

The Outernet, London

PROJECT TEAM

Architect: **Orms**

Structural Engineer: **Engenuiti**

Steelwork Contractor: **Severfield**

Main Contractor: **Skanska UK**

Client: **Consolidated Developments Ltd**



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The Outernet development provides circa 23,230m² of space, across four buildings and a combined basement, for music, arts, leisure, retail, and hospitality industries, in the heart of London's historic nightlife quarter. Whilst the development consists of four separate new buildings (A, B, C and D) and a large basement, the neighbourhood is centred on a 2000-capacity performance space - HERE at Outernet and The Urban Gallery.

The Urban Gallery is a four-storey immersive column-free space that forms part of Building A, a seven-storey steel-framed structure that also contains hotel, office and restaurant spaces. Effectively the face of the project, The Urban Gallery is a flexible, interactive events space that contains one of the world's largest LED screen installations. A series of sliding doors allow it to be open to the general public at ground level or closed for private events, while three-storey-high sliding and pivoting louvres situated above the doors allow the gallery to essentially be a covered outdoor area.

One of the biggest challenges involved the position of an escalator shaft for Tottenham Court Road underground station, as one of Building A's columns in the northwest corner sits directly above

this shaft. Foundations were out of the question and consequently this column is hung from cantilevering steelwork. The subterranean parts of the scheme dictated the construction programme and methodology. To construct the scheme efficiently and within the timescale a top-down method was adopted, whereby the basement was dug-out while the steel frames for Buildings A and B were simultaneously erected above.

The basement is where the steel-framed 'box-in-box' HERE at Outernet can be found. This 18m x 30m column-free, three-storey-high entertainment space is acoustically isolated from the Crossrail and Northern line tunnels that sit below and adjacent to the basement. Building the 'box-in-box' frame within the already complete basement structure provided several construction challenges, as the steelwork for the auditorium had to be lifted into the basement through a small opening in the ground floor slab.

Building B is a five-storey steel-framed mixed-use building that houses retail, office, entertainment and restaurant areas. The project's two remaining structures, C and D, are smaller concrete-framed buildings, both featuring steel-framed top floor plant decks.

A unique, mixed-use destination that fuses events, hospitality, information, retail, workplace and leisure, The Outernet is a dynamic and engaging collection of spaces that are fully integrated with the cultural and physical heritage of the local area.

Judges' comment

The complex Outernet project for music, arts, retail, and hospitality, at the heart of London's nightlife district, cleverly integrates a spectacular immersive digital Urban Gallery above a large performance space built between two underground rail lines, and a grassroots music venue within the sensitively preserved, renowned Denmark Street or 'Tin Pan Alley' heritage neighbourhood.