

# Through the Woods Architectural Services



Shop at 25 Southside Street, Plymouth, PL1 2LD.

Listed Building Alterations to Shop Fittings and Fixtures.

**Doc: 51-SSS-0B Supporting Statement  
Combined Design and Access and Heritage Statement.**

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Date:

■ TOTNES PLANNING ■

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Planning, Architectural & Historic Building Consultancy

## **INTRODUCTION – Covering Design and Access**

The applicant has recently purchased 25 Southside Street. The building is one half of a Grade II Listed double fronted Georgian shop with a warehouse type storage building attached to the rear, accessed off a courtyard. The shop occupies the ground floor of the front building and has an existing residential flat spread over the first, second and third storeys above. Until recently the premises had been used since 1898 by Yarmouth Stores Ltd, a traditional chandlery. Listed Building Consent was granted earlier this year for alterations and repairs to the shop and flat, which included creating separate access, improving the bathroom and kitchen facilities and removing modern fittings.

The 4 storey warehouse space associated with the shop has a larger floor area than the shop floor, which is excessive and no longer required and there is currently a separate application under consideration to convert the redundant rear warehouse space for use as residential accommodation, giving this part of the listed building a viable future.

The initial Listed Building Consent allows removal of all modern shop fittings, with all the historic counters and shelves being kept in-situ. The historic counters are very large and restrict the use of the space, so this further application seeks to change the position of the counters within the shop to allow it to meet the needs of a C21st retail business. The applicant has been unsuccessfully trying to let the shop for the last 6 months and the estate agent has shown round in excess of 20 interested prospective tenants, all of whom will not rent the shop because the 2 counters either side of the door prevent them laying the shop out so customers can circulate. The counter positions have been made even more untenable by Covid19 social distancing regulations.

Having discussed the issue with the Archaeologist who undertook the historic building recording, the proposal now seeks to keep the 2 primary counters in the same line as existing, but pushed back against the wall under the historic shelves. This would allow them to be appreciated and keep the character of the shop, whilst enabling the shop to be a functional space. The 3<sup>rd</sup> counter would be kept in its existing position. It is not viable to keep the shop as a museum piece without any change to the layout. The quality repairs that are needed to keep the shop and fittings in good condition are not cheap and can only happen in their entirety if the applicant is going to end up with a shop that can be let.

This application is also requesting permission to move the free standing desk and safe from the front shop room to the shop 'back office', which is where the historic building recording believes it would have originally been located. The historic draw unit in the 'back office' fireplace alcove will be kept where it is.

Other changes that are proposed are the removal the modern awning, leaving the remains of the previous historic awning boxing in place, to match next door and the removal of the C20<sup>th</sup> linoleum floor covering to expose the timber floor boards below. These all will improve the appearance of the shop and the age of these items has been confirmed by the historic building recording.

It is proposed that the 2 primary counters and sets of historic shelves are finished in the traditional manner for timber shop fittings of this period, keeping the existing dark natural timber finish. The rest of the internal joinery in the shop will receive a dove grey paint finish, including the existing timber screen partition which is currently painted on 1 side only. The lime plastered walls and ceiling will be white and with the dove grey should emphasise the dark natural timber of the 2 primary counters and shelves, without the shop feeling crowded and overbearing. The floor boards will be sanded and have a natural timber or grey paint finish.

These latest changes to the shop would achieve a compromise between the shop layout functioning so it appeals to a tenant and the interior of the shop retaining the historic character that makes it unique.

This application relates solely to listed building alterations and repairs to the shop fixtures and fittings at 25 Southside Street. The use will remain unchanged and the access is as per the initial Listed Building Consent.

## HERITAGE STATEMENT

### Listed Building Description

#### PLYMOUTH

*SX4854SW SOUTHSIDE STREET, Barbican 740-1/62/62 (North side) 01/05/75 Nos.25 AND 26 (Formerly Listed as: SOUTHSIDE STREET, Plymouth Nos.25 AND 26)*

#### GV II

*Shop premises. Mid C19. Stucco; roof hidden behind parapet with moulded cornice breaking forward over pilasters of attic storey. Double-depth plan. EXTERIOR: 3-storeys plus attic storey; symmetrical 3-window front with mostly original hornless sashes to upper floors and original pair of double shopfronts flanking a central doorway. Attic storey has paired round-arched windows: original sashes on the left, otherwise later casements. The sill of the attic storey becomes a heavy moulded cornice with paired modillions and returned to left-hand corner; rusticated quoins to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. Moulded sill string to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor breaks forward to bracketed sills and windows with moulded eared architraves. 1<sup>st</sup> floor has pilastered surrounds with pediments on consoles: central triangular pediment and flanking segmental pediments. Ground floor has fascia entablature with moulded cornice and consoles to shopfronts with slightly-bowed 2-light 6-pane windows plus splayed return lights to central doorways with overlights and there are pilasters flanking the central doorway. INTERIOR: not inspected but likely to be as unaltered as the exterior.*

*Listing NGR: SX4820654142*

### Historic Context

25 and 26 Southside Street have been group listed as a pair of shop fronts, mirroring each other and forming part of a larger symmetrical facade. They are located in the historic quayside area in Plymouth known as The Barbican. With the history of Plymouth being closely associated with the development of the natural harbour setting, The Barbican is one of the original settlements that grew and amalgamated into the city. As such, and having escaped direct bomb damage in World War II, it contains some of the oldest surviving buildings in Plymouth and is designated as a Conservation Area. Although the pair of shop fronts are pre-dated by a number of different historic commercial properties, the Conservation Area Appraisal identifies 25 and 26 Southside Street as an important part of the streetscape. It is the only remaining Georgian double fronted shop and has an almost completely unaltered facade, so is considered to be a fine example of this architectural period.

The listed building description was prepared without gaining access to the interior of the shop, so the key historic features that were recorded as giving the building special character are all located on the exterior. With the highly intact condition of the historic facade and in the absence of an internal inspection, the description anticipates that there could be an equally intact original interior present within. Whilst this is true to an extent as the 1898 shop layout and fittings remain and the majority of original surfaces survive, the interior above the ground floor level has very plain detailing. All of the original internal doors were removed and replaced with modern fire doors when the flat was created. There are no ceiling roses or cornicing to visually set out a hierarchy of floors of rooms. However, the status of the upper rooms can be identified by the ornateness and size of the architrave and skirting profiles. The first floor has deep skirting and ogee moulding with the drawing room having double width architrave. The depth of the skirting and architrave reduces on the second floor and by the third floor there is very low skirting with a simple rounded top edge and the door has no architrave at all. The window size also reduces with the fall in status of the rooms, with the large front sash windows of the first and second floor changing to a smaller pair of arched casements on the third floor, commensurate with probable servant living quarter use. The original lime plaster is present throughout the front building and with the exception of the ground floor party wall is mainly in reasonable condition. The lime plaster on the lower half of the party wall in the shop has failed, but was not repaired and

instead was hidden behind various inappropriate sheets of card and ply that have prevented the wall surface breathing.

In terms of what gives the building the special character and contributes to the historic significance, the external shop front is the most important feature as this is the last of its kind in the area making it unique. The shop interior is also of great value, with the single business having occupied it for over 100 years having limited the amount of change that has occurred to the shop fittings and linoleum floor, creating a rare 'time warp' experience. Of less importance in terms of uniqueness, but still of interest is the amount of traditional historic fabric that is still present throughout the front building and ally entrance. Examples of lime plaster, similar timber boarding and interior mouldings are plentiful in other buildings of the period in Plymouth but this does not diminish their value in this context and collectively they contribute to the integrity of the historic character.



*An extract from the 1881 Insurance Map of Plymouth, showing Southside Street.*

The front building at 25 and 26 Southside Street is the principal building that the listing relates to specifically and recent historical recording has confirmed that the current construction is the result of significant remodelling of a larger previous building. The attached building and courtyard to the rear area are also classed as part of the listed building. The rear building dates from a different construction phase at the site than the front building and whilst the listing overlooks its importance, the recent historic recording discovered that although the majority of the rear fabric is C20th, some of it actually dates to C17th making it of interest in sequencing the phasing of the development of the wider quayside and Southside Street.

#### **SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED WORKS:**

1. Remove modern canvas awning, leaving boxing to original awning intact to match next door, see historic building recording. Infill missing timber cover along underside of boxing. Repaint boxing. If possible, source reclaimed metal awning arm mechanism to match next door and fit.
2. Replace rotten timber frame to existing bracket mounted sign board, using like for like profile and carpentry joint. Paint frame to match existing sign. (Existing sign and bracket to be kept). non-historic shelf additions fixed to historic shop fittings, retain all original cabinets and shelves, repair and polish, like for like.
3. Remove linoleum floor finish (see asbestos report and undertake risk assessment). Expose timber floor boards and lightly sand. Repair any damaged boards like for like. Apply wax/oil finish or paint grey.

4. Move historic desk and safe from existing position to new position as shown on the plans, in the 'back office'.
5. Paint all timber joinery inside the shop and 'back office' dove grey, including the panelled screen and 3<sup>rd</sup> counter.
6. Move the 2 primary counters back against the wall underneath the shelves on the opposite wall as per the drawings, so the draws face into the room. Raise each shelf unit approximately 150mm so that the base sits on the newly positioned counter below. (Consent is already in place for like for like repairs to the counters and shelves). Make new draws (and any other missing elements) to replace missing draws using like for like timber, profiles, knobs, and joinery techniques.
7. Lightly sand the 2 primary counters and shelves, re-stain as appropriate using like for like colours, apply reversible wax finish (specification below) and polish.

***Specification for finishing exposed timber/CMS:***

*If necessary stain the timber to give a darker appearance. Apply a protective layer of wax polish over the original surface, using a traditional formula containing either pure beeswax or a 50/50 mix of carnauba and beeswax in turpentine for a harder, more durable finish. Alternately a modern microcrystalline wax may be used, such as Paralloid H80. (This type of finish will alter the appearance of the original, but unlike modern varnishes such as polyurethane, wax is a traditional finish which is not incompatible with historic interiors, it is reversible, and it is easy to maintain, helping to protect the original finish for future generations to discover and enjoy).*

**CONCLUSION: impact of proposed works on listed building**

The changes proposed are all reasonable in scale and will have minimal impact on the special character of the existing listed building.

Other than the non-reversible removal of the C 20<sup>th</sup> awning and linoleum (which are inappropriate to the setting and will actually benefit the listed building), the other changes will be done in such a way that they can be reversed in the future if necessary and do not damage the historic fabric. The counters, desk, safe and shelves could all be put back in their original positions, which have now been independently recorded, at some point in the future of necessary.

The 2 primary counters will still be located in the front shop and with the 3<sup>rd</sup> counter will still allow the character of the old shop to be appreciated. The shop would not have been as crowded with fittings as it has become and according to the historic building recording, moving the desk to the 'back office' is likely to be more representative of the original layout.

The areas of 25 Southside Street that carry most historic significance; the external shop front and the shop interior which has remained untouched for over 100 years, will still be the most important features of the property. However, the works will allow the shop to keep up with modern shopping requirements, which has always been a key feature of a successful unit like 25 Southside Street.

To summarise, this is a sensitive low impact proposal that will help the shop find a new long term tenant to replace Yarmouth Stores, without comprising the listed building fabric. There should be no reason why the proposal should not be granted approval.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF EXISTING LISTED BUILDING:**

