



City of Westminster

Cabinet Member Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for the Built Environment
Date:	2 September 2016
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Commemorative Green Plaque for the site of the former Vince Man's Shop at 5 Newburgh Street, W1
Wards Affected:	West End
Key Decision:	No
Financial Summary:	The Green Plaque Scheme depends on sponsorship. Sponsorship has been secured for this plaque
Report of:	Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

1. Executive Summary

Vince Man's Shop was the small Soho boutique which sparked the modernisation of menswear design and retailing in the second half of the 20th century.

2. Recommendations

That the nomination for a Westminster Commemorative Green Plaque for the Vince Man's Shop at 5 Newburgh Street, W1, be approved subject to sponsorship in full.

3. Reasons for Decision

Bill Green's Vince Man's Shop, more commonly known as 'Vince's', was the first male fashion boutique in Carnaby. His designs were an inspiration for many designers who would revolutionise male fashion in 1960's. It can therefore be regarded as the business which started to establish Carnaby Street as the centre of London's cutting edge fashion retail market.

4. Policy Context

The commemorative Green Plaques scheme complements a number of Council strategies: to improve the legibility and understanding of Westminster's heritage and social history; to provide information for Westminster's visitors; to provide imaginative and accessible educational tools to raise awareness and understanding of local areas, particularly for young people; to celebrate the richness and diversity of Westminster's former residents.

5. Background

The Vince Man's Shop 1954 - 1969

5.1 The Beginning

5.1.1 Bill Green started his career in the late 1940's as a photographer specialising in taking photographs of wrestlers and musclemen. His models were shot wearing bikini-style posing briefs, designed by Green himself, who, in the absence of readily made garments, decided to start his own line of briefs. He began to sell them through his mail-order catalogue in 1950.

5.1.2 After holidaying in France and Italy in 1952, Green, impressed by young Frenchmen who were sporting the 'existentialist' look - black sweaters worn with black jeans - started his own line of such clothes. He was the first designer to introduce this look to British men. His mail order business flourished and, in 1954, he opened Vince Man's Shop in Newburgh Street.

5.2 Newburgh Street

5.2.1 Not by accident, the shop was located very close to Marshall Street Public Baths which was a well-known and popular meeting place for gay men at the time. The store sold colourful and unconventional designs which were often revealing (for the time) using unusual fabrics, including velvet, silk, bed-ticking for hipster trousers and pre-faded denims. Outside, the window displays were also provocative for the time, often featuring mannequins wearing Vince's less than conventional garments.

5.2.2 The designs stocked initially appealed almost exclusively to gay customers, but as the catalogue expanded to include a wider range of continentally-inspired clothing, the store quickly broadened its appeal, attracting younger members of the Chelsea bohemian set and thespian fraternities, who frequented the West End of London.

5.2.3 The impact of Vince's should not be underestimated. By the late 1950'S, for the first time it was acceptable for heterosexual men to wear informal and flamboyant clothes. It was the first time that leisurewear became chic - jeans and sweater could be worn for an evening out, from now on. Green's clientele included such names as actor Peter Sellers, jazz musician George Melly, Pablo Picasso (who bought a pair of suede trousers), the King of Denmark, and young model-soon-to-turn-actor Sean Connery.

5.2.4 The fashions in Green's establishment were not cheap, and were generally out of the normal price range of ordinary teenagers, but these steps towards informality, ambivalence and colour with his new styles, were catalysts to the major changes that were to take place in the young male fashion market of the 1960's.

5.3 The Legacy

5.3.1 The Vince shop's clothing inspired many designers who would revolutionise male fashion in 1960s, and their designs were very much influenced by what had been found to be successful at Vince's. Older men still wore suits and white shirts for work, and grey flannels with blazers or sports jackets for weekends. But teenagers no longer wanted to dress like their fathers, instead wanting flamboyant but affordable designs including hipster trousers, multi-coloured denim, and tab-collar shirts in various highly coloured shades and patterns.

5.3.2 The young man largely responsible for this revolution worked briefly as a sales assistant at Vince's. Bill Green had sensed his ambition: *"Not much good"* - he said of his work as sales assistant - *"Always dreaming of the bigger things"*. The young man himself also seemed dissatisfied: *"I was just standing there taking money. Suddenly I thought, if this guy (Green) can do it, so can I..."*

5.3.3 The young man was, of course, John Stephen (1934-2004) later dubbed the "King of Carnaby Street". He had learnt a lot at Vince's and his own early designs and shop fronts owed a lot to Bill Green.

5.4 The Decline

5.4.1 The rise of John Stephen as a designer marked the downfall of Bill Green's business, for Stephen was much more in touch with the youth culture. Bill Green could not keep up with the rapid changes in fashion which were happening from early 1960's onwards. By mid-1960's, his shop had become un-fashionable and financial problems

forced him to move Vince Man's Shop from Newburgh Street to a cheaper location in North London. In 1969, he closed his shop for good.

5.4.2 Bill Green might have been one of the initiators of the revolution in fashion, but he had quickly fallen behind the times. In 1971, Green (by then a manager of a restaurant in Soho) was quoted as saying "*If I was to go into male fashion again today, I wouldn't even know where to start*".

6. Financial Implications

The manufacturing cost of the Green Plaque, its installation, scheme administration costs and maintenance will be borne by the sponsor, Shaftesbury. There is no cost to Westminster City Council.

7. Legal Implications

The property, 5 Newburgh Street, W1, the site of the original Vince Man's Shop is listed Grade II. A Listed Building Consent application will be submitted in tandem with this report.

8. Consultation

The owners of 5 Newburgh Street (Shaftesbury) support the nomination being the sponsors and Ward Members have been consulted and no objections have been raised.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact: Kim Patterson

Telephone: 020 7641 3297

Email: kpatterson@westminster.gov.uk

Report author: Chris Stanton

Telephone: 020 8763 2044

Email: seebee.stanton@virgin.net

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Site plan of 5 Newburgh Street at 1:1250 scale.

Appendix 2

Drawing showing proposed location of the Vince Man's Shop Green Plaque at 5 Newburgh Street, W1.

Appendix 3

Wording and layout of proposed Vince Man's Shop Green Plaque.

For completion by the **Cabinet Member** for **The Built Environment**

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: **Councillor Robert Davis MBE DL**

State nature of interest if any

.....
(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

Commemorative Green Plaque for the site of the former Vince Man’s Shop at 5 Newburgh Street , W1

and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed

Cabinet Member for *Built Environment*

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
.....
.....

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, Director of Finance and, if there are staffing implications, the Director of People Services (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.

Appendix A

Other Implications

1. Resources Implications

1.1 There are no resources implications arising from this report

2. Business Plan Implications

2.1 There are no Business Plan implications arising from this report

3. Risk Management Implications

3.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report

4. Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications

4.1 There are no health and safety and wellbeing issues arising from this report

5. Crime and Disorder Implications

5.1 There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report

6. Impact on the Environment

6.1 There are no environmental issues arising from this report

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report

8. Staffing Implications

8.1 There are no staffing issues arising from this report

9. Human Rights Implications

9.1 There are no issues relating to responsibilities under the Human Rights Act 1998 arising from this report

10. Energy Measure Implications

10.1 There are no energy measure issues arising from this report

11. Communications Implications

11.1 Should this report be approved and an unveiling ceremony arranged the Council's press section will be informed

Note to report authors: If there are particularly significant implications in any of the above categories these should be moved to the main body of the report.