Proposed Covent Garden Conservation Area Extension
Consultation Report

As a result of pre-application discussions earlier this year for redevelopment proposals at 5-9 Newport Street, the Council has undertaken a review of the boundaries to the western part of the Covent Garden Conservation Area. As a result of this review, officers are now consulting on a proposal to extend Covent Garden. A full review of the conservation area will follow in due course and is likely to take place in 2008/9.

This report provides a brief historical and architectural description of the area proposed for inclusion.

Please submit any comments on the proposal to extend the area and the information within this document in writing to:

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The deadline for further comment is 6 August 2007.
Current Boundaries

Covent Garden is a large Conservation Area, first designated in 1971. It is situated in the eastern part of the City of Westminster. The northern boundary abuts, in part, the London Borough of Camden along Shelton Street and Wild Street. The southern boundary follows the Strand, beyond which lies the Savoy and Adelphi Conservation Areas. To the east is the Strand Conservation Area; to the west is Leicester Square; and the Chinatown Conservation Area to the northwest. The current boundaries are shown at Figure 1.

Proposed Extension

It is proposed to extend the conservation area to include the area shown at Figure 2. This would include:

- The island of buildings bounded by Great Newport Street, Cranbourne Street and Charing Cross Road.
- North side of Great Newport Street (Nos. 5 - 13 consc.)
- Sandringham Flats (Nos. 50 - 80 (even) Charing Cross Road and 1-5 (odd) Litchfield Street)
- Nos. 1 -3 (odd) Upper St Martin’s Lane

Figure 2: Proposed extension (detail)

Figure 1: Covent Garden Conservation Area
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The land north of Great Newport Street on the west of St Martin’s Lane formed part of the Parish of St Anne, which remained as open fields and pasture until the early 17th century.

In 1601 the land known as St Martin’s Field, which included the west side of St Martin’s Land and Upper St Martin’s Lane, was purchased by the Earl of Salisbury. In 1654, Lord Newport purchased the land northwards from the west end of Little Newport Street to roughly where Cambridge Circus is now. Figure 3 shows the division of the land between the Salisbury and Newport Estates.

In c.1630, the Earl of Newport built a grand house, fronting Little Newport Street. The street running east of this was one of the earliest in the parish to be built up, which from 1649 onwards was known as Newport Street and as Great Newport Street in the mid 19th century.

By the mid 17th century the north side of Great Newport Street was rebuilt and became a fashionable place to live. In the second half of the 18th century many of the inhabitants of Great Newport Street were associated with the arts, including Joshua Reynolds and Josiah Wedgwood, who had a showroom at the corner of Great Newport Street and Upper St Martin’s Lane. No. 5 Great Newport Street is the only surviving mid 18th century house of the range on the north side.

In 1682 the Newport Estate was sold off, after which Newport House was demolished and the land subsequently developed by Dr Nicholas Barbon. The focus of Barbon’s redevelopment was a large market square, Newport Market, which became one of London’s principle meat markets by the early 18th century.

Roque’s Map of 1746 (Figure 5) shows the rapid transformation of the land around Newport Street, which has by this time
been completely developed. To the west, the rectangular plan of Newport Market is visible.

Figure 5: Roque’s Map, 1746

In 1877 the Metropolitan Board of Works initiated the creation of Charing Cross Road, in order to make a N-S link between Trafalgar Square and Tottenham Court Road. The line of the new street, drawn up by George Vullimay and Sir Joseph Bazalgette, was devised to make the maximum use of existing streets. However, much of the ground which the Board could not avoid purchasing was in

Figure 6: 1870s Ordnance Survey Map prior to construction of Charing Cross Road

the area of Newport Market. The 1870s Ordnance Survey map (Figure 6) shows the area just before Charing Cross Road was created.

By the mid 19th century the Newport Market area had degenerated into a slum, in need of social improvement. An Act of 1877 stated that some of the new land acquired by the Board should be used to provide labouring-class accommodation. Some 130 properties in the Newport Market area were therefore demolished to provide for the erection of artisan’s dwellings. The land which had been acquired by the Board but which was not required for the streets was divided up into plots of suitable size and shape and leased by public tender.

The Sandringham Buildings were erected in 1884 by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, as multi-storey blocks of artisans’ accommodation. The rest of the Newport Market area was also set aside for artisans’ dwellings, though these were leased separately. The modern Litchfield Street is only half its original length, since the west extension was also demolished by the Metropolitan Board of Works for the construction of the Charing Cross Road in

Figure 7: 1890s Ordnance Survey Map after construction of Charing Cross Road and Sandringham Buildings
The 1890s OS Map (Figure 7) shows how the Charing Cross Road was carved through the centre of Newport Market, completely altering the street and plot layouts. Late Victorian and early 20th century development has had a significant impact on the area. Despite re-development, the original 18th century plot widths have generally be retained at nos 5 - 9 Great Newport Street.

In the 1910 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 8) a large public house has appeared at the corner of Great Newport Street and Upper St Martin’s Lane. At the corner of Cranbourn Street and Charing Cross Road, Leicester Square Underground Station (1906) has also been built.

Architecture

Overview

The architecture in the proposed extension area is varied in detail, though predominantly dates from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and forms an attractive grouping. Each building will be considered in turn below:

Great Newport Street (north side)

No. 1 Upper St Martin’s Lane occupies the large corner plot with Great Newport Street (Figure 9). This Grade II listed former public house, dated 1898 by R. A Lewcock, is red brick broken with stone detailing. Four storeys with dormered mansard behind a balustraded parapet. Above the splayed entrance is a full height canted bay with turret and cupola at attic level.

No. 5 Great Newport Street (Figure 10) is also Grade II listed, and is the only late 17th century terraced house to
remain in the area. Although the front has been refaced in black polished tiles with metal casement windows, the original fenestration rhythm and proportions and parapet and interior has been retained.

This building is an important remnant of the area's historical development and the facade treatment masks the historic significance of this building.

Nos. 6-7 Great Newport Street (Figure 11) is a late 19th/early 20th century, five storey building in red-brick. The first floor has four bays of segmental arched, timber casement windows while the second and third storeys have square head casements and a central canted bay set between giant pilasters. The ground floor treatment, notably the signage detracts from the

building and its surroundings and offers an opportunity for enhancement.

No. 8-9 is similar in scale and detail to no. 6-7. The ground floor has attractive shopfront surrounds with carved consoles. The scale, materials and semi-industrial character of this grouping of buildings is similar to others within the Covent Garden Conservation Area.

No. 10-11 Great Newport Street is a 20th century four storey block with double-height mansard. Overall the proportions and fenestration relates to nos. 8-9, and although of a later date, the architectural detailing relates to that at no. 1 Upper St Martin’s Lane and contributes to the group of buildings along this side of the street.

No. 12 Great Newport Street occupies a narrower plot and is stucco fronted, with a double-height arch entrance way. Again though the detailing is different, the building fits with the scale of adjoining buildings. Thus, although of different ages in a architectural styles, nos. 8-12 Great Newport Street form a group in terms of their overall scale and general proportions.

Great Newport Street (south side)

The south side of Great Newport Street is dominated by Newport House at nos. 15 - 18. This symmetrical early 20th century block is in red brick and has a central arched opening at ground floor level and
stucco shopfront surrounds. There are paired timber sash windows. The material and simple detailing of this block relates to no. 8-9 on the north side of Great Newport Street.

Charing Cross Road

North of Great Newport Street, the east side of Charing Cross Road is dominated by the frontage of the **Sandringham Buildings**. Built in 1883-4 by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Co. to house artisans displaced by the construction of Charing Cross Road.

Five storeys, plus attic storey, it is in yellow stock brick. The front contains multiple bays of paired and tripartite windows with white painted arches above. There are a number of attractive timber shopfronts at ground floor level (Figure 15).

The side return of the Sandringham Buildings continues into Litchfield Street (Figure 16). This return is set back behind railings.

The southern corner of Great Newport Street and Charing Cross Road is occupied by the c.1865 Porcupine Public House. In stock brick with stucco dressings, the scale, age and detailing of this building is in keeping with much that already exists within the Covent Garden Conservation Area.
Leicester Square Underground Station occupies the large plot on the corner of Cranbourn Street and Charing Cross Road. The main building from 1906 and fronts Charing Cross Road, has an attractive red glazed tile front, arched mezzanine level windows and a dentil cornice. The upper storeys are in red brick with stone pilasters and window pediments.

Cranbourn Street (north side)

Nos. 21-25 Cranbourn Street (figure 19) is a group of five early Victorian terraced houses, which form a wedge-shape narrowing towards Upper St Martin’s Lane. The group form a consistent unit of four storey buildings with shops at ground level and roofs concealed behind a continual parapet. All are stucco fronted, and simply detailed, with timber sash windows.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed extension contains a number of buildings of both historical and architectural interest. These have a strong sense of group value and relate well to the existing character of the Covent Garden area. Their designation is therefore recommended.