

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Prepared in Support of a Planning Application for Installation of New Shopfront And Signage at

TESCO EXPRESS 40 BERNARD STREET, RUSSELL SQUARE, WC1N 1QJ

DESIGN

1. Introduction

This design and access statement is prepared in line with new Government Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System (DCLG Circular 01/2006)) which requires such statements to be provided with most planning applications. It is also been informed by Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Guidance on Design and Access Statements.

It is considered that the small scale and nature of the proposed changes at the above property are such that many of the standard design considerations outlined within the CABE guidance are of limited relevance to the application. However, for completeness they are all briefly noted within.

In addition, we attach a copy of a Generic Access Statement prepared on behalf of our client by Stace Project Management. This outlines how access issues are considered by Tesco depending on the different circumstances of each retail site. This should be read in conjunction with this Design and Access Statement which is prepared at the planning and design stage of the application scheme proposal.

2. Use

The current proposal relates to the installation of a new shopfront and signage to an existing Tesco Express neighbourhood foodstore at 40 Bernard Street, WC1N 1QJ. Photographs showing the existing shopfront and signage accompany the planning application.

The Tesco Express foodstore is an appropriate and beneficial use within this parade of shops and provides a valuable service to the local community.

3. Amount

No new floorspace is being created. The size of the shopfront is directly proportional to the amount of floorspace it contains and therefore is considered entirely acceptable. The shopfront and signage proposals have been designed to improve and simplify the appearance of the retail unit and thereby employ only the minimum detailing, advertising and window treatment necessary to perform key functions (e.g. to inform, screen etc).

4. Layout

The internal layout of the retail building is not a relevant consideration of this planning application. The layout of the shopfront remains essentially the same, with the most significant changes being in respect of the materials, removal of 'clutter', dimensions of glazing panels and finishing. It is proposed that both the entrance doors would become full height bi-parting doors.

5. Scale

The scale of the shopfront remains the same. The proportions of the shopfront overall, including the size of the lettering and clean lines, simplifies the shopfront and draws attention to only those elements which require such attention, namely the Tesco Express fascia sign and small vinyl graphics applied subtly to the glazing panels (opening hours and welcome).

6. Landscaping

No new landscaping is proposed as part of the application proposals as it relates solely to the installation and appearance of a new shopfront. This is considered an appropriate response given the uniform and simple appearance of the pavement in front of the parade of shops and which should remain unobstructed.

7. Appearance

a. General Design Principles

The shopfront and signage improvements proposed for the store are part of a wider improvement programme being undertaken by our client Tesco Stores Limited.

Tesco has reviewed the current appearance of its Express stores and obtained specialist design advice to develop specific proposals suited to the locality of each store. However, there are some general principles that apply to most of the 36 London Express stores involved. This includes replacing the strong white background with a dark blue/black; removal of excess vinyls and other 'clutter'; LED illuminated signage with clean and slick finishes; and new design frosted glass panels. Acid etch vinyls are being used to subtly screen the checkouts and other less attractive areas (e.g. storage, chillers etc) from view from the outside.

Shopfronts have been considered in the context of their location on host and surrounding buildings. It is considered that the proposals will enhance the streetscape in these busy commercial areas so that they will have a clear beneficial effect upon their character and appearance. As such we believe the changes will be warmly received by the community.

b. The Proposal

More specifically for this store, the following beneficial changes are proposed.

There are currently two entrance doors, one of which is a single sliding door and the other is a double sliding door. It is proposed to make both of these double sliding doors. On both these doors the existing transoms would be removed and full height glazed doors be put in place.

Two of the shopfront panels contain, at present, an overly large blue stall riser. These would both be removed to create a cleaner, more elegant shopfront. The small brick stall riser beneath would be retained but rendered in a grey composite resin marble sheet.

The existing ATM on the left hand side of the shopfront would be set into a panel of frosted glass. There would be a drastic reduction in window vinyl, which would increase the transparency of the shopfront. We provide you with a photographic example of this striped window vinyl for illustrative purposes.

Although not forming part of this planning application, the proposed improvements also relate to the signage at this store. The design of the proposed signage is summarised below for your information.

The existing white fascia sign would be replaced by a blue / black fascia sign. This would extend the length of the shop frontage. The blue / black colour would also be painted onto the pilasters at either end of the shopfront to create a symmetrical 'goal post' effect. The white projecting sign would also be replaced by a blue / black sign. It is considered that the change in colour would reduce the brightness and reflectivity of both signs.

At present, both the fascia and projecting signs are externally illuminated. It is considered that such illumination creates unnecessary clutter on the shopfront. It is proposed that the lettering only on the fascia and projecting signs would be internally illuminated with LED illumination. The proposed illumination would have a discreet and sleek appearance.

In addition, there would be a small blue sign with the word 'Cash' above the ATM. The lettering of this sign would be discreetly illuminated from within with LED illumination.

8. Compliance with UDP Policy

We are confident that the proposal satisfies the relevant policies contained within the Camden Unitary Development Plan 2004 Revised Deposit Draft. In accordance with Policy B1 'General Design Principles', the design respects its site and setting, and seeks to improve the attractiveness of the area. In respecting the form; proportions; characteristics; and materials of the building and surrounding shopfronts, the proposed design complies with Policies B3 and B4 on 'Alterations and Extensions' and 'Shopfronts and Advertisements'.

ACCESS

1. General

The Tesco Express foodstore is an appropriate and beneficial use within this parade of shops and which provides a useful service to the local community including those who less able bodied.

The Express Store concept provides for local convenience mostly for top-up food shopping, accessible to a walk-in catchment. It is therefore very popular for people unable or unwilling to drive or take public transport and which very often includes people with disabilities and the elderly.

Tesco also operate other services such as online shopping and home deliveries to cater for customers who are unable to travel any great distance to carry out the food shopping. In 2004, the Tesco website was recognised in AbilityNet (the UK computing and disability charity) as the only supermarket to have a website meeting the basic disability needs of disabled people.

Tesco also aims to provide fully for disabled customers through such initiatives as holding its themed Customer Question Times each quarter in partnership with disability organisations, to listen and respond to what customers with visual, hearing and physical disabilities tell them.

A generic access statement applicable to the development and use of the full range and type of Tesco stores in the country has been developed by our client and accompanies this application. It provides the framework within which Tesco work to ensure that the needs to the less able bodied are incorporated into development proposals at the earliest opportunity. It is necessary of course to also discuss the particular access considerations and elements specific to this store, as follows.

2. Key access considerations

All potential users, no matter what their ability, age or sex can easily enter the Bernard Street Tesco Express foodstore and carry out their grocery shopping.

Whilst alterations to provide a modern and more attractive shopfront and signage are being proposed, the general layout of the shopfront including maintenance of the two existing access-points, is to be retained.

The new entrance doors would provide a level access to the store and therefore is accessible to all including those less able-bodied. Both entrances would be double doors to allow ease of access.

The doors would be full height automatic doors which would meet DDA requirements and facilitate uncomplicated access and egress without the need to negotiate handles etc. The internal layout of the store is dealt with under building regulations and is elaborated within the generic access statement.

3. Appearance and safety

In respect of access and disability considerations, we consider that the two most important elements are to ensure that sufficient signage is present to inform and advise customers of where to find things (including entry) whilst being appropriate in design and appearance terms; and, also that the environment is safe and accessible for all. The proposal achieves this by removing excess 'clutter', whilst retaining the minimum needed to direct, advise and inform customers. The small number of vinyl graphics to be positioned onto the glazing (the trading hours, welcome and acid etch security vinyls) would also provide the useful function of alerting partially sighted people of the presence / potential danger of windows.

4. Compliance with UDP Policy

We are confident that the application scheme is fully compliant with the relevant policies in the Camden Unitary Development Plan 2004 Revised Deposit Draft. In accordance with Policy B1 'General Design Principles', the design would be safe and accessible to all.

CONCLUSIONS

We consider that the proposal would be a great improvement on the existing situation and would in no way harm the appearance of the building or streetscene or have any adverse impact on public safety.

Furthermore, it is considered that the proposals are accessible and inclusive and that the store will continue to provide a high quality service for all its customers in addition to meeting the more general design and appearance objectives.

It is hoped that the Council and the general public can also be satisfied that the proposed changes are wholly beneficial, making substantive visual improvements to Bernard Street and the Russell Square area.