

Archie's



Design Statement to support planning application for
72 Oxford Street - New Shopfront proposal

June 2021

Introduction

The proposals outlined in this application are to refurbish the shopfront of Archie's situated on 72-74 Oxford Street on the upper ground floor of the building, owned, and occupied on all other floors by the Samaritans. Over the last 11 years since opening, Archie's has enjoyed a strong and positive relationship with the landlord and the local community, allowing the business to grow to a number of new sites across the country. With this being the first premises, and the brand now elevated to an operational level not considered when the store was first conceived, it is felt that the proposed works to the internal operations as well as the shopfront will greatly benefit the local community and customers alike.

Design Proposal

The proposals outlined in the planning application focus on simplifying and tidying up the existing shopfront, which in doing so will also add a new aesthetic dynamic to the building. The existing frontage is comprised of 2 glazed openings with the larger containing the entrance door, along with an illuminated signage element and projecting sign. The new proposal intends to retain the larger opening and entrance door whilst reducing the size of the smaller one to a more traditional window size of 1200mm x 1200mm starting at 1200mm from street level. The existing brickwork surrounding the openings is not original and it is felt that with the separate signage and window elements, the store front looks a little disjointed. The proposal is to contain all these elements in a shallow built out cladding that will simplify the front elevation and create a much more premium aesthetic to the frontage, benefitting the building and surrounding elements alike. By mechanically fixing treated timber battens to the existing fascia, and cladding in a Cementous board before applying a decorated concrete render, the tenant will be creating a solid pink frontage that encompasses all the window and signage elements. All mechanical fixings made to the existing fascia brick work will be done through the mortar joints between brick courses to ensure the new cladding and frontage can be removed without damage to the building itself.

Although opposite the newly renovated grade 2 listed Kimpton Clocktower hotel, the surrounding architecture on the premises side of the road is varied with the old Cornerhouse building ground floor in a contemporary style underneath the traditional Victorian style building it resides, and the mock Georgian style of the Samaritans unit and adjacent Grand Central Public house in contrasting style. The addition of contemporary elements of architecture along Oxford Street and Oxford road such as the Holiday Inn building with Spar on ground level, and the Circle Square development with proposed retail and F&B Units should also be acknowledged as a precedent for allowing quality new design to sit alongside Manchester's heritage and historical buildings. It is felt that this simple, bold, contemporary approach to the shopfront will only help to increase the interest and aesthetic value to the area and will provide an uplift to the Samaritans and directly adjacent properties.

It should also be noted that within the proposed works – which have been fully endorsed and approved by the landlord – will also carry out much needed work to the internal space, providing the landlord themselves with a level of much needed maintenance as part of the renovation, again greatly benefitting the local residents and visitors to the area.

Access

The access to the unit remains exactly the same as the existing unit, with the large format central glazed door being replaced like for like and any maintenance work to the nominal concrete threshold that leads from street level to the store being carried out. This allows easy access into the store for customers of all abilities, and once inside, a DDA compliant counter and considered digital order screens with visual and hearing support allow for all potential customer requirements. This will furthermore embrace the consumer trends and efficiency of customer flows of people reducing the previous congestions.

With the recent upsurge in food delivery companies, we are proposing to introduce a takeaway hatch for delivery drivers only which we feel would reduce the amount of people queuing in and around the store. The requirements for this service in today's catering market cannot be ignored and through the digital handling application, drivers would be informed at the exact moment that their order was ready for collection, removing the need to wait and queue outside the store for their food. The app would clearly tell drivers not to arrive before they receive their notification and the window would not be used for taking orders or communication. We feel this is the most suitable way to manage the new influx of delivery drivers without them waiting around the store for long periods and any drivers caught loitering outside would be turned away and reported to the relevant handling company. This would provide a clear separation between the high street consumers and delivery drivers and the way these are managed would provide a clear set of rules to ensure drivers are not congesting the surrounding area.

Please note – all existing waste routes and management contracts are to be maintained along with the existing historic extract and ventilation ducting routes.

Summary

It is felt the proposal outlined enhances not only the frontage of the unit it is contained within, but also adds a unique and well considered shopfront to the parade of fascias surrounding it. A strong and well designed shopfront that will uplift the area as a whole, avoiding any crass branding or over embellishment to the surrounding landscape while providing a new experience to the longstanding resident for its customers and visitors to the area.