

## AMENITY IMPACT STATEMENT

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This '**Amenity Impact Statement**' has been prepared to accompany a proposal for express advert consent for a new poster display sign, designed into the over road bridge facade of a multi-storey office block where it crosses Procter Street, at the entrance to High Holborn. This statement represents a detailed analysis of the **amenity impact** of the sign.

### **1. THE SITE LOCATION**

The site comprises a 9-storey office building, which extends either side of Procter Street and then bridges across the road supported on two columns. This is a large scale building of typically modern design, multi storey in appearance and finished predominantly in silver cladding and glazing. The ground floor of the building fronting either side of Procter Street comprises retail units at street level with noticeably high shop fronts, particularly the cycle shop on the west side of Procter Street.

Procter Street is one way at this point bordered on each side by multi storey commercial buildings. Just beyond the building underpass the street joins the main shopping street of High Holborn at a traffic light controlled junction

The exact location of the sign relates to the north facing first floor facade to the over road section of the building.

The site is not within a conservation area. The building is not listed.

The street scene is modern at this point dominated by the large scale multi storey complex of 1-11 Procter Street which extends either side of the road creating a 'canyon like' approach to the bridge.

The area is predominantly commercial at this point with retail land uses at street level and offices above in multi storey buildings.

The street scene is one of hustle and bustle and general vibrancy. Holborn is part of the central core of the capital with its economy contributing to London's role as a 'world city'. The location is at a gateway entrance to Holborn shopping area and 'Theatreland'.

### **2. THE PROPOSED SIGN**

The proposal is for an internally illuminated poster advertising sign (12m x 3m) to be built into the lower portion of the north facade of the building where it spans Procter Street. The sign would be fully 'designed in' rather than an add on feature, and integrated into the facade with new silver cladding either side. The sign would display commonly seen illuminated poster images. The images would be entirely static with no animation. The poster images would be in non-digital format and printed on a single vinyl sheet, with illumination from behind. The luminance would be in accordance with the Institute of Lighting Engineers technical report no 5, as recommended in PPG 19 on Outdoor Advertisement Control.

### **3. NATIONAL GUIDANCE**

National guidance on advertising is contained within the following documents,

- The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.
- Planning Policy Guidance note 19 on Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992)
- DCLG circular 03/2007 accompanying the Advert Regulations .

### **The Advert Regulations 2007**

This Statutory Instrument sets out the line to take in determining advert applications and has something to say on *amenity*.

In 3(1), it states that, **“A local planning Authority shall exercise its powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account,**

- (a) The provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and**
- (b) Any other relevant factors**

**Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1)(b), factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest.”**

In 3(3), it states further, that, **“In taking account of factors relevant to amenity, the local planning authority may, if it thinks fit, disregard any advertisement that is being displayed.”** And in (4), it states that, **“Unless it appears to the local planning authority to be required in the interests of amenity or public safety, an express consent for the display of advertisements shall not contain any limitation or restriction relating to the subject matter, content or design of what is to be displayed.”**

The Advert Regulations define *“amenity”* in section 2 Interpretation, as including **aural and visual amenity.**

### **Planning Policy Guidance Note 19 ‘Outdoor Advertisement Control’ (1992)**

PPG 19 gives more detailed guidance on consideration of advert applications in the following sections,

#### Introduction

**“All advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed” and “Outdoor advertising is essential to commercial activity in a free and diverse economy.”**

In para 4, it states,

**“Many outdoor advertisements are displayed on or close to buildings. The Environment White Paper points out that, for most people, it is the appearance of a building which is of greatest importance. ‘A good building can contribute to a sense of pride and place’ (paragraph 8.24) But the appearance of a good building can easily be spoiled by a poorly designed or insensitively placed sign or advertisement, or by a choice of advertisement materials, colour, proportion or illumination which is alien to the building’s design or fabric. Too often, outdoor advertisements**

seem to have been added to a building as an afterthought, so that they appear brash, overdominant or incongruous.”

#### The role of guidance on design

In para 5, “Many local planning authorities (LPAs) have produced design guidance on outdoor advertisements.....Such guidance needs to recognise the importance of advertisements to the national economy. But provided it is not excessively prescriptive, it need not stifle original designs or new display techniques.”

#### Criteria for dealing with advertisement applications

In para 9, “ The general approach to dealing with advertisement applications is similar to the process of dealing with planning applications. But there are two important differences from ordinary planning procedures. First, the display of outdoor advertisements can only be controlled in the interests of “*amenity*” and “*public safety*”. What is meant by these two terms in the Regulations is explained in paragraphs 11-16 of this Guidance. Secondly, it is accepted that anyone proposing to display an advertisement “needs” that advertisement in that particular location, whether for commercial or other means.”

“The control system is concerned with the visual effect on its surroundings of an advertisement. The subject matter of the advertisement may not be controlled by LPAs, though it may sometimes be regulated by other means.”

#### Consideration of “amenity”

In para 11, “In assessing an advertisement’s impact on “amenity”, LPAs should have regard to its effect on the appearance of the building or on visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood where it is to be displayed. They will therefore consider what impact the advertisement, including its cumulative effect, will have on its surroundings. The relevant considerations for this purpose are the local characteristics of the neighbourhood, including scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, which contribute to the distinctive character of the locality.”

On illumination, “When it is appropriate to consider how brightly advertisements should be illuminated, LPAs should have regard to the Institute of Lighting Engineers Technical report no 5 (Second Edition)....”

“Where there is a group of buildings, whether in a city town or village, the scale and massing of existing structures, the predominant land use in the locality, the presence of “listed” buildings or a designated conservation area and any proposals for land use change in the area will be relevant considerations. For instance, a large, brightly illuminated sign, which would appear appropriate on a department store and contribute colour interest and vitality to some high street shopping areas may well be unacceptable on a corner shop in an otherwise residential locality.”

“Large poster hoardings, which are often part of the fabric of commercial and industrial areas, are usually out of place anywhere else. Since 1984 published guidance has been available about the criteria for deciding applications involving poster sites. The guidance remains relevant and is included as the Annex to this note”

It should also be noted that this guidance is repeated in *Appendix E to Annex to DCLG circular 03/2007*.

#### Advertisement control policies

In para 17, **“Many LPAs have adopted policies, often with associated design guidance controlling outdoor advertisements in their area.....These policy statements will be a material factor in considering an advertisement application: as in other planning proceedings, those that are incorporated in a statutory development plan will be accorded greater weight as a material consideration. But even though advertisement control policies or design guidance may have been formulated having regard to matters of amenity and public safety, references to these policies and guidance cannot by themselves be the decisive factor in determining whether an advertisement is to be permitted. Because the Advertisement Regulations require that applications be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of any material factors, it will always be necessary to assess the specific amenity and public safety merits of the proposed advertisement display (including relevant factors mentioned in this Guidance) in relation to the particular application site.”**

#### Annex :Criteria for deciding applications and appeals involving poster sites

This guidance is repeated in Appendix E to Annex to DCLG circular 03/2007 and is covered below under this circular advice.

#### DCLG circular 03/2007

#### Appendix E to Annex: Criteria for deciding applications and appeals involving poster-sites

##### General

**“Any application to a local planning authority, or appeal to the secretary of state, which involves the display of a poster is to be considered on its own merits with regard to the general characteristics of the locality in which it is to be displayed. Although other material factors may be taken into account in determining the application or appeal, the Control of Advertisements Regulations require that powers of control shall only be exercised in, the interests of amenity (which means the visual amenity of the neighbourhood where the poster is to be displayed.....) and public safety.”**

**“In applying the expression “in the interests of amenity” to any particular application or appeal, account should be taken not only of factors which may be detrimental to amenity but also of factors which may be to the advantage of the amenity of a locality, such as adding appropriate colour and interest to a drab area or screening an eyesore.”**

**“Poster panels should respect the scale of their surrounding location.....but when they are displayed on buildings they should be related to the scale of surrounding buildings and have regard to the symmetry or architectural features of their location.”**

#### Predominantly commercial areas

**"In predominantly commercial surroundings, the scale of the buildings may be sufficiently large to accommodate large poster displays without any adverse effects upon visual amenity. But the scale of commercial surroundings can vary greatly, even within short distances in the same town, and it is to be expected that decisions on applications or appeals in commercial areas will seek to match the scale of poster displays with the scale of adjacent buildings."**

**"A poster panel on a building should be in scale with the particular building. It should not cut across any architectural features of the building .....Large scale poster advertising will normally be inappropriate on listed buildings."**

**"Poster panels may be acceptable on the flank-walls of buildings, but they should not be unduly dominant, and should be so designed and positioned as to be seen as an integral feature of the building."**

**"In determining whether, on grounds of amenity, the display of a poster panel is appropriate on a building, the most important criterion is the overall visual effect of the display upon the entirety of the building and its surroundings. In judging this effect, the actual use of the building may matter less than the purpose for which the building was originally designed and built."**

#### **4. LOCAL POLICY GUIDANCE**

Local guidance on advertising is contained within the following documents,

- Camden Planning Guidance 2006 '*Advertisements and Signs*'
- Camden Planning Guidance 2006 '*Hoarding and banner advertisements*'
- Local Development framework: Core Strategy 2010
- Local development Framework: Development Policies 2010

The Councils Unitary Development Plan (2006) was recently superseded by the Local Development Framework in November 2010.

#### **Camden Planning Guidance (2006) 'Advertisements and Signs'**

This is a Supplementary planning document (SPD) which gives detailed guidance on how the Councils planning strategy and policies will be implemented for specific topics. The guidance states that its purpose is to provide advice on the design and siting of advertisements so that they contribute positively to the appearance and character of an area. It states the following,

**"This guidance is not intended to be excessively prescriptive or to stifle original designs but rather to ensure that the principles of policy B4 are adhered to and that advertisements have a positive effect on the buildings and areas where they are located."**

**"Good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As a general guide, the most satisfactory advertisements are those which take into account the character and design of the property, its surroundings and alter the external fabric of the building as little as possible."**

**“Interesting and unique styles of advertisements will be considered acceptable where they are compatible with the host buildings and surrounding environment.”**

**“All advertisements should be of a scale and size that respects and is appropriate to the host building or area where they are located and the design and detailing should be of a high standard. The erection of an advertisement shall not negatively affect the aesthetic appearance, amenity or character of the area in which it is placed.”**

**“Generally, advertisements will only be acceptable at a height no greater than fascia level.”**

**Camden Planning Guidance (2006) ‘Hoardings and banner advertisements’**

This is a supplementary planning document (SPD) which gives detailed guidance on how the council’s planning strategy and policies will be implemented for specific topics and gives the following advice,

**“The purpose of the guidance is not to be excessively prescriptive or to stifle original designs...”**

**“Advertisement hoardings/posters will not usually be acceptable in predominantly residential areas and will be carefully controlled in conservation areas and or near listed buildings to ensure that they do not detract from the areas and building’s character and appearance. However, if an area has a mix of uses or is predominantly in commercial use some poster/hoarding advertising may be acceptable where they satisfactorily relate to the scale of the host building/feature and its surroundings. They should be designed and positioned as an integral feature of the building.”**

**“Some guidelines on when hoardings will not be considered acceptable include,**

- ✓ In locations where they prevent or significantly damage views or obscure light;
- ✓ Where they are forward of the face of adjoining buildings;
- ✓ Where they project above roof ridge/eaves level;
- ✓ Where they obscure architectural features or landmarks
- ✓ Where the views will be unsightly
- ✓ On flank walls where they would be unduly dominant”

**“Interesting and unique styles of advertisements and signs will be considered acceptable where they accord with the guidelines above.”**

**“Hoardings will not usually be considered acceptable where they are above ground floor level.”**

**“The impact of illumination will be taken into consideration and where it is considered to be a nuisance or out of character with the area then it will not be considered acceptable.”**

**Local Development Framework: Core Strategy 2010**

The LPA have referred to the relevant policies in their report as,

**CS1 Distribution of growth.**

This policy indicates that Holborn is designated as a growth area.

### **CS5 Managing the impact of growth and development.**

This states that protecting amenity – the features of a place that contribute to its attractiveness and comfort - is a key part of successfully managing growth

### **CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage**

This seeks to protect Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and maintain what is distinctive and valued about in the local area and ensure high quality in new designs going forward.

At the same time it seems policies **CS9 Achieving a successful central London** and **CS8 Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy**. Holborn is a key business district and an economic focus. It contributes to the economy and London's standing as a 'world city'. Development which retains its vibrancy and vitality can complement this business district.

### **Local Development Framework: Development policies 2010**

The LPA have referred to the following development policies in their report,

#### **DP24 Securing high quality design.**

This policy reflects core strategy **CS14**. However, it states that, **"Innovative design can greatly enhance the built environment, and unless a scheme is within an area of homogenous architectural style that it is important to retain, high quality contemporary design will be welcomed."** And **"The provision of visually interesting frontages at street level"** are supported.

#### **DP26 Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours.**

The LPA have concluded in relation to this policy that the proposal does not affect residential amenity

### **5. AMENITY ASSESSMENT**

One of the key questions for a decision maker is whether, having regard to the statutory and national guidance contained in the Advertisement Regulations and associated circular and Policy guidance, and taking into account local policies, the proposed sign would spoil or harm amenity to a degree that consent should not be granted.

As the statutory Advertisement Regulations state, **"factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest."**

Planning Policy guidance 19 on Outdoor Advertisement Control (PPG 19), repeats that the relevant considerations for the purpose of amenity assessment, **"... are the local characteristics of the neighbourhood, including scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, which contribute to the distinctive character of the locality"**.

PPG 19 also points a decision maker to **"...have regard to its effect on the appearance of the building or on visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood where it is to be displayed"**. Also, **"The appearance of a good building can easily be spoiled by a poorly designed or insensitively**

placed sign or advertisement or by a choice of colour, proportion or illumination which is alien to the building's design or fabric, and that too often outdoor advertisements seem to have been added to a building as an afterthought so they appear brash, overdominant or incongruous".

DCLG circular 03/2007, sets out criteria and more detailed guidance for deciding applications for poster sites, including,

- ✓ **Poster panels should respect the scale of their surrounding location.**
- ✓ **When displayed on buildings they should be related to the scale of surrounding buildings.**
- ✓ **A poster panel on a building should be in scale with the building.**
- ✓ **When displayed on buildings they should have regard to the symmetry or architectural features of their location.**
- ✓ **A poster panel on a building should not cut across any architectural features of a building.**
- ✓ **They should be designed and positioned as to be seen as an integral feature of the building.**
- ✓ **In predominantly commercial surrounds, the scale of the buildings may be sufficiently large to accommodate large poster displays without any adverse effect on visual amenity.**
- ✓ **The most important criterion in determining whether on grounds of amenity the display of a poster panel is appropriate on a building is the overall visual effect of the display upon the entirety of the building and its surroundings.**
- ✓ **Account should be taken not only of factors which may be detrimental to amenity but also of factors which may be to the advantage of the amenity of a locality such as adding appropriate colour and interest.**

National guidance in PPG 19 advises that design guidance should not seek to, "stifle original designs or new display techniques" and Camden's own Planning Guidance, advises that, "Interesting and unique styles of advertisements will be considered acceptable where they are compatible with the host buildings and surrounding environment." That advertisements, "Should be designed and positioned as an integral feature of the building".

In assessing the amenity impact of the proposed sign against national and local guidance, I would make the following points,

- ✚ **The design is highly innovative and seeks to exploit the unusual circumstances of the host multi-storey building spanning Procter Street.**
- ✚ **Increasingly innovative forms of advertising displays are becoming more common in urban areas, and both national and local policy guidance do not seek to stifle such originality. The proposal creates a fully designed in feature adding a new point of interest in this modern commercial streetscape.**
- ✚ **The general characteristics of the location are commercial, modern and large scale. There are unusually high shop fronts at this point lining Procter Street and reaching level or thereabouts with the level of the proposed sign, particularly the cycle store. In any event the sign creates a new point of interest in its own.**
- ✚ **The sign does not impact on the historic environment of Camden. The sign is contextually part of a modern street scene at this point. It is viewed within a wholly commercial and modern setting. The proposal designed in to a modern office block does not impose itself on Camden's rich architectural or historic heritage or their settings worthy of protection.**



- ✦ The immediate locality is primarily commercial and the **sign does not impact on residential amenity**. The LPA state in their officers report that the distance to the nearest residential property (approx 50 metres away to Benin House on the east side of Procter Street) “...is considered sufficient to protect against harm to residential amenity through increased light pollution”.
- ✦ **The sign respects the architecture of the host building**. It reflects the horizontal alignment of the facade. It would be fully designed in to the fabric of the building and not just be bolted on as an ‘add on’ feature.
- ✦ **The sign is in scale with the host building** which is a multi storey office complex of large scale.
- ✦ **The sign would be fully designed in to the fabric of the building**, and not be an add on feature without integration.
- ✦ **The impact of the sign on the wider locality and any competing land uses, although head on to traffic, is effectively contained** by the juxtaposition of the large scale and multi-storey office blocks which as a containing features and create a ‘canyon like’ approach to the sign. Any views are only achieved directly from the north and in the context of a modern large scale office complex.
- ✦ **Local policies encourage unique and interesting styles of advertisements**. National policies encourage original designs and new display techniques.
- ✦ **The sign will not damage the architecture or dignity of the host building** or the immediate surrounds.
- ✦ **The sign would add a new point of interest** in to over road office complex without harm.
- ✦ **The visual amenity of the area overall would not be lessened** because the sign would be in an appropriate context, and its wider impact beyond its immediate surrounds into competing land uses is limited by the relationship of the containing large scale office building.
- ✦ **The sign would not obstruct important views, skylines or landmarks**.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The proposal is modern and innovative and seeks to fit in with the commercial street scene dominated by modern large scale and multi storey offices which extend over the road at this point. It respects the character and horizontal alignment of the architecture of the host building, and is in scale, and creates a new point of interest adding to the vibrancy and vitality of this business district in Holborn. Its wider impact on competing land uses or the rich historic, architectural or cultural heritage of Camden or residential amenity is insignificant due to the largely containing effects of the multi-storey office buildings which wrap around the site on either side of Procter Street. It is viewed contextually above traffic at a gateway to the vibrant business and retail area of High Holborn with walls of tall offices lining Procter Street from the back edge of the footway to create a ‘canyon -like’ approach.

It is acknowledged that Camden has a rich historic, architectural and cultural heritage worthy of protection, and is also a residential area, but these amenity features which contribute to its attractiveness and comfort will be preserved.

The case for the display sign is set out above in relation to national and local guidance on amenity and derives much support. I conclude that the impact of the sign is positive rather than negative in relation to amenity, and the features of the locality that contribute to its attractiveness and comfort and overall amenity will remain unharmed.