



Specialist traders leave Covent Garden – first Dobells, now Ray's Jazz Shop quit the area

and Camden for the Covent Garden area. In this capacity, we receive hundreds of applications every year, asking us for comments prior to the Council adjudicating whether to permit or refuse the application.

Applications and correspondence, on receipt, are stacked beside the coordinator's desk. It is not uncommon for this paper tower to rise several feet high. Our fortnightly agenda will usually feature 30 or more items for discussion. In these circumstances it would be easy to spend all our time only reacting to what we receive, however we also will write and send deputations on overall policy matters to local and central government. The volunteers who make up our committee sift and evaluate these applications and with their expertise and advice we respond to all. The list of members of this committee (given on the inside front cover) is a roll of honour, and the CGCA is very grateful for their work.

I give you a taste of the comments we make on frequent issues in applications.

### Air Handling Equipment

Just as the sound of waves greets you at the seaside, so the hum and screech of air-conditioning follows you around the streets of Covent Garden. Hearing is not the only sense affected. Smells are pumped out into narrow alleys, and large pipes and equipment blot the streetscape and block light-wells.

*We say to applicants,*

- Why not natural ventilation?
- The sound of air-conditioning is always intrusive
- If you must have it, maintain your equipment, and use screening where possible
- Turn it off at night

### Change of Shop Fronts

We believe Covent Garden should maintain its character with individual and diverse narrow shop fronts.

*We say to applicants,*

- Look around you, is your proposal in character?
- Look above ground floor level and respect the building you occupy
- Look at the best examples in the area
- Keep signage simple
- Keep clutter off the pavement

### Change of Use

We believe Covent Garden is not just for visitor shopping. The attraction of the area rests on the preservation of a high mix of uses and a residential community.

*We say to applicants for change and development,*

- What does the community gain?
- Aren't there enough bars /cafés / restaurants?
- Is the use compatible with your neighbours?
- What about housing?
- What about affordable housing?

### Security

With rising crime and lawlessness on the streets, this a standard by which we increasingly judge applications.

*We say to applicants*

- Will the use or design attract crime?
- Are there spaces which drug users or vagrants will occupy

It is probably unavoidable that it is by our objections that we are known (they lead to dispute, appeals, public meetings etc). This can give a negative image of our work, particularly to potential applicants. It is instructive to know that in the last 3 meetings we have considered 36 planning applications, of which 13 were objected to. Sometimes our objection