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Development Planning
Westminster City Hall
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via: MMason@Westminster.gov.uk and SouthPlanningTeam@Westminster.gov.uk

23rd May 2022

Dear Mr. Mason,

Re application ref. 22/02009/FULL: mixed-use development involving changes of use principally to Old Brewer's Yard, 28-32 Shelton Street, 15 Neal Street, 1 Mercer Walk and 5 Langley Street WC2

Covent Garden Community Association has serious objections to many aspects of this application. However, if Westminster council as the Local Planning Authority grants consent to elements of the scheme despite these objections, we believe that some of the negative impact may be mitigated, at least in part, by robust planning conditions being applied as suggested below.

We believe that the scheme as proposed is not in accordance with the City Plan, in particular:

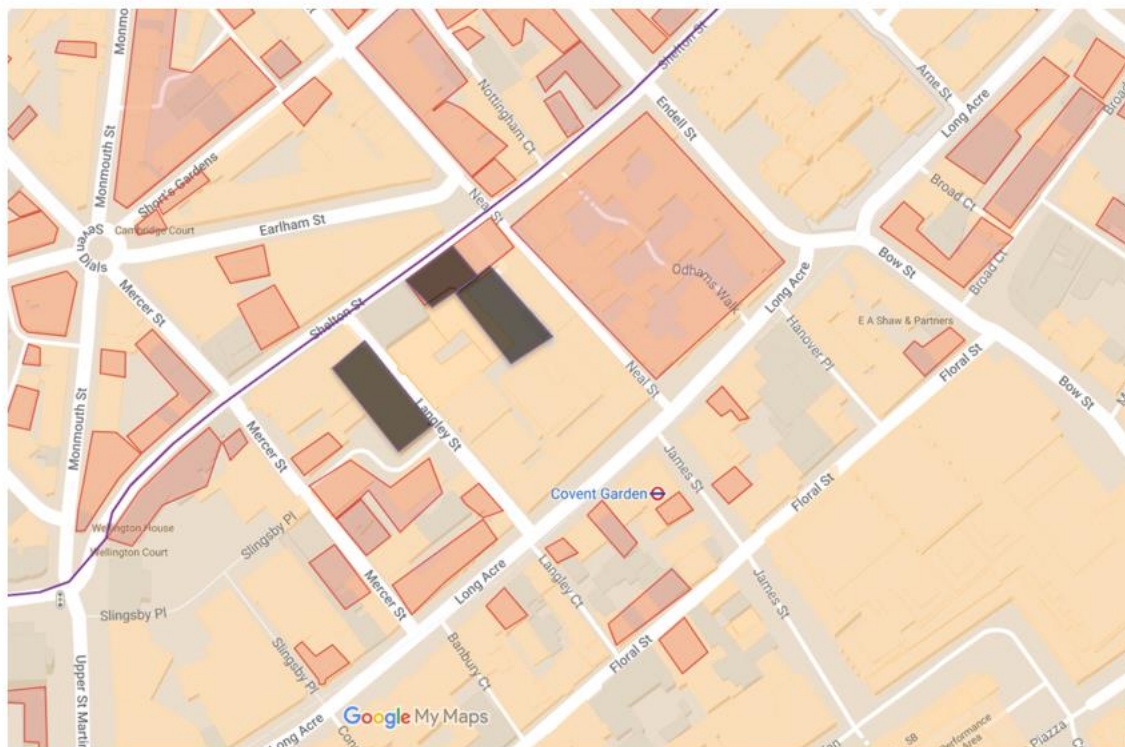
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| Policy 7 | Managing development for Westminster's people. | This Policy requires development to protect (and where appropriate enhance) amenity and local environmental quality - which includes light and noise. It also requires development to protect and respond positively to local character and the historic environment. |
| Policy 16 | Food, drink & entertainment. | This policy requires proposals for food, drink and entertainment uses to be of a type and size appropriate to their location. It prevents over-concentration of those uses where it could harm residential amenity. And applications for entertainment uses will need to demonstrate wider benefits for the local community, where appropriate. |

Context

This site is in a highly residential area on the border between Camden and Westminster, with hundreds of dwellings nearby on all sides in both boroughs. The streets are narrow, with some having high buildings on each side, so they act as sound canyons where noise reverberates and moves upwards into people's homes.

A plan showing residential property near to the proposed development is shown below. Dwellings occupy several floors in each property.

It is a family area, busy with workers and visitors during the day Monday to Saturday, but it quietens down later in the evening after the theatres close. It is generally quiet on Sundays, when residents particularly value the almost silent mornings.



Residential property (shaded brown) in close proximity to the proposed development (dark grey)

The site is on the border of the Covent Garden Conservation Area. But the elements of the development on Shelton Street are most visible in key views from the Seven Dials Conservation Area. The historic area is characterised by what were designed as small houses and warehouse buildings – all of brick construction.

We explain the reasons for our conclusions in detail below, taking each element of the development separately.

1. Mercer Walk building

(Currently H&M shop. Proposed to be Visitor centre with micro-brewery, events and a training hub).

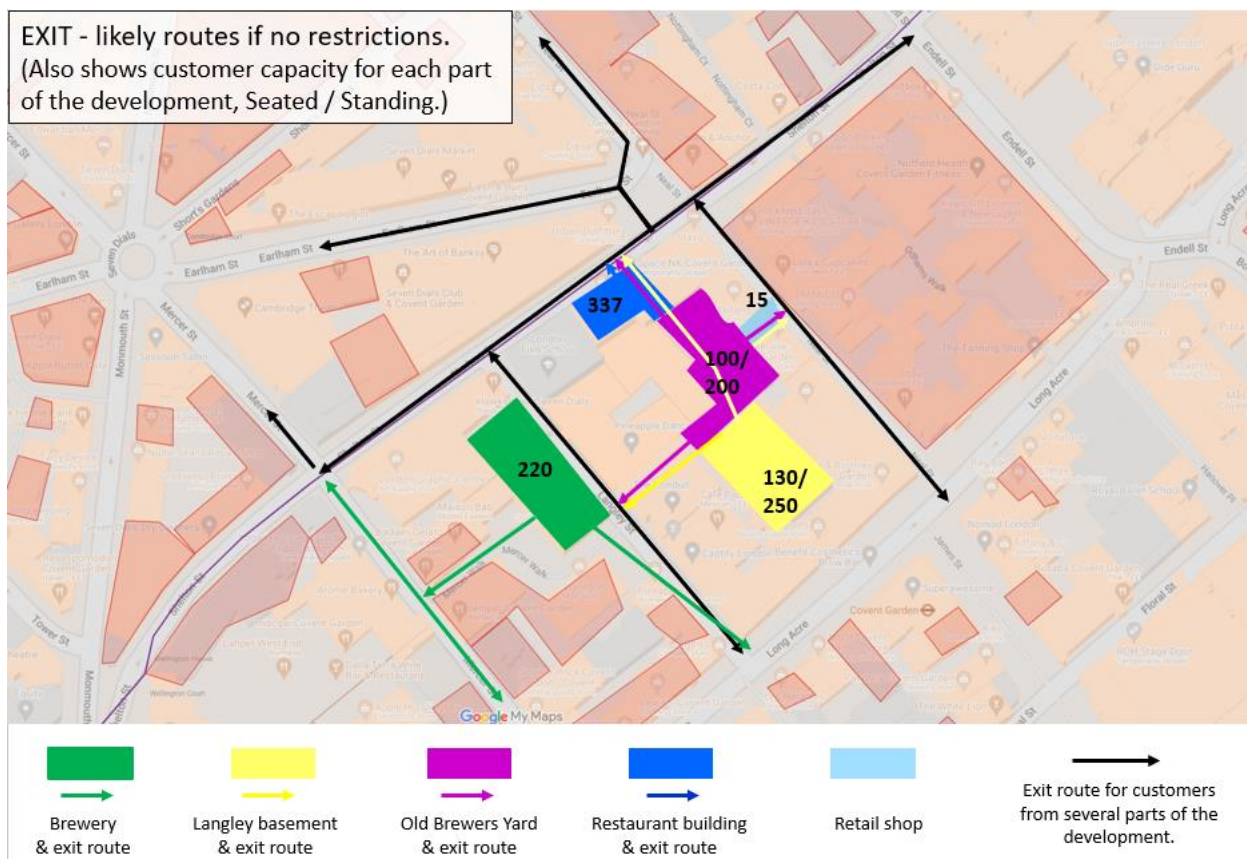
This 19th century building was once part of a brewery, but in recent decades has been used as offices then from 2017 as a retail store. New residential flats have since been built adjacent and opposite in Mercer Walk, which is a hard-surfaced space where noise echoes. Many more dwellings are all along Mercer Street, which is only 30 metres away.

For those living in the area, activity associated with this building has always been at a low level and during the daytime only.

The proposed change of use, involving a capacity of 220 people, with service and sale of alcohol, and including use as an events venue, constitutes a high level of intensification - particularly if it operates late in the evening. We believe that this part of the development should be refused as it is currently proposed, due to the likely harm to amenity, especially after 9pm and before 8am - and indeed at any time if large groups gather outside.

However, we suggest possible changes / planning conditions that would protect against some of this harm as follows:

- Maximum hours of use should be conditioned via any planning consent, and not exceed:
 - o 8am to 9pm Monday to Thursday
 - o 8am to 10pm on Fridays
 - o 9am to 10pm on Saturdays, and
 - o 10am to 9pm on Sundays.
- The exit to Mercer Walk (on the West side of this building) should close at 9pm on all days of the week, to minimise crowds passing residential buildings in Mercer Walk and Mercer Street on their way home late in the evening on Fridays and Saturdays. The plan below shows the likely routes by which people who do not know the area well are likely to leave various parts of the development if no restrictions are in place.



- Entry to the bar should be restricted to ticketed visitors only.
- The beer shop should close at 9pm every night as it could otherwise operate as a late off-licence.
- No noise should emanate from the operation.
- There should be no queuing outside, which is either underneath residential windows or in the crowded public thoroughfare. Queues can successfully be managed via mobile apps.
- Brewing starting at the very early hour of 6am on 6 days of the week could have additional negative impact on local amenity; this activity should start later and no earlier than 8am.
- A condition should require the brewing process to be suspended at any time when fumes are generated that emanate from the building.

- Deliveries & servicing should take place from within Mercer Walk, as under the existing consent for this building (ref. 13/06028/FULL), not out on Langley Street as suggested in paragraph 4.72 of the applicant's Planning Statement, which is narrow and where sound echoes.
- Deliveries should not start until 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays, and end by 11am on days when they take place. A selection of photographs below show how Mercer Walk is currently unable to cope, with delivery vehicles using Mercer Street instead, disturbing residents and obstructing pavements at all hours despite planning conditions to forbid this. Any more vehicles delivering to the building at 1 Mercer Walk in the early part of the morning will cause more problems for families nearby.



Vehicles delivering to Mercer Walk, breaking planning conditions & causing obstruction day & night.

- Any movement of barrels should be after 9am as it can be particularly noisy.
- No glass waste collections should be made before 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and 10am on Sundays.
- A green wall is welcomed as it will absorb sound in Mercer Walk where every noise echoes. However, it is important that the Espalier sculpture is re-used elsewhere in the development or nearby (for example, in Old Brewers Yard or a wall of the Graphic Centre). Our view is that the Espalier would be better left in situ, and other walls in Mercer Walk greened instead. Indeed, as much greening as possible should be encouraged in Mercer Walk for a wide range of environmental reasons.

We believe that some other elements of this part of the proposal are positive. The exhibition of historical information and other educational elements would make interesting contributions to the area, and highlight the history of brewing here which is not as well-known as the history of uses relating to Covent Garden market. Reinstatement of original windows is welcomed. The use of solar panels is also welcomed, as long as they are not visible from the public realm or from residential property.

2. Basement of 5 Langley Street with ground floor lobby

(Proposed to be Events space, plus toilets and furniture storage for courtyard).

This space was previously a bar with entertainment, but its main door was further South down Langley Street and nearer to Covent Garden station. Nevertheless, it did have some negative impact on residential amenity as a result of crowds standing outside smoking and pedicabs being attracted to people as they left.

Amenity would be further diminished by this new venue, however, if people were to leave in larger groups than before - for example at the end of sports streaming events. Such groups tend to be louder than people leaving in a steady trickle from a bar or club. And tight management will be needed to prevent nuisance from groups queuing, smoking etc.

We believe that this part of the development could reasonably be consented with some changes / planning conditions that would protect against harm as follows:

- Maximum hours of use should be conditioned via any planning consent, and not exceed those suggested in the application for the yard, being:
 - o 10am to 11.30pm Monday to Thursday
 - o 10am to Midnight on Fridays & Saturdays
 - o 10am to 10.30pm on Sundays.
- There should be limits on the type and frequency of sports streaming events that attract rowdy crowds, with no more than 12 days of rugby, football or similar match streaming days per annum. Earlier terminal hours not exceeding 10pm should apply to such events, with their capacity limited to 130 so that everyone can sit down.
- No noise should emanate from the operation. Sound insulation may be needed to prevent music and streamed events from causing disturbance.
- There should be no queuing in the public realm. Queues can successfully be managed via mobile apps.
- Smoking should only be allowed in a designated area within the yard, by planning condition.
- It is not clear how any community benefit will be delivered by this space. A means for local community groups to use the space at no cost, including a reasonable number of evening slots, should be included as a planning condition, to contribute to the case for this development under Policy 16 of the City Plan.
- Deliveries & servicing should take place only from within Old Brewers Yard by planning condition, and should not start until 8am on weekdays and 9am on Saturdays with none on Sundays except waste collections.
- No glass waste collections should be made before 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and 10am on Sundays.
- Reduced capacity and reduced hours compared to the current permitted use are welcome.
- Location of the main door in an enclosed area is welcome.

3. Old Brewers Yard ground floor outside space

(Currently a service yard. Proposed to be a bar, café, dining, live music & events space).

This element of the development, in conjunction with the proposed bar at the rear of 7 Langley Street, is the most concerning from an amenity perspective, and **we believe that a yard for outside drinking should be refused outright** due to the likely harm to amenity.

For as long as this yard has existed it has been a service yard, generating only daytime activity and very few pedestrian movements. This has had minimal impact on the very many flats nearby in Shelton Street, Neal Street, Earlham Street and Mercer Street.

The proposed change of use, involving an outdoor capacity of 200 customers in an alcohol-led operation, and including music, events etc., constitutes a high level of intensification - particularly if it operates late in the evening. Crowds of people generate high levels of sound when they are talking, even when no background music is played and even when no alcohol is drunk. On days when 25 people gather outside the Crown & Anchor pub, the noise levels are already higher than nearby residents feel comfortable with.

We are astounded that the applicant's Noise Impact Assessment states glibly:

"We have been informed that the flats at 17 Neal Street which currently overlook the site are currently in the process of being converted to commercial use. Therefore there will be no sensitive dwellings in close proximity or overlooking this site. As such noise impact on noise sensitive receptors is low and no assessment is considered necessary."

Did they not notice the 12 flats at 43-47 Shelton Street, the 18 flats at 22-35 Neal Street – all within close proximity and clear hearing distance of the open gates of Brewers Yard? Not to mention many of the 105 flats in Odhams Walk a few metres around the corner, as well as more than 40 flats further up Neal Street, 23 flats at Nottingham House and 33 flats further along Shelton Street?

It should be noted that a previous version of the Noise Impact Assessment, shared with us in relation to licence applications for Old Brewers Yard, did foresee unacceptable levels of noise in the surrounding flats at 17 Neal Street. This document is provided as an appendix for ease of reference. Based on only 50 seated customers outside and no music, it states at 6.3.6 that:

"The noise levels past 11pm will exceed the WHO guidelines. As such use of this area may need to be limited after 11pm".

This may be why the applicant proposes to convert flats to commercial use subject to further planning applications. But without the provision of data to the contrary, it must be assumed that, with many more people and with a wide-open gate, noise level in flats slightly further away will also be unacceptable.



Shelton Street as imagined by the Applicant



Shelton Street reality: narrow pavement & heavy traffic

Furthermore, Shelton Street is full of busy traffic, and its narrow pavement is dangerous as a main exit for the yard. The applicant's images show a street devoid of traffic, with people loitering mid-carriageway as

if it is pedestrianised. On the contrary, this is in fact the only traffic route from East to West in Covent Garden and carries the highest volume of vehicles within the area. Yet it has a pavement about 130cm deep, reducing to only 112cm deep within the bollards to the immediate East of the gate of Brewers Yard. The images above illustrate these points.

If large numbers of people leave via the Shelton Street gate late at night, it will not only be dangerous, but it will also lead to them passing hundreds more residential units than the closest ones that we mention above - causing greater loss of residential amenity.

It is difficult to suggest possible changes / planning conditions that would protect against the likely harm from this element of the proposals. We suggest some below, but believe that these will be insufficient. We maintain the view that this part of the development should not be allowed.

- Maximum hours of use should be conditioned via any planning consent, and not exceed:
 - o 10am to 11pm on any day.Otherwise the intensification of the use, from a back yard to a high-capacity outdoor bar and events space, will lead to a dramatic loss of neighbouring residential amenity.
- Capacity should be limited to 50 people at most, as envisaged in the initial Noise Impact Assessment.
- Customers should be required by planning condition to remain seated. Seated customers cause far less impact and disruption than those who stand drinking; the ‘vibe’ is very different. Even businesses who have written to support the scheme (because it may bring them, too, more footfall) have told us that they do not want a ‘vertical drinking’ environment on their doorsteps. The yard should therefore also include sufficient seating for all customers when open to the public, removable for servicing.
- No noise should emanate from the operation. The gate on Shelton Street should be much higher than shown on the plans, in order to help to contain noise. When there is music or sound from other entertainment, it not only generates disturbance itself but leads to people speaking much more loudly - so the level of noise generated by a whole operation rises. For this reason only occasional acoustic music without amplification should be allowed here, with no general background music or soundtracks from screenings etc. in this open space.
- There should be no queuing in the public realm. Queues can successfully be managed via mobile apps.
- The gate should be closed by 10pm and customers exit via Langley Street afterwards – not the opposite way around as suggested in paragraph 4.64 of the applicant’s Planning Statement. We have consulted residents in all the surrounding streets, and this is the consensus solution that is preferred. A dispersal plan, secured by way of condition, will be needed to ensure that the process is managed so as not to harm residential amenity.
- Deliveries & servicing should take place only from within Old Brewers Yard by planning condition, and not start until 8am on weekdays and 9am on Saturdays with none on Sundays except waste collections.
- No glass waste collections should be made before 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and 10am on Sundays.
- We anticipate a separate planning application for the decorative part of the proposed canopy, but ask that it should be of a more sympathetic design than shown in the application images, with more transparency to allow views upwards to the historic buildings.

4. Rear ground floor of 7 Langley Street

(Proposed to be an open-air Bar & service store).

This element of the development, in conjunction with the proposed bar, café, dining, live music & events space in Old Brewers Yard, is the most concerning from an amenity perspective, and **we believe that a bar for outside service should be refused outright** due to the same likely harms to amenity listed in the section above.

It is difficult to suggest possible changes / planning conditions that would protect against the likely harm. We suggest some below, but are doubtful that these will be sufficient. We maintain the view that this part of the development should not be allowed.

- As for Old Brewers' Yard, maximum hours of use should be conditioned via any planning consent, and not exceed:
 - o 10am to 11pm on any day.
- As for Old Brewers' Yard, deliveries & servicing should take place only from within Old Brewers Yard by planning condition, and should not start until 8am on weekdays and 9am on Saturdays with none on Sundays except waste collections.
- No glass waste collections should be made before 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and 10am on Sundays.

5. Ground floor of 15a Neal Street

(Proposed shop for Guinness products, and entranceway through to Brewers Yard).

The entire East side of this part of Neal Street above ground floor level is occupied by Odhams Walk housing estate, with 105 flats. It is a family estate with elderly people and children. The street is just 7 metres wide at its widest point, with only 5m distance between some flats and the commercial frontage opposite. The ground floor level only has daytime retail uses. Along the West side of the street, opposite Odhams Walk, the upper floors are offices.

The street is very busy during the day except on Sunday mornings. The noise of people is clearly audible through every closed window. However, in the evenings it is quiet by 10.30pm once the theatres have closed, after which time people tend to be leaving the area in small groups. In any case Neal Street is not heavily used as an exit route because there are no entertainment uses in this section.

Any noise from a new entertainment use (such as people leaving a bar) here late in the evening will be very disturbing to families in about half the flats on the estate.

As stated above, we do not believe that the use of Old Brewers' Yard and the rear of 7 Langley Street as a bar is appropriate, nor complies with Policies 7 and 16 in the City Plan.

However, if 15a Neal Street is to be used as an exit from Old Brewers' Yard at all then we would suggest the following changes / planning conditions that would protect against harm as follows:

- The door to Neal Street should be closed at 8pm each night to minimise impact from people leaving Old Brewers Yard.
- Deliveries & servicing should take place only from within Old Brewers Yard by planning condition, and not start until 8am on weekdays and 9am on Saturdays with none on Sundays except waste collections.

6. Building at 28-32 Shelton Street

(Currently shop and offices. Proposed to be Restaurants, bar, kitchens & staff rooms with 5th & 6th floor extension)

(i) Roof extension at 28-32 Shelton Street

It is proposed to add two upper floors, incorporating a glass and metal roof extension, onto this well-proportioned 5 storey brick building which stands in an area characterised by brick buildings. We believe that the proposal is unsympathetic to the building and to its context.

The applicant's Heritage & Visual Impact statement concludes at 7.2 that:

"It will reinforce a sense of place in this part of Covent Garden by virtue of its distinctive but complementary design. It will aid in urban way-finding and help to orientate visitors to the area."

It is rather sad to see such a statement from newcomers to a famous neighbourhood that has had a very distinctive sense of place since 1690!

The remark about way-finding is inconsistent with the applicant's claims elsewhere that the extension will have no impact on views. Indeed, the Visual Impact statement shows clearly that it will indeed have an impact on views. We await, however, the missing and most important view taken from the open area outside 24 Neal Street, which will make the impact even clearer.

The roof heights on this section of Shelton Street start low, with 4 storeys to the East at the corner of Neal Street, then there are 5 storeys on this building, and the equivalent of 7 storeys on the next building (London Film School) on the corner of Langley Street. This progression looks quite gradual. If the middle building becomes 7 storeys then the balance will be lost.

The applicant's Design & Access statement notes that the area has "a distinct human scale"; this is true, and we believe that the proposed extension would diminish this.

The applicant's planning statement at 7.50 claims that the proposals at 28-32 Shelton Street:

"will not be introducing a new feature in this locality, given the existing of a high-level glazed roof extension and roof terrace opposite, the permitted roof extension and ancillary terrace at 107-115 Long Acre, and a recent pending application at 7 Langley Street to extend the existing rooftop terrace at 6 Langley Street".

However, these features on other buildings are completely different from this application. All of them simply add a bit of furniture and safety rails to existing rooftops. Whereas the applicant wants to build a new 2-storey development on top of this building! And all the terrace consents limit usual hours of use until 7pm, with no use on Sundays.

The applicant's Daylight, Sunlight & Overshadowing Assessment shows in Appendix A that the open area at the junction of Neal Street and Earlham Street will lose some of its precious sunlight at 12pm and 2pm in March and in the morning in June. Our own observations between 11am and 2pm on sunny days in May indicate that this loss is likely to be pronounced. However, separately from sunlight, a 6.6 metre extension will add general gloom to Shelton Street, blocking out too much open sky in what is already the darkest street in the area.

For the above reasons we believe that the proposed 2 storey roof extension fails to enhance either the Covent Garden Conservation Area, where it is located, or the Seven Dials Conservation Area from which it is seen from as far North as 34 Neal Street. And its effect on the Seven Dials Conservation Area is more damaging than neutral. It makes no positive contribution to the building. It therefore fails all the tests from a conservation perspective. We support the comments of the Covent Garden Area Trust and the Seven Dials Trust, and **we believe that the roof extension should be refused.**

A single-storey roof extension could be acceptable, if designed sympathetically in brick and set well back from the façade so as to avoid blocking sky. We note that an extension is operationally unnecessary, however, given that the floors below are proposed to be under-used. We believe that the main restaurant could be located on the existing top floor, rather than a new 6th floor, without significant impact on the business.

(ii) Uses at 28-32 Shelton Street

This building has been used as offices to date. For those living in the area, activity associated with this building has always been at a low level and during the daytime only.

The proposed change of use, involving a capacity of 337 people, with service of food and alcohol, and including use for events, constitutes a high level of intensification. Under Use Class E it would be difficult to prevent some of these activities. However, we suggest possible changes / planning conditions on other activities that would protect against some of this harm below.

The applicant's planning statement states at 4.18 that "the new sixth floor level shall serve as a rooftop bar, comprising both internal and outdoor seating options, to take advantage of the panoramic views over Covent Garden". As stated above, we believe that the 6th floor extension should be refused. However, on whatever floor the activity that is described takes place, it sounds far more drink-led than food-led, which does not lie within the Use Class E applied for.

We are surprised that the applicant's Noise Impact Assessment states glibly that:

"the rooftop terrace will be screened from the residents in the area, and the impact of this use will be low and not considered in the assessment."

In our experience the impact of rooftop terraces in the area can be great, particularly in terms of sound carrying long distances across rooftops to peoples' home. Hence other high-level terraces that have been given planning consent nearby have strict limits on hours of use, and even on the numbers of events that are allowed after certain times. Examples of terraces having an impact on Odhams Walk are:

1. The Seven Dials Warehouse, with its entrance at 42 Earlham Street in Camden. Use is generally restricted to 8am to 7pm Monday to Saturday only, plus 24 special events uses per annum lasting until 9pm (see application refs. 2017/1723/P & 2017/5591/P).
2. 107-115 Long Acre is restricted to normal hours of use 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm Saturday only (see application ref. 20/06533/FULL).

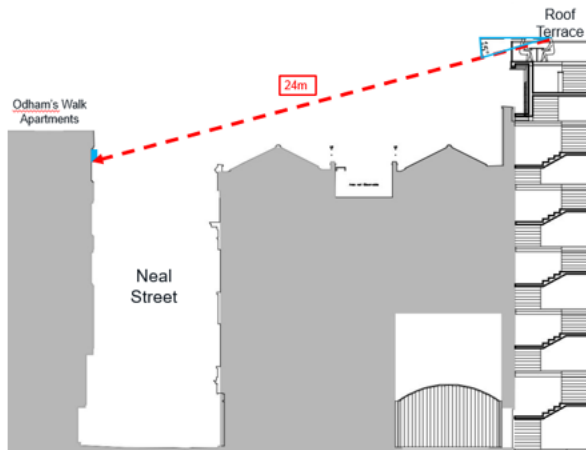
The relevant decision notices are at Appendix 1 for ease of reference. No use is allowed on Sundays.

The terrace shown in the applicant's plans has a direct line of sound and sight to family flats and roof terraces in Odhams Walk.

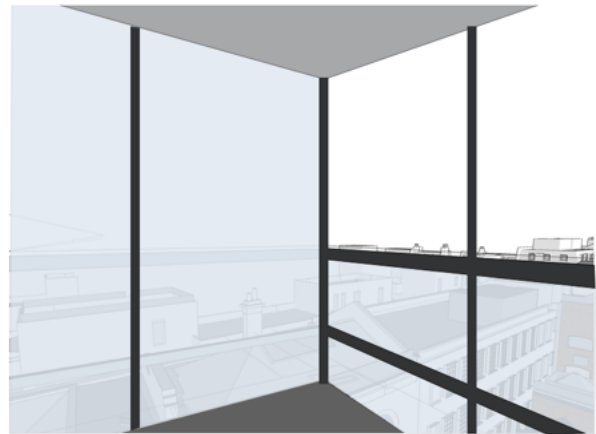
The possible changes / planning conditions that we believe would protect against some of the likely harm are:

- No sui generis bar use should be permitted in this building. All entertainment uses here should be food-led Class E.
- There is the potential for loss of amenity from people leaving late in the evening from restaurants, associated bars and events. Maximum hours of use should be conditioned via any planning consent, and not exceed those suggested in the application for the building, being:
 - o 10am to 11.30pm Monday to Thursday
 - o 10am to Midnight on Fridays & Saturdays
 - o 10am to 10.30pm on Sundays.

- Maximum hours of use of any terrace here should be conditioned not to exceed 10am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and restricted to seated customers only. This is the same terminal hour and days as the consents that we cite above and in the appendix.



Line of sight and sound from proposed roof terrace to flats



Obscured glass used to mitigate overlooking from terrace

- The obscured glass indicated in the Applicant's document entitled 'Shelton Street Top Floor Views Concerns' should be required by condition on any terrace and staircase landing that is consented on this building to lessen overlooking. None is mentioned on the plans themselves.
- Planting should be required around the perimeter of any terrace to minimise overlooking and absorb sound.
- The proposed development currently offers little community benefit. We have consulted a number of amenity groups in the area, and the request is that an office space (in this building or at 1 Mercer Walk) for local community groups to use at no cost should be included as a planning condition, along with much-needed storage space for items such as archive materials. This would be in addition to free use of the basement space at 5 Langley Street for meetings and community events.
- Kitchen extraction should use an internal, recycled air system and not express any exhaust to the outside. We cannot support new restaurants with ample space using old-fashioned cooker hoods as described in 7.61 of the applicant's planning statement.
- Deliveries & servicing should take place only from within Old Brewers Yard by planning condition, and should not start until 8am on weekdays and 9am on Saturdays with none on Sundays except refuse collections.
- No glass waste collections should be made before 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays and 10am on Sundays.

7. Patio in front of 1 Mercer Walk

(Currently open public realm and used for events or for 2 tables & 6 chairs by Stanfords bookshop. Proposed to be used for 6 tables & 24 chairs by the applicant)

This area is currently open, except for two tables sometimes put out for Stanfords book shop, up against its own window. It is a very busy thoroughfare during the day and early evening.

We do not believe that the area should be filled with furniture as this will impede pedestrian flow. It will be difficult to serve customers from the building at 1 Mercer Walk, with staff trying to walk through the flow of people holding trays or glasses full of beer. And we certainly would not want to see self-service here, with open containers of beer being carried through crowds including families with pushchairs.



Patio is a pedestrian thoroughfare to Mercer Walk.

We therefore believe that the proposed **use of this area for tables & chairs serving 1 Mercer Walk should be refused.**

8. Control of mechanically-generated sound

We are concerned that there is a plan to play background music in all the buildings, as well as there being live performances inside and out, and streamed events. There is enormous potential for noise breakout. This clearly detracts from nearby residential amenity. But it also damages general amenity if every building is generating noise on the street.

Extraction and air handling systems may technically produce sounds within ambient levels, but our experience is that this often ceases to be the case at night. Furthermore, maintenance can be inadequate which leads to noise levels above those published by the manufacturer. In a neighbourhood like Covent Garden it is then impossible to tell whose equipment is generating the nuisance, and so it sometimes continues for years.

To mitigate these issues, we suggest the following conditions should be attached to any planning consent:

- The entire development should be conditioned not to generate any noise that is audible on the surrounding streets.
- All air handling systems should be switched on no more than 30 minutes before opening time and switched off by closing time at the latest, not left on 24/7 as suggested in section 2 of the applicant's Noise Impact Assessment.
- All kitchen extraction equipment should be switched on no earlier than opening time and switched off no less than 30 minutes before closing time.
- Prior to use, contracts for regular maintenance of all equipment must be submitted to the council for approval, and, once approved, implemented prior to occupation and thereafter permanently retained.

9. Other environmental features

We welcome suggestions for a green wall, but we believe that there are many opportunities for additional greening across this development and would encourage the applicant to submit more proposals for them. We would also suggest the addition of rooftop beehives and bat boxes to any consented scheme.

The use of recycled rainwater is very welcome, and the use solar panels in places where these are not visible from the public realm of the conservation areas nor visible from residential buildings.

We would also ask for these conditions to be added to any consent:

- Throughout the scheme all kitchen extraction should use an internal, recycled air system and not express any exhaust to the outside.
- Additional cleansing beyond the boundary of the scheme to clear up litter left further away.

10. Control of Deliveries and servicing

The applicant's planning statement envisages an enormous 30 deliveries per day before consolidation, which will be challenging to manage. The staff in Mercer Walk already struggle to manage far fewer deliveries; the planning conditions applying to deliveries there are broken every day and on many nights, to the detriment of residents in Mercer Street and Shelton Street. Some photographs are included above that show the problems. Another set of different photographs is shown below.



Further examples of deliveries to Mercer Walk, breaking planning conditions & causing obstruction.

We believe that this situation needs to be sorted out well before any consent is given for yet more deliveries to buildings on The Mercers' estate.

We would then suggest the following conditions (some of which have already been mentioned above):

- All deliveries to and collections from buildings on the Guinness site should be restricted by condition so that they take place only between 8am and 11am on weekdays, 9am and 11am on Saturdays, with no deliveries or collections on Sundays due to the proximity of dwellings. No deliveries should take place from the street, but only from within Mercer Walk and Old Brewers Yard. The applicant's SMP suggests a time slot of 7am to 10am every day, but the earlier time would be detrimental to residential amenity as explained above.
- Other servicing, such as cleaning and maintenance, should also take place after 8am on weekdays, 9am on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays except in emergencies.
- All waste should be stored internally within the development, and collections only take place between 8am and 11am on all days of the week.
- No vehicles should be allowed, by condition, to wait to gain access to the site on any roads within the area of the Covent Garden Neighbourhood Traffic Management scheme.
- **It is vital that all deliveries to the site comply with TfL's Code of Practice for Quieter Deliveries,** by condition.

11. Branding

The application documents are not clear regarding branded signage. We anticipate separate applications for signage, but expect this to be limited in scale and quantity on walls and other surfaces facing the street in these conservation areas.

The images shown in the applicant's documents (as shown below) show too many logos and they are too large for the area.



Applicant's mock-ups showing signage on various buildings

We suggest that the applicant is asked to consider signage that enhances the conservation areas.

12. Community benefit

The application mentions 'community'. In most instances, however, this refers to the community of Guinness customers that Diageo hopes to serve through this development.

There is, in fact, a large residential community in Covent Garden. Over 7,000 people live in the neighbourhood, with many more being present part of the time in flats that are second homes. The core of the community is mixed, and about half live in social housing. Much of this housing was campaigned for and built following the 'Battle for Covent Garden' in the 1970's and 80's, when the area was threatened with demolition and the residential population was due to be moved out. Our Association was founded to fight against the proposals and in the end that battle was won against great odds. Housing that was not fit for purpose was refurbished and new buildings created, including the award-winning Odhams Walk complex. Gradually the population grew again.

Despite the wealthy façade, there are pockets of serious deprivation in our area. There is also an ageing population which no longer has a regular place to go since the Age Concern day centre in Odhams Walk was closed.

In this context we feel that there is an opportunity for any large enterprise coming in to the area to give something back.

We suggest that the applicant should offer the following elements:

- A means for local community groups to use the large space at 5 Langley Street and smaller spaces in the other buildings at no cost for meetings etc., including a number of evening slots on quieter business days such as Sunday to Wednesday.
- A shared office space in 28 Shelton Street or 1 Mercer Walk, for local community groups including Covent Garden Community Association and The Seven Dials Trust to use at a peppercorn cost. Space for 2-3 desks would suffice.
- Some complimentary storage space for items such as archive materials, in the basement of 28 Shelton Street or 5 Langley Street. About 24 cubic metres would suffice.
- Staff time donated to organise and host 'day centre' activity for elderly residents on at least 3 days of the week.

We are happy to make ourselves available to work constructively with the applicant towards modifications to the proposals that could achieve more acceptance in policy terms, less likely to harm local amenity.

We are also happy to give input into the SMP for any modified scheme, as we have successfully done in relation to previous developments in the Westminster part of Covent Garden.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Rigby,
Vice-Chair

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