

**Design Statement: St Giles Square – ‘Wedge Planter’ Reconfiguration
Hard Landscaping Proposal**
April 2025

Introduction and Situation

This document has been prepared by Almacantar, on behalf of Almacantar Centre Point LP Acting via its general partner Almacantar Centre Point GP Sarl, to support its application to partially discharge condition 13 of planning permission ref: 2017/0994/P, dated 30 June 2017, in respect of the design details for the extant wedge planter to the south of Centre Point Tower, only.

Condition 13 states:

“Details of hard and soft landscaping including tree/plant species and sizes, all hard landscape materials, play structures, security features for the underground entrances and means of enclosure of all unbuilt, open areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the relevant parts of work are begun. Such details shall include details on how the spaces are accessible by all including details on level access, ramp gradients, landings, handrails, step dimensions, colour contrast nosings etc. Implementation of the hard and soft landscaping and the boundary treatment shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details”

This submission follows the pre-application meeting held with Camden planning and highways officers on 4 February 2025 (ref: 2024/5741/P). The proposals for the wedge planter were presented to officers who advised that the design was acceptable in principle and could be sought via a partial discharge of condition 13.

St Giles Square is an established public space for London designed to suit the needs of residents, retail and commercial tenants and the public. With the Tottenham Court Road Crossrail station and Outernet now both operating fully, and wider regeneration projects completing in the local area with commercial occupiers moving in, the square benefits from a high footfall of commuters on weekdays and being centrally located for tourists at weekends. The vision for St Giles Square’s redevelopment was to create a safe environment which interacts with the architecture on the surrounding estate and wider local area.

The square is the West End’s newest destination for cultural and creative expression. It is the centre of the reinvention of a significant district and a case for change and improvement. It is flanked by some of the most creative and well-established districts in London and is often visitors’ first touchpoint in London once exiting at Tottenham Court Road Station. Almacantar is committed to creating a usable space with access, linkages, comfort, and an improved image.

Whilst the area has improved with the redevelopment over time, there are still some elements of concern, and it is essential that stakeholders collectively address issues around anti-social behaviour and operations to create a safe, usable space with improved sociability.

There are a number of issues to be addressed on the square over the long-term, with the key challenges as follows:

- Inadequate/ lack of public realm nearby
- Unfinished square restricting ability to capture increased foot traffic (Tottenham Court Road is now the busiest West End station due to Crossrail, and Outernet is attracting over 180,000 visitors a day at peak times)
- Pedestrian congestion/confusion
- Poor air quality due to traffic
- Poor lighting and safety
- Anti-social behaviour including:
 - Rough sleeping
 - Drug use and dealing
 - Aggressive behaviour (often under influence)
 - Loitering (particularly in residential entrances and behind planters)
 - Littering/ graffiti
- Evolving retail trends and global competition for nearby Oxford Street
- Lack of strategic programming to create unique identity and reasons for visitors to return

Almacantar is dedicated to improving the square as a public space, recognising that it, along with its Estate Manager and Camden Council, has a responsibility as a landowner to ensure that the following is appropriated:

- respect and protect the rights of all users
- treat all users in an equitable and inclusive manner
- keep spaces safe within the context of the actions of any reasonable person
- keep spaces clean and well maintained
- keep spaces open and unrestricted at all times (or otherwise in line with regulatory stipulations)

One immediate need to address, in order to fulfil the vision for the square, is the unfinished 'Wedge Planter' located at the south of Centre Point tower.

The planter was included in the public realm works which received consent in 2014. Subsequently Camden Council undertook delivery of the project as part of its public realm works mandate, funded by Almacantar in January 2015 when works started on the wider estate. The concrete structure was completed in January 2019 with the steel overlay and planting completed in 2020.

Whilst the planter serves a purpose in covering the UKPN air vents, it is not designed or built well and therefore landscaping has failed. The angle does not allow for adequate watering in order for planting to survive and the planter itself has been constructed poorly. As a result, the planter gives a poor visual impression of the estate on entrance from Tottenham Court Road Station and attracts anti-social behaviour of varying degrees throughout the day. It has been subsequently damaged, and the structure now attracts anti-social behaviour and making it a hinderance for managing crime on the square.

Proposal

We propose reconfiguring the planter into permanent hard landscaping which is in keeping with the area.

As discussed at the pre-application meeting held on 4th February 2025, the hard landscaping will be designed by Robert Montgomery and delivered by Millimetre to ensure a high standard, creative and timeless solution.

Robert Montgomery is a globally recognised and highly regarded British contemporary artist well known for his work in public spaces, including other locations in Camden including King's Cross. His work responds to its surroundings in the form of poetry in a variety of material forms and he always derives a personal connection to each. Having lived in Camden for many years, Robert has witnessed first-hand the change around Tottenham Court Road and understands the collective vision behind its regeneration. Similar to his work at Coal Drops Yard, his proposal for St Giles Square celebrates the magic of London and encourages visitors to stop and look around.

Existing Site and Case for Reconfiguration

The existing planter is poorly made and therefore looks unfinished and not in keeping with the rest of the square and wider Centre Point Estate.

Camden Council originally planted the landscaping and Almacantar subsequently replanted it with more resilient plants to no benefit. The structure does not work as an effective planter due to the angle and its location under the Centre Point overhang which means it is not watered effectively, and planting does not survive.

The planter is also providing a hidden-from-view area behind for anti-social behaviour such as drug-taking, public urination/ defecation, littering and rough sleeping.



Image 1: View from Outernet of the planter



Image 2: View from the west, from Tottenham Court Road Station exit



Image 3: Detailed close up of failed landscaping



Image 4: View between Centre Point and wedge planter with temporary barriers to stop unauthorised access at both ends

Proposed Renovation to Existing Wedge Planter

Proposed Hard Landscaping:

- Layout, Scale and Build



Artwork embedded on surface with slanted top

- Materials



Base – steel sheet



Lettering – brass



Frame – steel frame underneath

- We have chosen timeless materials which allow for reflection and interaction with Outernet as well as the changing light in the square
- The materials also have a purpose in ease of maintenance and cleaning as well as being hard wearing providing the piece with longevity
- The UKPN air vents will remain open at the back of the structure in the same way that they are in the existing planter

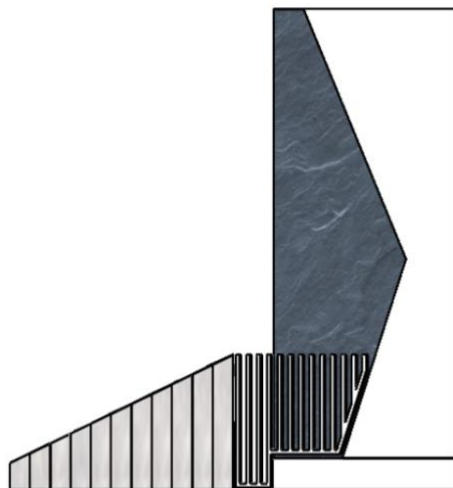
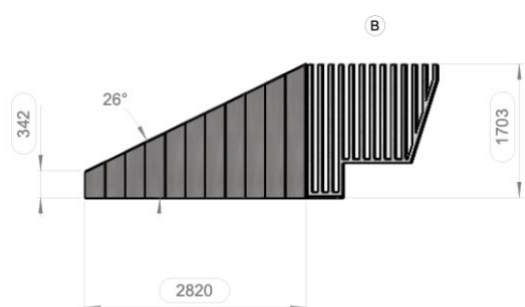
- Design

- Whilst hard landscaping is a sensible solution for the issues with the existing wedge planter, we feel it does not go far enough to deter anti-social behaviour, or reflect the identity of the area to simply just 'box' it in. Almacantar has engaged Robert Montgomery due to his affinity and sympathy with the local area having lived close to Tottenham Court Road and delivered public art elsewhere in Camden
- Robert Montgomery's proposal carefully considers the Grade II Listed Centre Point tower as well as the bright lights of Outernet by creating coherence between the two whilst celebrating the local community
- It is designed to work in harmony with both buildings, as well as respond to the wider public who will visit the square
- *See Appendix 1 - Hard Landscaping Pack for more detail on the design and the proposed plan, section and elevation drawings*

- Anti-social Behaviour Mitigation

- As discussed in the pre-application meeting on 4th February 2025, the proposed reconfiguration of the wedge planter will also include steel gates behind the structure to prevent unauthorised access
 - These will be fixed to the structure, not the ground or the building
 - There is no top rail to act as a deterrent to climbing
- On the western side, these will be openable to provide access for the Estate team to services, as and when required

a*



almacantar*

Summary

The proposed reconfiguration of the extant wedge planter is sought via the partial discharge of condition 13 (planning permission ref: 2017/0994/P) to address anti-social behaviour issues whilst also reinvigorating this part of St Giles Square to deliver an attractive and unifying piece of public art, designed by a British artist well-known in Camden.

The proposals have been discussed with Camden officers who considered the designs acceptable in principle.

As such, the application to partially discharge condition 13 should be approved.