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AWARDS



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11 Baker Street LONDON



View from Baker Street.

A seven-storey mixed-use development has replaced a dilapidated post-war building occupying an entire urban block facing Baker Street, London W1. The scheme comprises a strongly modelled concrete and glass office building addressing Baker Street and two predominantly brick residential buildings to the rear, which flank a private courtyard garden.

Squire and Partners worked closely with freeholder Portman Estates to develop a scheme that would augment its aspirations for the area and work alongside its own portfolio to achieve these aims. In order to extend the Baker Street Quarter, a building of quality and longevity was required, which in accommodation terms would attract a high calibre of tenant to the area.

City of Westminster planning officers encouraged the implementation of a contemporary design solution to the site. Aesthetically, the new building is a simple and modern contribution to the area, being sensitive through its use of materials, which relate to the surroundings. The design of the building respects the existing parapet heights along Baker Street, including set back upper floors. A fine grade of concrete was selected to tie in with existing buildings along Baker Street which use stone or concrete on their façades. The completed building introduces a contemporary element to the streetscape, as well as integrating into the existing architectural language with strong horizontal expressions.

Office building

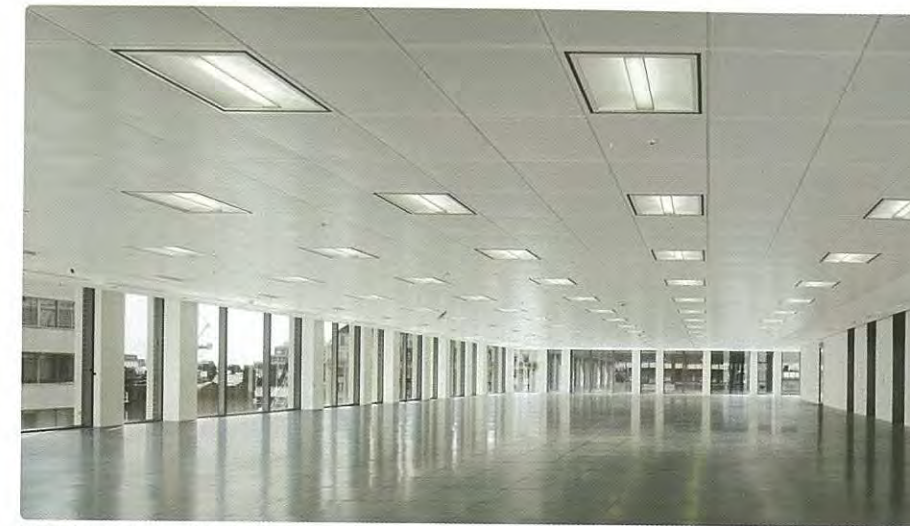
The office building was constructed using a hybrid steel-concrete frame, which expresses the decrease in structural loading as the building rises – traditional vertical lines of structure are lost and the building appears as an object in its own right. The elevation is discretely split into three horizontal elements that bring order to the façade. The central three floors have glazing flush with the precast, while at the top and bottom two floors the glazing is recessed. The precast joining also varies to reflect this layering. An open loggia at ground floor is repeated in a section of terrace on the sixth floor, while areas of flush and recessed glazing have similar conversations across the façade. Retail units are provided on the ground and basement floors. Internally, the structure allows for an 18m clear span office floorplate, offering column-free spaces with spectacular full-height views across London.

In terms of value and efficiency, the hybrid steel-concrete frame facilitated a short construction time which enabled the building to be watertight and the internal works to progress earlier. The use of concrete was a cost-effective choice, allowing for an efficiency of floorspace due to being used as the structure as well as for the cladding.

The building meets the aspiration of drawing high-calibre tenants north from Oxford Street (the building has been fully let as an HQ for a high-profile company) which is good for the developer, freeholder and the City of Westminster.

Concrete

Due to its location just outside a conservation area, it was possible to use a more contemporary palette of materials, an approach favoured by the City of Westminster. A fine-grade precast concrete was chosen,



Typical column-free office floor.



Flush and recessed glazing set within slender concrete columns.



Installation of precast units.

along with cassette glazing units, as the primary element of the façade. The crisply detailed material bears a strong resemblance in colour and texture to the Portland stone used in many buildings around central London.

The quality of concrete used was very important to the success of the façade and a long process of approvals had to be completed before it was finally specified. The architect selected a concrete containing reflective mica to add texture and 'sparkle' to the otherwise matt concrete face. All precast units were fully inspected at the point of manufacture before being delivered to site.

Precast concrete was specified because of a desire to achieve slender column proportions on the building. Within these columns, large glazed panels are positioned at differing depths on the façade – precast concrete allowed a solid 'cheek', which remained the same regardless of where the glazing sat within the frame.

The flexibility of the material also allowed panels to vary slightly according to individual requirements, ie, recesses could be cast in for flashing, insulation and drips. Perhaps most importantly, concrete facilitated the minimal aesthetic that all parties strived to achieve on this high-specification building in a prominent location.



Exterior view of reception and artwork.

Discrete elements

The primary office elevations are split into three discrete elements that bring order to the massing. The glazing to the central three floors is flush with the spandrels/beams, while glazing above and below is recessed. Within this framework, two additional areas of large flush glazing are introduced, responding to the local context, along with adjacent recessed colonnades – together creating an asymmetrical composition to the Baker Street elevation.

Aiming to avoid the traditional vertical lines of structure while introducing areas of both flush and recessed areas of glazing proved a design and construction challenge. The team collaborated with a cladding subcontractor early in the design stage, which led to the implementation of a hybrid construction system, using structural precast elements to maximise the ground-floor colonnade and the sixth-floor terrace.

A key width of 350mm was established for all precast columns and beams to ensure an elegance and lightness to the façade. To maintain this width of column in the colonnades and areas of recessed glazing, the steelwork could not be encased in traditional cladding panels. Instead, and to maximise internal floor area, structural precast units are used, which retain the key dimensions. In locations of highest load, these incorporate cast-in steel columns to maintain the size limit, and at ground floor also include large steel stub-beams to connect to the primary structure.

The associated details were of particular complexity, as the preferred precast jointing rationale and elevational treatment dictated this to be a double-height precast column. This innovative method of construction results in a deceptively simple-looking façade that successfully achieves both the design aesthetic and the needs of the client.

11 Baker Street was designed from planning stage to achieve a BREEAM rating of Excellent, which was met at inspection on completion with a score of 71.14%. ●



This is a classic use of precast concrete elements forming the façade of a steel frame building.



11 Baker Street, London

Owner	AUB (Baker St) Development
Architect	Squire and Partners
Consulting engineers	Scott Wilson/Taylor + Boyd
Contractor	McAleer & Rushe
Project manager	GVA Second London Wall
Quantity surveyor	Rider Levett Bucknall
Precast concrete supplier	Evans Concrete Products

Judges' comments:

This is a classic use of precast concrete elements forming the façade of a steel-framed building. The seven-storey modern rectilinear building is a good, contemporary addition to the buildings along this part of Baker Street. The façades have used precast concrete to produce slender column proportions on the building. The impression is of a concrete and glass office building, although the building is essentially a hybrid steel-concrete frame structure with central concrete lifts/stair core and composite steel-concrete floors.

The appearance is crisp and clean with the whiteness of the concrete standing out from some of the older adjacent buildings. The use of (false) concrete column spacing on a 1.5/4.5 grid between concrete-clad main support columns has broken up what could have been a boring regular box arrangement.

In certain lighting, the acid-etched concrete gives a sparkle appearance through the use of mica aggregate. Small particles of black aggregate are also visible on the surface, which give contrast to the white concrete matrix. This is a common appearance for precast concrete but takes experience to get it right. Using self-compacting concrete has produced an even overall appearance.