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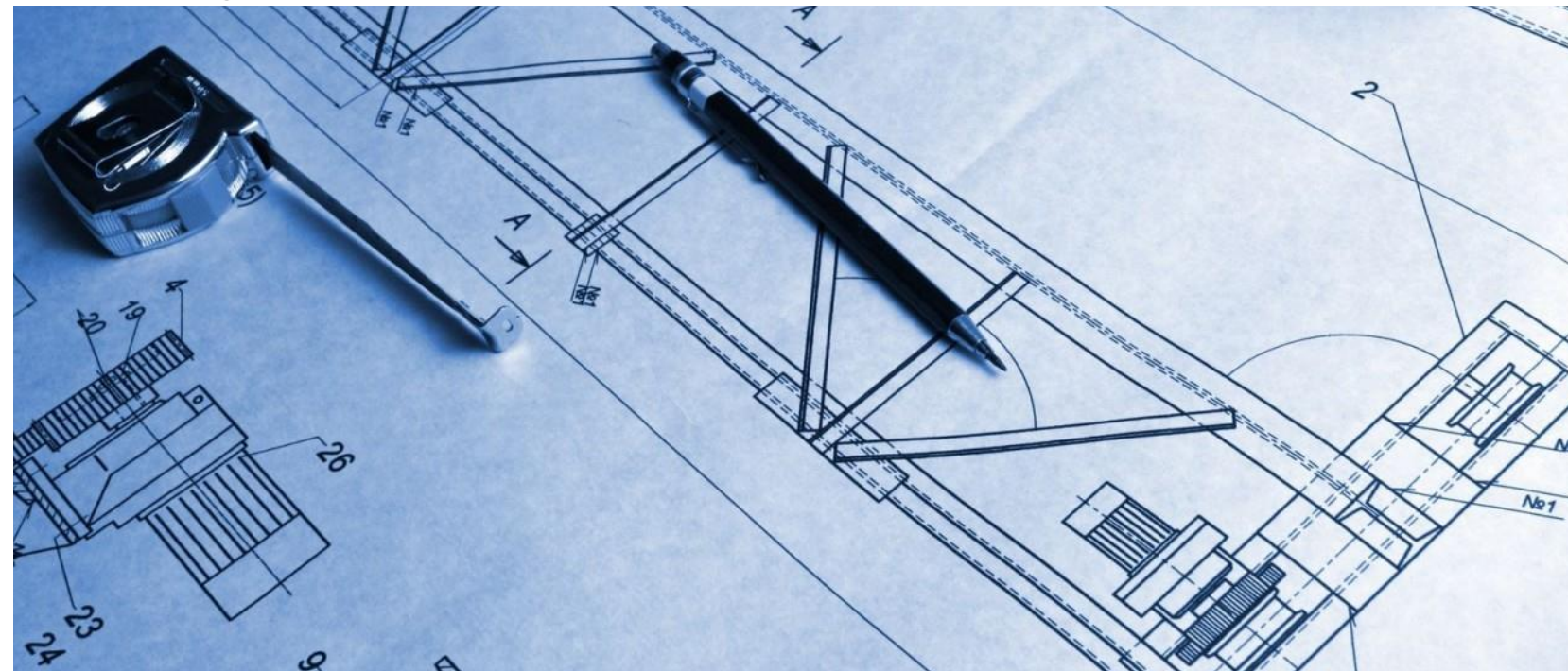
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Design Excellence



At the heart of JCDecaux's philosophy is a devotion to design excellence. The Company is renowned for its landscape legacy of beautifully designed Street Furniture & Large Format displays that are more than just physical supports for advertisement displays. The reputation for build quality, great designs and functional furniture is maintained through a continued collaboration with leading Architects and Designers who have created some of the most attractive and inspiring lines of Street Furniture and Large Format displays for cities across the World.

A core function of the JCDecaux group is the Research and Development Department (R&D), which serves as the essential link between art and industry. With more than 120 staff, the R&D department and the professionalism of the team, combine with leading-edge technology to lay the foundation upon which JCDecaux builds its Street Furniture and Large Format estate. This knowledge and experience is employed to deliver the most suitable and appropriate design solutions to complement local environments and place.

The investment in high quality durable designs is intended to enhance the public realm by providing inspiring and attractive built forms that raise the quality standard and challenges the perception of what a roadside advertisement should be. The proposal for the Euston Circus vent shaft embodies these principles and presents a singular challenge for the urban setting. The proposal essentially creates a second skin and new identity for the vent shaft structure that better fits the appearance of the area. The proposed framework will sit over the concrete structure to support the outer skin, green wall and advertisement display. The principal function of the vent shaft will be unaffected by the scheme but the visual benefits will be clear, through enlivening the street scene and transforming an unattractive, yet essential, item of infrastructure into a more pleasing form.

JOB	Euston Road Vent London NW1
CLIENT	TfL/LUL
SCALE	N/A
DRAWING	Design Excellence
REFERENCE	A01348/15

Planning Considerations

Introduction

This proposal is primarily a scheme that requires advertisement consent, the control of which is governed by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. The Regulations exist through the provisions of s220 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and sets out the controlling regime applicable to advertising related proposals. The advertisement is designed to be an integral part of the structure, which also includes a new external cladding system and two vertical living walls. The primary purpose and funding of the new structure relates to the advertising use and as such falls within the scope of the Regulations, as provided by s 222 of the 1990 Act.

The 2007 Regulations provide a self contained code for advertising developments, which sets it apart from mainstream Planning controls and the pre-eminence of Development Plan Policies. Advertising proposals are to be determined and considered in light of the Regulations, which identifies two areas that are material in such cases, being the interests of visual amenity and public safety. In this case, the desire to improve the appearance of the existing structure was paramount in order to build on the recent investment in improving the townscape at this busy interchange. The development of Regent Place, opposite the application site, provided the catalyst to redesign the junction and improve the local environment. The scheme was completed in 2014 at a cost of £4.5million and involved the collaboration of public and private organisations to realise tangible improvements in the operation of the junction, the movement of all modes of transport and the transformation of the appearance of pedestrians moving through the area. The area and locations are now more clearly defined and it feels pleasant and safe to walk through.

The redesign of the vent shaft structure is presented with the same intention, to improve a neglected and unattractive aspect of the junction and to increase the green estate in the capital for the benefit of people living, working and visiting.



Planning Considerations

Site and Surroundings

Euston Circus is located at the junction of Tottenham Court Road, Hampstead Road and Euston Road. The junction experiences high levels of traffic, which includes all modes, passing through the junction throughout the day and night. The 2014 changes to the road layout has greatly simplified the junction however it remains a busy interchange and important route in, around and out of the City. The complementary improvements to the public realm at the junction has helped to provide a better sense of place by installing better seating, through new tree planting and improved signage.

Within this changed and improved environment sits the London Underground ventilation shaft located to the east of the junction on the north side of Gower Street. Gower Street itself is a one-way street and the main route that takes traffic into the centre of town. The site lies opposite University College Hospital, an expansive multi-storied building dating from 2005 which provides state-of-the-art teaching and medical facilities. The hospital is one of several modern multi-storied and large-scale buildings that dominate this area, and together with the transport network and extensive street lighting creates an essentially commercial character. There is also a great deal of advertising at street level, including media screens on the underpass abutments, which were granted consent on the 1st July 2011 under Council reference 2010/6613/A. The application site building also includes an illuminated portrait advertisement affixed to the northern elevation of the structure and visible from Hampstead Road approach.

The ventilation shaft is an essential piece of infrastructure needed for the safe operation of the Underground network and will continue to require a presence on Gower Street. This type of structure, of which there are several examples in the Capital, are imposing and unprepossessing built forms that rarely have a positive effect on their urban settings.

The vent shaft at Euston Circus was built in 1965 and vents both east and west along Euston Road. The shaft was constructed using reinforced concrete and has been repaired several times over the course of its life. The height of the concrete structure is 5.5m tall and was extended to 7.9m using timber feather edged panels, which surround the existing advertising panel.

The application site sits outside of the central London congestion zone and is not within a conservation area nor close to any heritage asset, the setting of which is, likely to be affected by the current proposal.

Proposed Development

This proposal represents a creative solution to redesign and reenvision the vent shaft structure whilst retaining the primary function of venting the tube lines below. The existing concrete structure will remain unaltered encased within an outer skin comprising a gently curved clad living wall system. The new structure will also incorporate a portrait advertising display on the western elevation forming an integral part of the whole design. The living wall elements will feature on the north and west facing sides of the structure and is made up of a series of planted tiles that together create a continuous green facade that not only looks lush and verdant but contribute to the green estate in the capital and assists in the removal of air pollutants from the atmosphere. Similar examples of this type of living wall installation can be found elsewhere on the TfL estate at Elephant and Castle and Edgware Road stations. It is also now common to find living walls used in architectural applications to provide an ever-changing canvas that provides visual interest in a natural material that can improve air quality.

Planning Considerations

Policy Issues

The use of a living wall in the context of the application site is intentional considering the poor air quality readings found on the Euston Road, which is examined further in Part C of this submission.

The advertising display will, as with the current display, be portrait in orientation and illuminated to a level consistent with the advice of the Institute of Lighting Professionals, which in this context would indicate a maximum night time limit of 300Cdm². The advertisement screen provides a display area of 4.75m x 7.68m and is made up of a series of LED tiles to create one image that can be remotely changed via a secure ISDN feed, making it a more sustainable form of roadside display. The advertisement and green wall will be elevated to a height of 2.5m above the carriageway and stand at a maximum height of 10.6m with the roof of the structure gently curving from front to back to a height of 6.7m.

The rear of the structure will channel the air from the vent through ducting in the new structure directly to the rear and diverted at the front to two vertical grills on the north and south elevations behind the display panel, as illustrated on the plans in Part A. The intake and extract points of the vent shaft will be unobstructed and will continue to function as they currently do. The northern elevation of the new structure will include a concealed door to enable access into the structure for the inspection and maintenance of the concrete core.

The control of advertisements is governed by the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007, which sets down the criteria and relevant considerations for advertising proposals. The Regulations are supported by guidance on interpretation and application of the Regulations through MHCLG guidance of advertisements published in March 2014. The two interests of concern are those of amenity and public safety. On the matter of amenity, the Regulations requires a Council should take into account the provisions of the development plan policies that are material and any other factors relevant to those two areas of concern. Unlike applications for planning permission, the primacy of local plan policy does not apply to advertising cases. The Regulations goes on to identify the factors relevant to amenity, which area to include the general characteristics of a locality, *“including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest”* (Para. 3). The guidance suggests that advertising is expected and likely to be acceptable outside of sensitive areas such as locations *“... 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.”*

The need to be consistent in assessing and defining local character is important and the applicant is encouraged in this proposal by the presence of other advertising panels within close proximity to the appeal site as the underpass, which supports the view that the bustling and vibrant nature of Euston Circus is an appropriate setting for street level advertising. Overall the proposal would represent an innovative and inspiring form of development within the context of this locality.

Planning Considerations

Policy Issues

The National Planning Policy Framework July 2018 (NPPF) refers to advertising proposals in paragraph 132 and provides general guidance on the need to ensure advertisements are appropriate to their location and proportionate in scale. Paragraph 132 states that:

“The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.”

More generally, and pertinent to the current proposal, is the principle aim of securing high quality design in new buildings and in encouraging vitality in urban areas, both of which are embodied in the proposal. Paragraph 131 states that in determining applications,

“... great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

It is considered that the proposal contained within this submission is an example of innovative design that does enliven the area, will add to local character and distinctiveness and raise the standard and quality of the built form in the area. The size of the advertising element of the proposal is subordinate and dwarfed by the scale and mass of the surrounding buildings. The proposed changes to the vent structure is a sympathetic addition to the street that respects the surrounding building architecture and will provide tangible benefits in visual amenity and air quality.

In respect of public safety impact, the proposal has been the subject of a Stage ½ Road Safety Assessment, a copy of which is attached with the application documents. The RSA recommended a collision study be undertaken to ascertain the number and location of accidents close to the application site, which revealed that the level of accidents over a three-year period was not excessive and that that location for the proposed advertisement display would not exacerbate this position. The RSA also recommends a review on the anniversary of first display to monitor the accident occurrences at the junction and contributing factors. Overall the report concluded that the proposed type and position of the advertisement would not be against the interests of public safety.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal is an appropriate and suitable form of the development within the context of the site and the surrounding area. The design is of a high quality and will complement the modern architecture of the area and replace an unattractive and utilitarian building with a more interesting and attractive built form that will improve the visual aspect of this part of Gower Street. The installation of the green wall, a living façade that will change with the seasons, will not only provide visual interest but will be an valuable addition to TfL’s green estate and make a contribution to the air quality of this part of the Capital. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant material considerations and will not offend national or local policy.