

**London Borough of Camden Design Review Panel**

**Report of Formal Review Meeting: Network Building**

Friday 11 September 2020  
Video Conference

**Panel**

Catherine Burd (chair)  
Harriet Bourne  
Scott Grady  
Barbara Kaucky  
Richard Lavington

**Attendees**

Gavin Sexton	London Borough of Camden
Victoria Hinton	London Borough of Camden
Neil McDonald	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Kevin Fisher	London Borough of Camden
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects
Kiki Ageridou	Frame Projects
Roisin Menon	Frame Projects

**Apologies / report copied to**

Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden

**Confidentiality**

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

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## 1. Project name and site address

Network Building, 95 - 100 Tottenham Court Road/76 Whitfield Street W1T 4EZ

## 2. Presenting team

Stuart Piercy	Piercy and Company
Henry Humphries	Piercy and Company
Harry Bucknall	Piercy and Company
Andre Nave	Piercy and Company
Matti Lampila	Piercy and Company
Tom French	Derwent London
Richard Baldwin	Derwent London
Caroline Haines	Derwent London
Jim Pool	DP9 Limited
Hannah Willcock	DP9 Limited
Sarah Roberts	DP9 Limited
Ollie Morris	TST
Matt Schaaf	Blackburn and Co.

## 3. Planning authority briefing

The application site occupies the southern half of the block bounded by Tottenham Court Road on the east, Whitfield Street to the west and Howland Street to the south. The building is a six-storey office block with retail units at ground level. The site is not situated within a conservation area, nor is it a listed building. A large part of the site is located within the London View Management Framework protected view 2B. The applicants are proposing to submit an application for outline planning permission, with two Reserved Matters applications for a mixed-use office building and a mixed-use lab-enabled building. Both submissions include retail at ground floor.

The proposal is to demolish the existing building and replace with an office-led (and lab-enabled) development. The proposal looks to unify and simplify the massing of the site and provide high quality, highly sustainable and adaptable 21<sup>st</sup> century building befitting a prominent corner site. The façade curves at each corner – referencing the curved glazed corner of Heal and Sons building. Improvements to the public realm are proposed on Tottenham Court Road, Howland Street and Whitfield Street, along with external terraces for the building users at high level. Service access will be provided via Cypress Place, involving closing the southern part of the street. New planting and public seating is proposed on Howland Street and Whitfield Street. On Tottenham Court Road, high quality retail units extend the active frontage. The development area provides justification for the provision of 13 intermediate and ten social rented residential units in a new, purpose-built development nearby at Tottenham Mews.

Officers asked the panel for its views on the development as a whole, including building lines, bulk, massing and height. They also asked, in particular, for its advice on the building's impact on protected views, the proposed public realm, and the closure of Cypress Place.



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## 4. Design Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The panel is impressed with the architectural quality of proposed designs for the Network Building, but suggests refinements that will enhance the design in its setting. If the closure of Cypress Place and additional bulk / footprint are to be justified, the proposed public realm improvements must return significant value to the area. The panel encourages the design team to consider moving back both the building line and the recessed entrance to create a more generous relationship with Howland Street. Upper storeys should be set back to respond to the height of the Qube building. The specification of planting and future maintenance of public realm requires further consideration, to ensure high quality public realm is delivered. The comments are expanded below.

### *Massing*

- The proposed massing pushes to the boundaries of the site, and the panel recommends this should be pulled back at key points to improve its townscape quality,
- The acceptability of incursions into the London View Management Framework viewing corridor are for planning officers to determine. However, the panel suggests that floors six and seven could be set back to respond to the height of the adjoining Qube building.
- Stopping up of Cypress Place represents a loss of public realm and permeability that can only be justified through the provision of sufficient areas of high quality public space in its place.
- Rather than extending the development forward to the site boundary at upper floors, the panel suggests the building line should be moved further back along the Howland Street frontage.
- Similarly, it should be set further back at ground floor level to provide a more generous pavement width. This would offset the loss of public realm.
- The relocation of the office entrance to Howland Street is a positive strategic move. The panel suggests that the curve in the façade line could be more pronounced, to create additional breathing space on the pavement at the threshold.

### *Architecture*

The panel supports the proposed materiality and architectural expression, relating the building to high quality neighbours such as the Heal's Building. In particular, it enjoys the asymmetric profile of the pre-cast concrete façade panels.



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- The building's corner on Tottenham Court Road and Howland Street is an important, highly visible element of the scheme. The panel suggests that the curved corner treatment at ground and first floor level could be continued through the full height of the building. Piercy and Company's own Turnmill Building in Farringdon provides a strong precedent for this approach.
- The building could do more to reflect the scale and variety of Whitfield Street on its western frontage, and should avoid a completely closed façade at street level. The ground floor should aim to offer a more bespoke and public element to the street, for example by including smaller scale entrances and shopfronts.

### *Landscape design*

- The appropriate tree specification is important on Howland Street. The panel encourages the incorporation of London Plane trees rather than Field Maples, to provide continuity with Tottenham Court Road and the trees further west on Howland Street.
- It is critical that the street trees are given sufficient space at canopy level. Because of this, the panel recommends that the building should not step forwards at upper floor levels into the tree canopy zone. Trees further along Howland Street suffer from being too close to the building adjacent.
- The panel suggests that rain gardens, rather than benches, could be located on the far side of the pavement from the building, at the corner of Howland Street and Whitfield Street, to help provide sustainable drainage capacity.
- Further opportunities should be sought to include planting at roof level, to achieve the required urban greening factor.
- As the boundary line will be mid-pavement, it is important to that the applicants discuss and agree future maintenance responsibility with Camden officers, to ensure planting and public realm are maintained.
- The provision of green amenity spaces could also be considered inside the building, perhaps at the corners, to provide a further level of benefit to employees.

### *Next steps*

The panel has full confidence in the applicant and architect team to deliver a building of high architectural quality. It is confident that the applicants will be able to resolve the issues it has raised in discussion with Camden officers.

