



Regeneration and Planning
Development Management
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

6th April 2017

REF: 77 Tottenham Court Road, Fitzrovia, W1T 2HG

Dear Sir/Madam,

This statement has been prepared to support an application for advertisement consent to erect a wall mounted media screen on the northern elevation of 77 Tottenham Court Road.

The Site and Context

The application site is located on the blank brick façade of the northern flank elevation of 77 Tottenham Court Road in the Bloomsbury Ward of the London Borough of Camden. The host building is a four storey block with a Starbucks unit on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. 77 Tottenham Court Road is located at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Tottenham Street, the northern flank elevation protruding over Tottenham Street. The façade in its current state is unattractive and uninteresting, the brickwork uneven and displaying signs of wear through discolouration.

Tottenham Court Road is located within both the designated Central London Area and Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and is typical of such a location, with a mixture of offices, ground floor and first floor retail units with residential/offices above and cafes/eateries. Street lights and the illuminated signs and window displays of the various commercial uses ensure the area has a vibrant character and is brightly illuminated at night.

According to the Camden Proposals Map, the application site is located within the Central London Area (Policy CS) and is also designated as Central London Frontage. The proposal site also falls within the area covered by the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan and is located within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. Several of the buildings in the surrounding area benefit from Listed status, the closest of which are located on the eastern side of Tottenham Court Road. The Heal and Son building at 191-199 Tottenham Court Road is Grade II* Listed whilst Glen House at 200 – 204 Tottenham Court Road is afforded Grade II status. However, it should be noted that the surrounding built form consists of a range of modern and historic buildings with generally large footprints. The Conservation Area is overwhelmingly commercial in character which is befitting of its location within the Central London Area/CAZ. The

Conservation Area Appraisal states that Tottenham Court Road is one of the busiest streets within the Conservation Area and that it is, “notable for the variety of heights, building styles and materials along the frontage” (paragraph 6.18). It is also noted that, “To a large extent the conservation area comprises streets that are characterised by a mix of residential, shopping and commercial uses that tend to have a ground floor level shop frontage onto the street” (Paragraph 6.25). As such, the application site would seem an appropriate location in principle for advertising. The application site is not subject to any further designations.

The development surrounding the site is mixed in both character and scale. The adjacent buildings on both Tottenham Court Road and Tottenham Street are similar to the proposal site in that they feature retail/food units on the ground floor with residential/commercial uses on the upper levels. Goodge Street Underground Station is located approximately 17m south of the application site along Tottenham Court Road, the building extending 7 storeys in height. The buildings on the eastern side of Tottenham Court Road are of a markedly larger scale and grander in character. These buildings are typically over five storeys in height, featuring retail uses at ground floor level and offices above. The famous Heal & Son furniture store is located along this stretch of Tottenham Court Road. As such, the built environment in the immediate surroundings can be described as lacking in uniformity and shared character.

Whitfield Gardens (designated as Open Space by the Camden Proposals Map) is located immediately opposite the proposed site to the north, featuring public art, benches and landscaping. An American Internal Church building is located beyond Whitfield Gardens to the north, whilst the BT Tower dominates the skyline in the horizon beyond.

The site is seen primarily from Tottenham Court Road, with the target audience being pedestrians and vehicles travelling southbound once the Tottenham Court Road improvement works have been completed.

The West End Project

The West End Project has been developed by Camden Council in partnership with Transport for London in order to deliver major public realm and transport improvements in the section of the West End which falls within the boundaries of Camden Council. The aim of the project is to create more civilised streets with less traffic, lower traffic speeds and better public spaces on the street.

The main driver of the scheme is the forthcoming Tottenham Court Road Crossrail station which is due to open in 2018. The Crossrail station will result in an increase in footfall and a resulting desire to ensure the area is safe and welcoming.

Tottenham Court Road currently suffers from traffic congestion, poor air quality, a lack of public space and narrow, cluttered pavements. The existing one-way system is due to be replaced with two-way tree lined streets, protected cycle lanes and new public space.

There are plans to refresh Whitfield Gardens as part of the project. The plans include new seats, lights and plants which will be designed to make the area easier to clean and to reduce anti-social behavior which is sometimes a problem. A large mural on a flank wall at the western side of Whitfield Gardens is due to be restored whilst the historic street lights in the middle of Tottenham Court Road are due to be relocated to the pavements next to Whitfield Gardens.

Planning History

The available planning history all relates to the commercial use of the ground floor unit. There is no planning history associated with the use of the site for advertising that is material to the consideration of this proposal.

There is one example of large format advertising in the vicinity of the application site. An advertising hoarding is located in front of the deep shelter entrance south of 80-85 Tottenham Court Road. The advertisement does not appear to benefit from consent and there is no planning history available on the Camden Council website. The Fitzrovia Area Action Plan (adopted March 2014) notes that the possibility of serving a discontinuance notice to seek removal of the advertisement whilst also noting that any development of the area between the American International Church and 80-85 Tottenham Court Road should involve removal of the advertising hoarding.

Nevertheless, there is a strong, prominent tradition of advertising along the relevant stretch of Tottenham Court Road and in the surrounding area which would be expected in commercial centres such as this:

- Euston Underpass;
- Digital bus shelters;
- A wealth of fascia advertising;
- 44 Grafton Way has historically featured a range of large format advertisements;
- JC Decaux free standing 6 sheet street furniture displays;
- JC Decaux advertising columns; and
- Telephone kiosks.

The Proposed Scheme

It is proposed to erect a wall mounted, media screen on the northern elevation of 77 Tottenham Court Road. The advertising display will measure 3.43m by 5.10m and will be positioned to face southbound traffic along the re-configured Tottenham Court Road. The display will be located so as not to obstruct or conflict with any traffic signs/signals.

The media screen will be mounted to the wall as part of a slim line structure, utilising high quality materials to create an attractive setting. The display has been located to ensure that it does not impact adversely on the surrounding area. The media screen will seek to integrate with the building through a sleek, minimal design. As such, the screen will not protrude from the building. The materials are both attractive and hard wearing, ensuring the longevity of the display and reducing the amount of maintenance required. This will also help the screen to assimilate with its immediate surroundings.

The advertising display will be orientated towards pedestrians and vehicles travelling south along the re-configured Tottenham Court Road. There will be no visibility for those travelling north whilst there will be limited views from vantage points to the east and west due to the slim line design and the level of integration into the form of the host building. The display will be afforded excellent screening at ground level in Whitfield Gardens due to a line of tall, mature trees.

Operational Controls

The proposed digital display will be used for commercial purposes, displaying static adverts which will change sequentially no less than every 10 seconds. The luminance of the display will be controlled to a maximum of 300cd/m², half of the maximum level suggested in the ILP Technical Guidance note 5 regarding illuminated advertisements. As a result, the proposal will not be excessively bright or result in glare to motorists.

The screen will be remotely controlled via broadband or wireless connections, which will mean that images can be changed without the need to visit the site. Planned maintenance of the media screen can be carried out without disrupting the highway network.

In order to control the operation of the display the following conditions are proposed. These conditions have been applied elsewhere and represent current best practice:

- The intensity of the illumination of the signs shall not exceed 300 cd/sqm at nighttime;
- The architectural lighting shall be designed and installed in accordance with the ILP Guidance Notes on the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (GN01:2011);
- Any change in advertisement display shall be instantaneous;
- The signs shall not display any moving, or apparently moving, images; and
- The advertisements displayed on each panel shall not change more frequently than once every 10 seconds.

Planning Considerations

National Policy Overview

According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it should be accepted that there is a “need” for advertising and that it must be ensured that Local Authorities only exercise their powers of control “...where there is an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings”. In such circumstances, “Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety” (Paragraph 67).

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 is the legislative framework upon which the NPPF is based. Regulation 3 states that advertising should be controlled in the interest of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.

Further advice is included within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The advice on amenity serves as a reminder to Local Authorities that large format advertising is acceptable in principle in the right locations, and states:

“...In assessing amenity, the local planning authority would always consider the local characteristics of the neighbourhood: for example, if the locality where the advertisement is to be displayed has important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, the local planning authority would consider whether it is in scale and in keeping with these features. This might mean that a large poster-boarding would be refused where it would dominate a group of listed buildings, but would be permitted in an industrial or commercial area of a major city

(where there are large buildings and main highways) where the advertisement would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the neighbourhood of the site.”
(Paragraph 79)

Considering the proposal against the above it is entirely appropriate for an advertisement to be located in a commercial town centre location within the designated Central London Area/CAZ, where the opportunity to significantly impact on visual amenity is very limited. The impact of the proposal on amenity and road safety is considered in more detail later on in this statement.

Local Policy Considerations

Local policies are a material consideration in assessing amenity and public safety impacts but cannot alone be used to determine an application for advertisement consent, the key facets in determination being impacts on amenity and public safety as per the NPPF.

Camden's Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy, the Development Policies, the Camden Planning Guidance and the Site Allocations. Although Camden does not have a specific advertisement policy, regard is given to Core Strategy Policies CS5 (Managing the Impact of Growth and Development), CS14 (Promoting High Quality Places and Conserving Our Heritage) and CS17 (Making Camden a Safer Place) along with Development Policies DP17 (Walking, Cycling and Public Transport), DP21 (Development Connecting to the Highway Network), DP24 (Securing High Quality Design), DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) and DP26 (Managing the Impact of Development on Occupiers and Neighbours) when assessing advertisement applications.

The Supplementary Planning Documents, Camden Planning Guidance 1 – Design, and Camden Planning Guidance 6 – Amenity, are also considered when assessing advertisement consent applications, as is the Streetscape Design Manual, which informed the development of the CPG's but contains no specific guidance in relation to large format out of home advertising.

Chapter 8 of CPG1 deals directly with advertisements, signs and hoardings. The guidance states that the most satisfactory adverts are those which take into account:

- The character and design of the property;
- The appearance of the surroundings; and
- The external fabric of the building.

The Council's approach towards assessing applications for large format advertising hoardings/billboards is set out in paragraphs 8.16 to 8.19 of CPG 1.

Paragraph 8.17 states that *“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 or feature and its surroundings”*. The circumstances where hoardings are not considered acceptable are set out in a bullet point list in paragraph 8.17 as follows:

- Locations where they may prevent or significantly damage views or obscure light;

- Locations where they are forward of the face of adjoining buildings;
- Locations where they project above roof ridge/eaves level;
- Locations where they obscure architectural features or landmarks (including windows or window recesses); and
- On side walls where they would be unduly dominant.

It is considered that the proposal passes the above test, being located on a non-descript side wall and not protruding from the face of a building or above a roof ridge.

In circumstances where a display is considered acceptable Paragraph 8.17 expects that *“they should be designed and positioned as an integral feature of the building”*. The proposal seeks to achieve this as set out in the previous section.

Paragraph 8.19 states that the impact of illumination will be taken into consideration and where it is seen to be a nuisance or out of character it will not be acceptable. The proposal is for an illuminated sign which accords with ILP guidance as outlined in the Operational Controls section below.

In all other regards the proposal complies with Council Policy. With reference to residential amenity, Core Strategy Policy CS5 (Managing the Impact of Growth and Development) Part (d) refers to protecting and enhancing the amenity of local communities and part (e) states that the impact of development on neighbours must be fully considered. Similarly, Development Policy DP26 (Managing the Impact of Development on Occupiers and Neighbours) seeks to protect residential amenity. The application proposals comply with Policy CS5 and Policy DP26 in that the orientation of the display is away from residential properties.

In regards to heritage, Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden’s Heritage) states that developments within Conservation Areas should preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area as well as not permitting developments that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building. The proposal seeks to complement the ongoing improvement works at Whitfield Gardens and will not be detrimental to views within the Charlotte Street Conservation Area. Similarly, the setting of the listed buildings in the surrounding area will not be impacted upon due to the orientation of the screen.

With reference to design, Core Strategy Policy CS14 (Promoting High Quality Places and Conserving Our Heritage) part (a) requires high quality design in developments in a manner that “respects local context and character”. Development Policy DP24 (Securing High Quality Design) requires that alterations to buildings to consider the character of the existing (part a) and adjacent buildings (part b) along with the quality of the materials used (part c) and the “provision of visually interesting frontages at street level” (part d). The proposal seeks a light touch way of enhancing the site by concentrating the existing building features. Through the use of high quality materials to accompany the high tech signage, the site will be significantly improved and will help to tidy up the host building and improve the street scene.

In addition to the above, the proposals comply with Core Strategy Policy CS17 (Making Camden a Safer Place), part (e) of which seeks to promote safer streets. As previously noted, the West End Project aims to reduce anti-social behaviour at Whitfield Gardens, through enhancement works. Investing in cleaning up “grot spots” has a positive effect on promoting safer streets.

Amenity

Notwithstanding the above, in accordance with the Advertisement Regulations (2007) all applications for advertisement consent should primarily consider the impact on amenity and public safety as set out in the NPPF.

The meaning of amenity when assessing advertising applications is usually taken to be the impact on visual or aural amenity in the immediate surrounding area. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that the character of the local area is material to the consideration of impact on amenity. In this instance the proposal site is in a vibrant town centre location with large scale commercial development surrounding.

Whilst the application site is located within Charlotte Street Conservation Area and adjacent to several listed buildings, the applicant is of the opinion that the character of the conservation area and setting of the listed buildings will not be affected by the proposals. The Charlotte Street Conservation Area Appraisal is out of date (adopted 2008) and should be afforded limited weight in the decision making process. Nevertheless, paragraph 6.18 notes that the area around Whitfield Gardens “has a slightly run-down and fragmented character”. It should also be noted that the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan (adopted March 2014) identifies a need to improve Whitfield Gardens, “particularly at the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Tottenham Street” (paragraph 4.4). This type of environment is robust and can easily accommodate advertising and other forms of illuminated signage. Whilst there is only one other example of large format advertising in close proximity (possibly due to the lack of appropriate sites), there is a plethora of other signage including illuminated shop fascia signs, advertising on bus shelters, and advertising on telephone kiosks.

The size of the proposed display has been selected to meet market requirements to make the investment viable whilst also having regard to the scale of the host building. It is not considered that the size of the display is materially significant in the context of the scale of the surrounding built development. The format and orientation fits in with the scale and size of the flank wall and will not encroach on, or exceed, the ridge height of the building. Advertising on flank elevations is a long established and common sight on London streets and Victorian properties such as this. This form of advertising originated with traditional painted signs and has evolved to digital adverts as per the subject of this application. As the proposal proactively seeks to clean up the gable elevation and create a more attractive street scene, it can reasonably be concluded that the impact would be seen as having a positive effect on amenity.

Whilst the display will be set within a primary commercial environment within both the designated Central London Area and Central Activities Zone (CAZ), it is noted that there are residential properties in proximity and as such the impact on residential amenity requires consideration. The nearest residential properties are located at first and second floor level within the host building and to the north along Tottenham Court Road. As such, views from the windows within these properties will not overlook the proposed advertising display. There are no further residential properties in close proximity to the application site. Furthermore, the display is fully controllable and will be set within stricter guidance limits set by the ILP in 2015, meaning the maximum level of illumination is halved from 600cd/m² to 300cd/m². The hours of illumination can also be limited by condition if the Council deems this necessary to pass the test of being necessary.

In summary, the applicant is of the opinion that the principle of advertising is acceptable at this location. It is considered that the both the digital advertisement and the bespoke designed mounting would have a positive impact on the area in amenity terms.

Public Safety

Digital advertisements are now widespread alongside roads in major cities throughout the UK. Drivers are used to their presence and view them as part of the urban landscape. Research on roadside advertising has not uncovered any evidence of an increase in accident rates on roads adjacent to digital signage despite the growth in installations over recent years.

The results from the published research state that drivers always give priority to the driving environment taking in secondary information according to the existing road conditions and whether they have available 'spare capacity' to execute these secondary tasks. During more testing road conditions, drivers utilise a strategy of glancing, wherein they take multiple glances of less than 1 second to either side of the vehicle's path. This allows the driver to maintain good levels of awareness regarding the surrounding conditions.

The ongoing Tottenham Court Road improvement works will result in the existing one-way system being replaced with two-way access and protected cycle lanes. Access will be restricted to buses and cyclists from 8am – 7pm, Monday to Saturday. The reduction in traffic will lead to a higher level of public safety, rendering the site more suitable for advertising.

The advertisement is positioned and designed to be readily visible and will attract attention without causing a dangerous distraction to drivers, pedestrians or cyclists. As the display is located on a gable wall it will also not cause any physical obstruction to vehicles or pedestrians.

The site is located on the western side of Tottenham Court Road and the advertising will be directed towards southbound pedestrian and vehicular traffic (following the completion of the improvement works).

The approach to the site is straightforward meaning that the proposed advert could be readily assimilated without impacting on a driver's ability to control their vehicle and navigate through the area safely. The fact that the area is generally busy (with a speed limit of 30mph) and that there is a lot of other visual stimulus will ensure that the advert is assimilated as part of the general context of the area rather than as a stand out dominant feature. There are also traffic lights at the junctions of Tottenham Court Road and Chenies Street (approx. 65m to the south) and Tottenham Court Road and Torrington Place (approx. 80m to the north) which slow traffic further in the vicinity of the application site. Further to this, the JC Decaux advert located in front of the deep shelter entrance south of 80-85 Tottenham Court Road at the junction with Torrington Place has been in situ for a number of years. The advert has operated safely without incident, and, as such, indicates that this section of Tottenham Court Road is an appropriate area for advertising.

In terms of operational controls, the proposal follows the guidance closely by setting a maximum level of luminance in line with the ILP Technical Note 5 and in limiting the display to static content with instant changeovers between adverts rather than slow merges. In terms of the frequency of change between adverts this has been set to 10 seconds which is in line with how the advertising will be sold. The guidance explains that this changeover should limit the potential for drivers to view multiple adverts on the approach, although it is accepted that it is impossible to get this below two adverts as there is always the potential to arrive at the point of changeover (as there was with traditional adverts). If the formula suggested in the guidance were to be applied in this instance, then the 10 second changeover would be appropriate. The advertisement would become readily visible on the approach at approximately 120m distance.

Travelling at 30mph this distance would take 8.9 seconds which would indicate that a ten second changeover is appropriate. Whilst the junction between Tottenham Court Road, Tottenham Street and Alfred Mews is not signalled, traffic often moves slowly through the area. The risk of accident is decreased at slower speeds and as such this is not a factor that should influence the changeover rate.

Taking into account the above, the proposal is considered to be appropriately located and appropriately controlled to ensure that driver and pedestrian safety is not compromised.

Conclusion

The application proposes to erect an advertising display within a central London commercial centre. The proposal will represent a significant investment in the site and will seek improvements to the site as a whole to make it more attractive, including cleaning the building and introducing a high quality lighting scheme. The proposal will complement the improvement works at Whitfield Gardens which are coming forward as part of the West End Project. Overall it is considered that the scheme would serve to positively enhance the site.

When considering the individual merits of the proposed scheme and the particular circumstance of this site, the proposal is not harmful to amenity or public safety and does not conflict with adopted Council Policy nor its guidance on assessing large format advertising hoardings as set out in paragraphs 8.16 to 8.19 of CPG1.

For the reasons given above, it is considered that this is an appropriate proposal for this location and should therefore be granted consent.

The application is submitted with the following supporting information:

- Completed application forms;
- Full set of plans and elevations:
 - 3670_PP_001 Site Location Plan;
 - 3670_PP_002 Existing Site Plan;
 - 3670_PP_003 Proposed Site Plan;
 - 3670_PP_004 A-A Elevation;
 - 3670_PP_005 B-B Elevation;
 - 3670_PP_06 Specification Drawings; and
 - 3670_PP_007 Design Sheet.

Additionally, we will arrange payment to Camden Council for the sum of £385 to cover the cost of the Advertisement Consent application.

I trust that the above is clear and look forward to receiving notification that the application has been registered in due course. Should you have any queries in relation to any of the attached information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin MacNamara', written in a cursive style.

Martin MacNamara

Managing Director