

London Borough of Camden Council
Camden Town Hall Extension
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 8EQ

6th February 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations
(England) 2007

Re: Land at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, c/o Finchley Road/ Eton Avenue, London, NW3 3HY

I am writing to apply for advertising consent for the retention of an advertisement display with associated screening works at the above site. The site is located on the eastern side of the A41 at the junction with Eton Avenue and College Crescent.

Briefly, the aim of the proposal is to provide a temporary solution which will improve the visual amenity of the site and create a more uniform and tidy boundary treatment whilst development works take place. The application therefore seeks the retention of the digital '48 sheet' landscape display (the other 48 sheet backlit panel will be removed) with associated improvements to the boundary to include a high-quality metallic cladding and imagery boards depicting the history and development of the school and future plans for expansion.

It is my view that the application would not be against either the interest of visual amenity or public safety, and therefore is consistent with both national and local policies regarding advertisement consent.

Application Site

The application site is a piece of land facing onto a heavily trafficked junction within a busy, urban location which is overwhelmingly commercial in character. The surrounding land uses are varied but include retail, office

spaces, a cinema, transport connections and a range of public facilities associated with the extensive Swiss Cottage development. The scale of surrounding buildings is considerable, with the Nesta building (London Overground) and Legacy nightclub reaching up to nine storeys in height. There is no prominent architectural style, but on the whole the buildings surrounding the panels generally date from the 1960s onwards and have a more modern, functional style with simple block designs and regular patterns of detailing, whereas those seen in longer distance, oblique views along Finchley Road and College Crescent are more period in character. The site is not within a Conservation Area or adjacent to any listed buildings.

Planning History

This site has been used for the display of advertisements for in excess of thirty years and now benefits from deemed consent.

In recent years, the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama has undergone extensive redevelopment, and the scheme now proposed seeks to provide a boundary treatment – to include the digital panel – which will be displayed in association with these on-going works for a temporary two year period.

The school, as a registered charity, benefits considerably from the revenue generated by the advertising sales from the hoarding, and relies heavily on this income to fund educational services. These include bursaries and scholarships for the less affluent students, local youth theatre (formerly funded by Camden Council) and a range of other outreach theatre and drama based workshops in the community to promote the arts and art education. Without this revenue stream, the school would no longer be able to provide these services, to the detriment of both drama students and the wider community.

Description of Proposal

The site is currently occupied by two advertisements which are displayed above the boundary fence. The proposal is to provide a temporary solution which will improve the visual amenity of the site and create a more uniform and tidy boundary treatments whilst development works take place.

The application therefore seeks consent to retain a single '48 sheet' landscape display which will be incorporated into associated improvements to the boundary enclosure using high-quality cladding and printed information boards about the school.

The images will depict the history of the school as it has developed, and will tell the story from its beginnings as the Hampstead Conservatoire of Music and School of Art as established in 1888, through its post-war guise as the Embassy Theatre to its current operation as the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama today. The display will be formed primarily of large scale photographs depicting the spatial and architectural development of the buildings that have occupied this site, with pictures of historical theatre programmes and possibly other images showing the drama performances of the school set alongside.

The advertising display will be mounted (as per its current position) above this boundary treatment. It will be a sequential form of advertising, utilizing 21st century technology in the form of a digital display screen.

Key Considerations

Visual Amenity

This stretch along Finchley Road (A41) has long been established as both a dynamic local retail centre and as a busy thoroughfare into central London where advertising hoardings have commonly been displayed and would be expected by pedestrians and drivers alike. Neighbouring buildings are of a large scale and are occupied by wholly commercial uses, as described above. Within this context, it is considered that the panel would have a good relationship with the character, setting, context and the form and scale of its surroundings, and therefore would not be detrimental to visual amenity.

The hoardings and associated fencing would be positioned at the western end of the site and will also work to provide a screening function to the bins and storage area on this part of the grounds. Whilst it is appreciated that the original eastern section of the university building, with its grand entrance stairs and Georgian bay-windows is a valued asset to be protected, crucially this positioning of the contemporary advertisement structures at the opposing end of the site means that there is no visual relationship between the two.

The council's LDF Policy DP24 encourages developers to show consideration to the provision of "visually interesting frontages at street level" and of "appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments". Policy CS14 also requires development to be "of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character". The boundary treatment proposed is designed to improve the visual amenity of the site by replacing a rather utilitarian fence with a high-quality cladding solution which would not only tie in better with the contemporary materials used in the school building behind but would also create a more tidy and uniform appearance. The overlay of historical images will also help to add visual interest and colour, whilst unifying this temporary proposal with its site context.

In respect of the hoarding itself, the environmental benefits of LED technology are clear. In facilitating the remote, computerised rotation of advertisements, there is no requirement for poster panels to be produced and changed on a regular basis. As a result, there is a substantial reduction both in carbon emissions - because operatives do not need to travel to the site - and a significant reduction in waste and recycling - associated with the continuous reproduction of posters. As such, modern digital formats have been widely accepted by LPAs across the UK in recognising the need to take a sustainable approach to meet changing commercial and consumer needs.

Public Safety

The vital consideration in assessing the impact of an advertisement on highway safety is whether that advertisement is likely to be so distracting or confusing that it presents a danger to drivers. Given the busy location, drivers will expect to see a variety of signage and imagery, therefore the presence of such a display is unlikely to appear as an unexpected or unusual feature of the street. Indeed, the proposed 48 sheet is currently displayed at the site already under the benefit of deemed consent, and during its display it is not known to have been linked with any traffic incidents or otherwise given rise to any highway safety concerns.

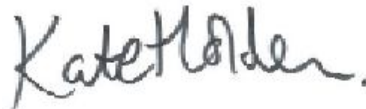
Finchley Road, though a busy trunk road, does not contain any unusual traffic features. As a result it is not considered that this junction would require any special degree of attention from drivers. The orientation of the panel will be such that it is viewed by traffic travelling in the northbound (outbound) direction only where there is a long advanced view on the approach, such that drivers will have sufficient time to acknowledge its presence. The

advertisements displayed will feature simple, static messages so as not to attract undue attention or dwell time.

In addition, it should be noted that the advertisement is also set well away from any road signage such that directional information or instruction signs in the area will still be visible and effective. The panel would not obstruct or overhang any public footpaths.

Please contact me once you have had the opportunity to review the application and visit the site if necessary to discuss the scheme.

Yours Faithfully,



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