

6 July 2021

**Delivered by email**

Central Planning Team  
City of Westminster  
Westminster City Hall  
64 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1E 6QP

Ref: CORL3011

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **46 ALBEMARLE STREET, W1 – APPLICATION FOR PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

### **REPLACEMENT SHOP FRONT AND INTERNAL ALTERATIONS**

On behalf of the applicant, the Corob Group, we are pleased to submit this application for planning and listed building consent relating to 46 Albemarle Street, W1. The site is located in the heart of Mayfair, and the application specifically relates to the ground floor commercial unit (Class E) at number 46, which is currently vacant following the vacation of the unit by the former tenant during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

Specifically this application seeks planning and Listed Building consent for the following proposed development:

*‘Alterations to shopfront to number 46 Albemarle Street, with associated external ground floor alterations, and internal alterations including the removal of internal partitions and an internal staircase from ground to basement level’*

This application is accompanied by existing and proposed plans and elevations provided by the applicant.

### **SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA**

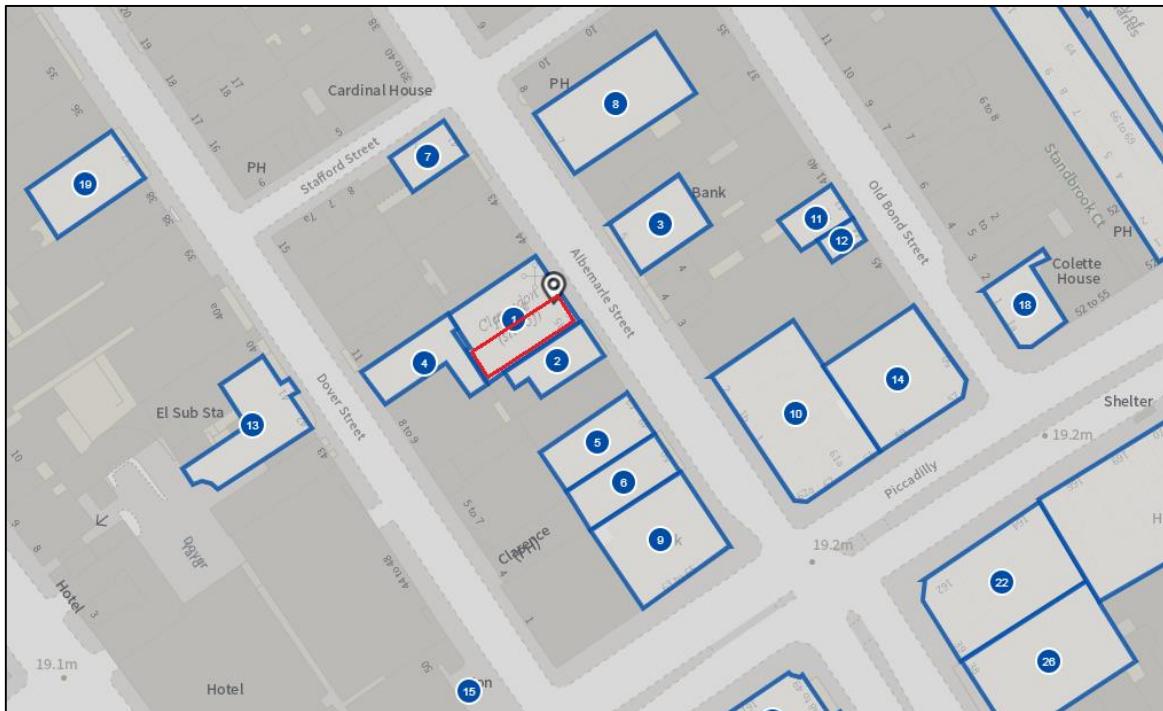
The application site is the ground floor commercial unit at number 46 Albemarle Street, which forms part of the wider building at 45-46 Albemarle Street, formerly the site of Clarendon House. The building is Grade II Listed, and located within the Mayfair Conservation Area, with further details of its listing and interest set out below.

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The building comprises basement, ground and five upper floors. The ground floor is split into two retail/commercial units (Class E), with five floors of office floorspace (also Class E) above. There is fairly extensive planning history for the site as set out below.

**Figure 1: Site location, and listed building designations**



**Figure 2: 45-46 Albermarle Street (Google)**



The surrounding area in this part of Mayfair comprises a similar range of uses to the application site, including predominantly ground floor retail and other commercial uses, with offices to the upper floor levels of buildings. There are also a number of hotels in the area, including on Albemarle Street itself.

Bond Street is a short distance to the east of the site, one of the world's premier luxury retail streets and identified as an International shopping centre in Westminster's City Plan. To the south of the site is Piccadilly, which is around 50m to the south of the site, and is a major route through the West End of Westminster. The nearest London Underground Station is Green Park, which is a short distance from the site on Piccadilly (served by the Victoria, Jubilee, and Piccadilly lines), while a number of bus routes run along Piccadilly.

## PLANNING HISTORY

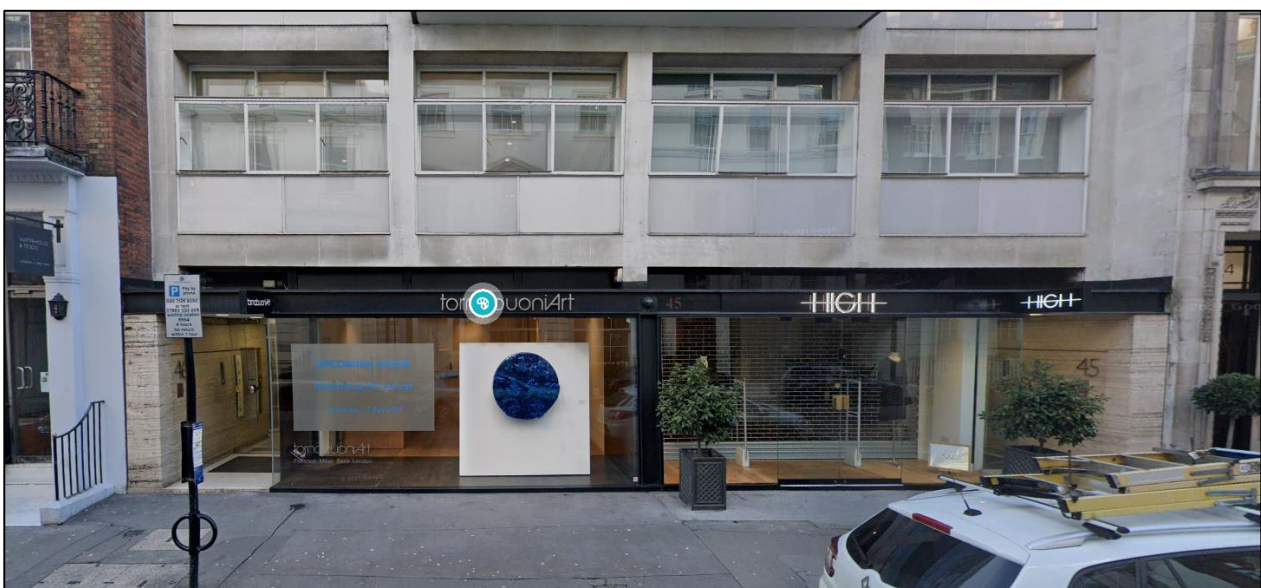
Recent planning history includes recent listed building consent for the repair of the rear façade of 45-46 Albemarle Street (early 2021), and recent listed building consents for internal alterations and the installation of internally illuminated signage to the building. Planning permission was granted in 2015 for the conversion of the building to residential use (Ref. 14/04967/FULL), which was not implemented by the applicant/owners.

Of most relevance to this application is the listed building consent from December 2014 (Ref 14/09680/LBC), which this application is now seeking to partially reverse. That listed building consent was for *'internal alterations at ground and basement level including the creation of a new staircase'*. The new staircase was proposed at the front of the ground floor commercial unit connecting the ground floor to the basement, and replicating a similar historic staircase located at the rear of the unit. This was undertaken for the former, now departed tenant in the retail unit at number 46.

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks to remove the front internal staircase in the retail unit at number 46 Albemarle Street that was installed for the previous tenant connecting the ground floor to basement level, and also removing internal partitions erected by the previous tenant. It is also proposed to replace the existing shopfront at number 46 to replicate the shopfront at number 45, as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Existing shop fronts, number 45 (right) and 46 (left)



The proposal will relocate the doors to the unit to the centre of the glazed frontage, replacing the existing entrance located in the recessed return entrance, which was created to deliver a showcase space at the front of the unit for the previous art gallery occupier of the unit (see Figure 3). This return glazing will be replaced by marble walling, again replicating what is found at number 45 as shown on Figure 3.

The proposal will create a unified, high quality shop front, replicating the arrangement of number 45 across the elevation, using high quality materials that are appropriate for the Listed Building and Conservation Area context.

## **LISTING AND HISTORY – 45-46 ALBEMARLE STREET**

The site was built in 1955-7 to the design of Erno Goldfinger, and was subsequently listed (Grade II) in 1991. The listing sets out that the building was listed based on its architectural interest and authorship as set out below, along with the history of the building. The building has however been altered both internally and externally over the years, including the shopfront and retail unit subject of this application.

### ***Architectural interest***

It is one of the most distinguished office buildings of the 1950s and a rare instance of urban infill in post-war London that responds sensitively to the scale and vocabulary of the streetscape. Of particular note is the subtle interplay of projection and recession, anticipating on a small scale the mature style that Goldfinger was to develop in his later work. The changes of plane, combination of new and traditional materials and expression of every element of the structure, are hallmarks of Goldfinger's work;

### ***Authorship***

Ernö Goldfinger was a figure of considerable importance in post-war British architecture; this building marks a pivotal point in his career.

### ***Site History***

The history of the site is that it was built as a speculative office and retail development to the design of the architect Erno Goldfinger, on the site of a pair of Georgian terraced houses destroyed in WWII. The façade grid follows the 'Golden Section' proportions (a mathematical ratio, fundamental to classical design, that has defined proportions in both art and architecture), a principal which Goldfinger derived from his mentor, the French architect Auguste Perret, and which he applied throughout his career. While treated as a single composition, the building comprised two separate premises for different clients, and was designed to enable the floors to be interlinked laterally by constructing the dividing wall as two independent walls.

Goldfinger also designed the shop and office fittings for No.46, which do not survive. The building was widely reviewed following its completion, eliciting considerable praise for its sensitivity to its historic context. Further details about the history of the building as set out in the Listing detail on the Historic England website are as follows:

### ***MATERIALS***

Reinforced-concrete frame clad in Portland stone and grey vitrolite; rear elevation clad in bush-hammered concrete with smooth concrete panels; brick infill to WC wings; steel-framed windows to both elevations.

### ***PLAN***

Mirrored plan with recessed entrances to either side; stairs against outer wall; WCs in small projections to rear. The ground floor and basement are deeper in plan than the upper floors, occupying the entire

building plot. The office layout of No. 46 designed by Goldfinger no longer survives. The offices to No. 45 were designed simply as open spaces to be fitted out by respective lessees. The dividing wall has been removed on some floors to create a single office, an intentional part of the design.

**EXTERIOR:** six storeys high and four bays wide. The façade is set back from the street: a means of conforming with the London County Council's plot ratios while avoiding a set-back top floor. The glazing system consists of 'photobolic screens', a light-diffusing device used by Goldfinger at his house in Willow Road, Hampstead (1939) and later at Alexander Fleming House (1959-67), whereby the upper sections of the glazing are set back; the ledge of the lower part serving to reflect light further back into the room. The second and fourth floors have central paired steel-framed oriels. These combined features give the façade its distinctive rhythm of set-back and projecting planes. The fascia to the shop front is an exposed steel I-beam; the plate-glass shop fronts and travertine cladding to the entrances date from the early C21. The façade is surmounted by a timber eaves cornice at 45° supported on concrete posts. The rear elevation has the same glazing as the front, minus the oriels.

**INTERIOR:** Each shop has a steel spiral stair down to basement. The original steel and glass screen separating the entrance hall and shop of No. 46 is believed to survive beneath later cladding. The shop interiors have been otherwise much altered and lack special interest. Stairs to offices have steel balustrades and tubular steel handrails. The office interiors have been repeatedly modernised and lack special interest.

## PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The principal planning policy considerations relate to statutory duties from the NPPF (2019) in relation to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and Local Plan considerations again in relation to the heritage context and policies around Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Design. The statutory development plan for the City of Westminster comprises:

- Westminster City Plan 2040 (April 2021) and associated policies map
- London Plan (March 2021)
- NPPF (2019) and associated NPPG (2019)

Associated relevant guidance (Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents) is also a material consideration in determining applications.

The application site is subject to the following planning policy designations within the Westminster City Plan (2021):

- Mayfair Conservation Area
- Listed Building
- Central Activities Zone
- West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area (WERLSPA)
- Mayfair and St James's Special Policy Area (SPA 2)

## PLANNING ASSESSMENT

As set out above, this application does not seek to change the use of the property in question, being limited to changes to the shop front and to the internal access of the unit, reversing similar modern interventions made for the previous tenant of the unit.

It is acknowledged in the listing entry that the shop interiors lack special interest, and that the shopfront glazing is modern from the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The proposal seeks to reverse changes recently made to the shop front and internally, and return it to mirror the neighbouring frontage at number 45, providing a harmonious and consistent composition, as shown on the submitted elevations. The proposal will use high quality, sympathetic materials including a marble return within the recessed entrance at the side of number 46, mirroring that found at number 45.

As such, it is considered that the proposal will preserve the special interest of the listed building given the description in the listing as set out above, using appropriate architectural detailing and restoring previous arrangement of the shopfront and removing the recent additional internal staircase from ground to basement level. The proposal will also preserve the building's contribution to the character and appearance of the Mayfair Conservation Area given the minimal and positive nature of the proposals. As such it is considered that the proposals accord with City Plan policy 39 Westminster's Heritage, and with relevant NPPF policies.

I trust this is sufficient information for you to consider this application, however please do contact me at our offices if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely



Laurence Brooker  
**Director**

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