

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT APPLICATION FOR ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT AT ST GEORGE'S COURT, BLOOMSBURY WAY, LONDON WC1

### 1 DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION

1.1 Display of three micromesh PVC scaffold screening shrouds incorporating three static front illuminated advertisement attached to the façade of the site fronting the apex of New Oxford Street and Bloomsbury Way for a period of 9 months. It is proposed that the shroud be erected onto the existing scaffolding. Parts of the scaffolding and shroud not covered by the advertisement will incorporate a 1:1 replica of the facade of the building. As the ongoing and current works involve the entire block (including the elevations on Bloomsbury Way, New Oxford Street and Bury Place) a large proportion of the scaffolded area and shroud will be covered by this 1:1 building imagery.

1.2 The dimensions of the proposed advertisement part of the shroud are:

Banner A: 6.56 meters (height) x 18.4 meters (width) x 0.5 meters (depth)

Banner B: 3.28 meters (height) x 9.2 meters (width) x 0.5 meters (depth)

Banner C: 6.56 meters (height) x 18.4 meters (width) x 0.5 meters (depth)

1.3 The applicant, King Media Limited, is one of the UK's leading exponents of large scale illustrated shrouds and scaffold safety screens. The Company has carried out a number of similar screening projects in London and other cities across the UK and is a pioneer in the innovative use of new display techniques for screening construction sites and buildings.

1.4 The shroud will be in situ displaying advertisements during the period of redevelopment works to the entire block primarily granted under planning permission ref 2012/1400/P dated 31 January 2013 and thereafter will be removed.

### 2 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Within the wider planning framework, there are some controls specific to shroud advertisements. Shroud/banner advertising falls under the definition of an advert requiring express planning consent from the local planning authority. In making their decision, the two issues the local planning authority can consider are:

2.1.1 The impact on amenity (visual, aural of the immediate neighborhood);

2.1.2 Impact on public safety.

NPPF policy aims to achieve the sustainable development and positive improvement to the built environment. Paragraph 67 states "only advertisements which clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or their surroundings should be subject to local planning authority's detailed assessment".

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**2.2** Paragraph 154 of Circular 03/2007 specifically relates to shroud and large advertisements and states, "that buildings which are being renovated or are undergoing major structural work and which have netting around them may be potential temporary sites for shroud advertisements or large wrap advertisements covering the face or most of the face of the building. In all cases express consent will be required for these advertisements that can remain in place until the netting is removed. These advertisements should be considered on a site specific basis taking account of amenity and public safety issues".

**2.3** Local planning authorities can formulate their own specific policies indicating what detailed considerations they take account of. These policies and/or guidance statements should not be the only deciding factor and each case should be considered on a site-specific basis. Camden Council's own policies and guidance accepts on a temporary basis shroud/banner advertisements where used to shield unsightly construction works to a building.

**2.4** The temporary nature of the shroud only being required until the works are completed needs to be taken fully into account.

### **3 SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION**

**3.1** The host building comprises the entire block, which contains St George's Court. This building is located on a triangular site adjoining Bloomsbury Way (to the north west), Bury Place (to the east) and New Oxford Street (to the south) within the Bloomsbury conservation area. The proposed banner is to be placed on the façade of the apex of Bloomsbury Way and New Oxford Street. The site is located at the Southern end of Camden Borough in a central London location attracting the usual mix of shopping, nightlife and tourists' accommodation. The general character of the area is commercial with the mix of uses largely comprising retail and related uses at ground level and commercial offices above.

### **4 DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

**4.1** The freehold of the site is owned by The Crown. The Applicant is working closely with London & Regional Properties Ltd the developer, who is looking to raise additional funding which will contribute to the major redevelopment of the property. London & Regional have entered into an agreement with King Media Limited who will sell advertising on the shroud some of the revenue generated can be used towards the cost of some of the works to the external parts of the building. The majority of these works are detailed in the works schedules and plans accompanying the application ref 2012/1400/P.

**4.2** This project is a significant redevelopment of this large central London property and will have a positive contribution to the area's economy. The Council's evaluation of the application explained how these works would enhance the character and appearance of both the building and this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area causing no harm to locality and surrounding buildings. To implement this permission the building will need to be scaffolded and shrouded. The applicant will be working closely with developers to achieve the project aims including the overall programme of works and scheduling.



4.3 Along with the significant redevelopment works including reconfiguration of façades at ground and first floor level, the buildings facades will be cleaned during the project prior to removal of the shroud/scaffold. On a building of this size the cleaning of the facades is a substantial project in itself, funding from the advertising shroud which is the subject of the application will also be used for this type of cosmetic work to the building. This will undoubtedly create an improved presence of the building in the street scene.

4.4 The scaffold safety screen is, in any event, a health and safety requirement while the works are carried out to the building. The screening is a highly effective measure in preventing debris falling whilst also protecting the façade(s) of the building while works are being undertaken in a much more efficient way than traditional scaffolding mesh. The safety screen has many applications in addition to those mentioned; not least weather protection, which allows the works to continue during adverse conditions. Further, given the proximity to the streets (on all sides) an additional screen of this nature is highly advisable.

4.5 It is proposed to illuminate the screen by use of lighting units positioned at 3 meter and intermediate centers above the advertisement display. The luminaries are specifically designed projector types, which can aim very precisely. They are designed and positioned to focus at the advert inset panel and not over the surrounding areas. This reduces any potential for light spill/glare and sky glow. The style and orientation of the luminaries comply with the Institution of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the reduction of intrusive light. The illumination will not be intermittent and it will not exceed 400cd/m<sup>2</sup> with a maximum projection of 1.25 meters. Details of the lighting arrangements have been provided with the application documents.

4.6 The colour and content of the advertisement display panel will vary during the period, however it will consist of simple graphics and limited typography, complying with the standards and regulations laid down in the Code of Advertisers Practice by the Advertising Standards Authority.

4.7 The screen/shroud would be of a high quality, constructed from micromesh PVC and would be maintained to a very high standard, incorporating a replica façade of the building underneath. This form of PVC mesh allows for both light and air circulation within the building being shrouded. London & Regional Properties Ltd has informed the applicant they are satisfied the shroud meets their operational requirements for the use of the building. The materials are capable of being recycled. The appearance and maintenance of the shroud/screen to this high standard is of significant benefit. If the Applicant was not involved in this project London & Regional Ltd would use the existing and standard scaffolding plastic sheeting/netting. This type of screening normally becomes ragged and tatty fairly quickly and is not usually that well maintained. This type of sheeting/shroud will fail to maintain and improve the visual amenity of the area whereas the 1:1 building imagery shroud incorporating the advertising that this application is the subject of will for the temporary period it is in situ enhance the appearance of what will be recognisably a site under construction.

## **5 RELEVANT SITE SPECIFIC ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

5. 1 This application needs to be fully considered in the context of its temporary nature where permission is sought only for a period of 9 months. The following section deals with the impact of amenity and safety of the proposal along with other relevant considerations.



## **5.2 Public Safety**

**5.2.1** The general criteria used when assessing any public safety issues where advertisements are concerned is set out in Appendix B to the Annex of Circular 03/2007. The proposal has been assessed against those tests. The type and location of the proposed advertisement display will not create a hazard or danger for the following reason:

**5.2.1.1** The type of advertising display proposed does not require a close study nor would it obstruct or confuse any road users in terms of their use of the road, statutory road signs or traffic control.

**5.2.1.2** The proposed display is not unusual. It is static and will have a good range of visibility, providing appropriate sight lines, thus the display will not appear as a sudden feature or present itself as a road hazard.

**5.2.1.3** The simple typography and graphic elements normal to this type of advertisement display media are specifically designed to be readily assimilated, understood by road and pedestrian users in the vicinity.

**5.2.1.4** Implications to road users will be negligible. The site is within an area where traffic access and speeds are controlled.

**5.2.2** Having carefully considered the level and method of illumination and positioning of the shroud banner advertisement, the applicant is satisfied that there is no impact on public safety or highway safety. Both the national and local Camden Council policies encourage improvements to the built environment and are permissive of this type of proposal.

**5.2.3** The site is in a busy and vibrant commercial location where a variety of different forms of illuminated signage are commonplace.

**5.2.4** The shroud adds a temporary addition to the landscape of the area and will enliven the vista and provide a point of interest to the frontage whilst works take place to the building. In terms of street scene the positioning and replica façade imaging with advert inset of the size proposed will give those passing through or already familiar with the area the sense of the existing road layout and the building underneath in the street context.

**5.2.5** There is a significant and longer-term public benefit to be derived from approving this proposal as part of the overall project for the building granted permission under ref: 2012/1400/P bringing with its implementation other benefits via the associated S106 obligations. Improving the building will bring it into viable uses attracting tenants/users and improving/enlivening the locality. The external appearance of the building will be improved and contribute positively to the street scene in the future and the advert shroud

as an temporary measure during construction will fully support the project to achieve these aims.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

**6.1** The Council's own policies on scaffold/shroud advertisements are that they are acceptable where associated with works and for a temporary period. In this case, the location of the advertisement on the shroud, the scale, illumination and context are appropriate to the building and it is acceptable in highway safety terms.

**6.2** It is felt that this application proposal meets the criteria of both the local and national policy considerations. In such a busy commercial location, the proposal would provide an aesthetically acceptable, temporary addition to the street scene. The context and appearance of the host building will remain very clear for all to see.

**6.3** The display for a temporary period of a well maintained shroud advertisement is far superior to the type of netting or plastic that would ordinarily be used by a building contractor. High quality well maintained screening to what would otherwise be a bland and untidy introduction to the street scene of the screen, without replica imaging and advertisement, benefits the visual amenity of the location during the temporary period of the building works.

**6.4** Camden Council, like other authorities, is keen to secure improvements to the buildings and the public realm within their area. This is why temporary shrouds and advertisements are recognized to have a place in locations such as this. The Council will be aware that planning permissions for many similar applications have been granted. A similar proposal for a temporary scaffold banner was allowed at appeal at 187 Camden High Street, the appeal Ref: APP/X5210/H/08/2091485 It should be noted that in this case the two banners took up half of the overall shroud area, the proposed displays in this instance would make up a much smaller percentage of the overall shroud itself. In the formal decision letter the appointed inspector, Mr Emm states at paragraph 6:

*"This is a vibrant bustling commercial area and to my mind the proposed scheme would form a acceptable temporary addition to the townscape. Given the need for a safety shroud, I believe the proposed sign would be an improvement on the otherwise alternative utilitarian vista, bringing colour and interest to the townscape while refurbishment work is being undertaken. For the duration of the refurbishment the sign would preserve the character of the area as a whole."*

In light of this appeal decision the council then granted consent for another temporary scaffold shroud nearby at 11-13 Camden High Street, Ref: 2010/1299/A. A recent approval has been granted under 2013/5984/A dated 24 October 2013 for an advert shroud at 174 Camden High Street, a property bound by three roads in a similar way to the application site also within a Conservation Area.

Amongst many applications that have been granted; similar advertising shrouds include applications with reference numbers; 2013/4086/A on Holborn and also 2011/2591/A near Centrepoint.



**6.5** The proposal will not detract from the appearance of the surrounding site or the host building while the works are undertaken, nor would it be detrimental to public safety. The Applicant considers this application supports the longer-term refurbishment of the building.

**6.7** The Applicant is very happy to discuss the details and/or provide any further information requested by the Council for their consideration of the application. It is hoped that the Council will consider this application favorably and grant the permission sought.