

PLANNING STATEMENT

APPLICATION FOR ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT AT ST GEORGE'S COURT, BLOOMSBURY WAY, LONDON WC1A 2SL

Introduction

This is an application for advertisement consent to display one micromesh PVC scaffold screening shroud incorporating one static advertisement on the façade fronting the apex of New Oxford Street and Bloomsbury Way for a period of 12 weeks while emergency repair works are carried out at the premises. It is proposed that the shroud be erected onto scaffolding covering the apex elevation. Parts of the scaffolding and shroud not covered by the advertisement will incorporate a 1:1 replica of the facade of the building. The planned works involve the entire block (including the elevations on Bloomsbury Way, New Oxford Street and Bury Place) and the entire building is to be scaffolded .

The dimensions of the proposed advertisement are: 6 meters (height) x 5 meters (width)

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.

The freehold of the site is owned by The Crown. The Applicant is working closely with the leaseholder, London & Regional Properties Ltd, who is seeking to help fund some of the necessary maintenance works through commercial sponsorship, securing investment in the property. London & Regional have entered into an agreement with King Media Limited who will sell advertising on the shroud, revenue from which will be diverted towards the cost of the works to the building.

The shroud will be in situ displaying advertisements during the period of repair works to the entire block and thereafter will be removed.

A photographic schedule is provided documenting the evidence of water ingress at the building and the showcasing the extent of the works required, see the Leak Report submitted with this application. A letter from London & Regional's contractor, CBRE, is also submitted, it sets out the 'scope of works' and provides a 'programme of works' in the form of a GANTT chart.

Planning Policy Considerations

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:

- The impact on amenity (visual, aural of the immediate neighbourhood);
- 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”*.

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and promotes the positive improvement of the built environment; it encourages local planning authorities to work with applicants to foster a positive approach to planning.

Paragraphs 18-20 clearly define the Government’s key policy objective: to encourage economic growth and build a strong competitive economy in order to create jobs and prosperity *“significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system”*. Advertising plays an important role in stimulating growth by promoting commercial activities, stimulating spending and attracting investment.

Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 18b-005) specifically relates to shroud and banner advertisements and states that *“buildings which are being renovated or undergoing major structural work and which have scaffolding or netting around them may be considered suitable as temporary sites for shroud advertisements or large ‘wrap’ advertisements covering the face, or part of the face, of the building”*. These advertisements will require express consent.

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

Site Location and Description

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) and falls 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 tourist accommodation. The general character of the area is commercial with the mix of uses largely consisting of commercial, retail and related uses at ground level and with predominantly offices above.

Site History

Advertisement consent has previously been granted at this location for an advert of identical size, location and configuration, under application ref: 2014/6777/A where the shroud and advertisement was considered in the decision notice to be “*appropriate in terms of size, method of illumination and location, and would therefore conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area*”. The Council also found that “*during construction the advertisement would shield unsightly construction works in accordance with guidance in CPG1 - Design.*”

Details of the Proposal

Planned works at the application site will require the erection of scaffolding to facilitate access and ensure safety. The proposal is to screen the scaffolding with the erection of a scaffold shroud employing a 1:1 representation of the building facade covering the full extent of the scaffolded area, and an advertisement inset (6m high x 5m wide) on the front elevation. All banner specifications are set out in the schedule of drawings.

The scaffold is to be rigged off the building with limited down pipes and fastenings where needed. The scaffold shroud will aesthetically screen the building works from public view and shield workers from the elements helping works to be carried out in adverse weather conditions. The shroud also serves a vital role in preventing dust, debris and falling masonry from potentially causing a danger on the public highway and is essential for reasons of Health & Safety.

The scaffold shroud is a high quality micromesh PVC and would be maintained to a high standard. This mesh material allows for both light and air circulation within the building being shrouded, and is recyclable. The shroud depicts a 1:1 replica of the building facade, and is far superior in quality and design to the typical builder's plastic sheeting that would otherwise be used if advertisement consent was not being sought. Such alternative generic sheeting has the potential to become ragged and unsafe and is not usually as well maintained as those shrouds bearing advertisements. This aspect should be considered a positive impact on visual amenity.

The advertisement will be set within the scaffold shroud. It will consist of simple graphics and limited typography, and comply with the standards and regulations laid down in the Code of Advertisers Practice by the Advertising Standards Authority.

Relevant Site Specific Issues and Considerations

This application needs to be fully considered in the context of its temporary nature where permission is sought only for a period of 12 weeks. The following section deals with the impact of amenity and safety of the proposal along with other relevant considerations.

Public Safety

It is important to note that the proposal for an identical advertisement at this location was previously considered by the Council when the view was held that *“the proposal will not impact on neighbours’ amenity nor would be it harmful to either pedestrians or vehicular safety.”*

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:

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

Having carefully considered the positioning of the shroud banner advertisement, the applicant is satisfied that there is no impact on public safety or highway safety.

Impact on Amenity

The principle of an acceptable level of impact on amenity has been demonstrated through the previous application for an identical proposal at this location.

The works are due to take place shortly and scaffolding is to be erected. The temporary impact of the scaffolding on both the host building and the conservation area will be greatly reduced if advertisement consent is granted as the high quality illustrated shroud associated with the display of an advertisement is of a much higher quality than the traditional builder’s sheet and will be maintained to a very high standard. The 1:1

imagery of the building facade and the overall effect of the shroud would be to smarten up the appearance of the scaffolding, minimising its visual obtrusiveness.

The site is in a busy and vibrant commercial location where a variety of different forms of signage are commonplace. The shroud will add 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.

Conclusion

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 and context are appropriate to the building and it is acceptable in highway safety terms.

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.

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.

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 consent in due course.