered to have any impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers in terms of loss of light, privacy or outlook.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the proposed alterations are considered to have a negative impact on the privacy of the residential entrance which forms part of the host site but is not considered to cause sufficient harm to form a reason for refusal in this instance.

6.0 Recommendation:

- 6.1 Refuse Planning Permission.

