

The poetic office

Lynch Architects' approach to the Zig Zag Building appealed to the client of this Victoria office development, writes *Felix Mara*

'There's no reason why the poetic imagination shouldn't be practical,' says Patrick Lynch of his studio's Zig Zag Building, a 13-storey mixed-use development with speculative offices above two floors of retail units. 'The more efficient the office, the less urban,' he adds, going some way towards explaining why, as he observes, 'good architects tend to turn their noses up at commercial projects and want to do art galleries'.

Lynch's outlook is inquisitive and in certain ways more prone to accept and synthesise than to reject and segregate. The Zig Zag provides an opportunity to test his assertion.

It's one of five projects designed by Lynch Architects currently on site in London's Victoria Street, comprising offices, flats, retail and a public library.

There's a refreshing ethical dimension to Patrick Lynch's thinking about urban office design, which sets him apart from the wide boys within the construction profession, with their commercial-speak of 'footfall', 'uplifts', 'resi' and, of course, the clipped multiplier 'k'. For a start, he's interested in the occupants of the offices, not just the 'punters' who commission them. 'People spend a lot of their lives in these buildings,' he empathises. The Zig Zag Building develops the idea of the facade as >>

Right The Zig Zag Building and Kings Gate viewed from Westminster Cathedral to the south

- Site plan
1. The Zig Zag Building
 2. Kings Gate
 3. Courtyard
 4. Westminster City Hall
 5. Westminster City School
 6. District and Circle Line tunnel

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The Zig Zag Building, Victoria, London SW1

Lynch Architects

a threshold between the world of its occupants and the city beyond, exploring parts of buildings which users are able to occupy, relate to and interact with, for example by opening windows or stepping on to terraces.

In a reciprocal connection, facades have the potential to act as intermediate spaces, rather than opaque or reflective boundary planes. 'It's the facade that speaks to the city,' says Lynch. If people are able to look inside and are aware of occupants' activities, the buildings will feel less oppressive. For Lynch, this is part of the ethics of enlightened patronage, which he traces back to golden ages in Renaissance Florence and the New York of Adler & Sullivan: 'They have a base and a top, and there's a delicious pleasure in walking past these buildings because their lobbies are like urban rooms.' The Zig Zag Building and Lynch Architects' Kings Gate residential and retail development further up Victoria Street emulate their civic qualities with their colonnades and layered, crafted facades with intricate, shifting patterns of light and shade. At low level, there are active retail frontages, stepped in section. 'The geometry of the plan creates a false perspective and this naturally draws you into the space between,' Lynch explains.

Lynch is tuned in to the history of the site as well as office building typologies. Victoria Street has a rich hinterland, especially to the south, with its Peabody estates, Westminster Cathedral, the mansion blocks built around it and its side streets. These feel more like high streets. Victoria Street itself is a canyon of flush, 2,000-workplace office juggernauts, like a stunted, provincial version of New York's Avenue of the Americas. >>

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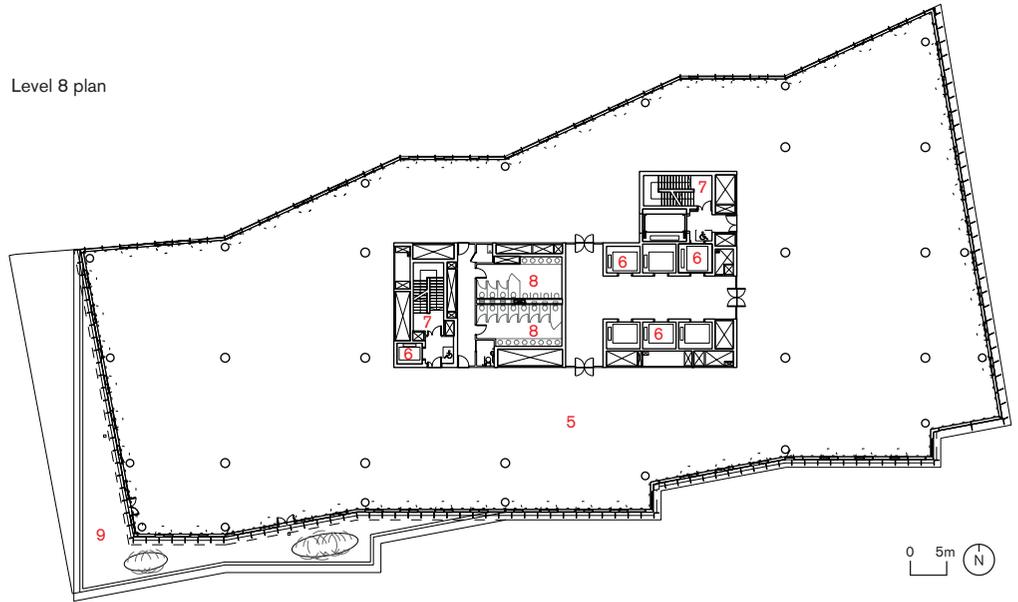
V A
RENOVATO URBS
VICTORIA STREET APPEARS
GENIUS LOCI





- 1. Plant
- 2. Management suite
- 3. Retail
- 4. District and Circle Line tunnel
- 5. Office
- 6. Lift
- 7. Stair
- 8. Washroom
- 9. Terrace

Level 8 plan

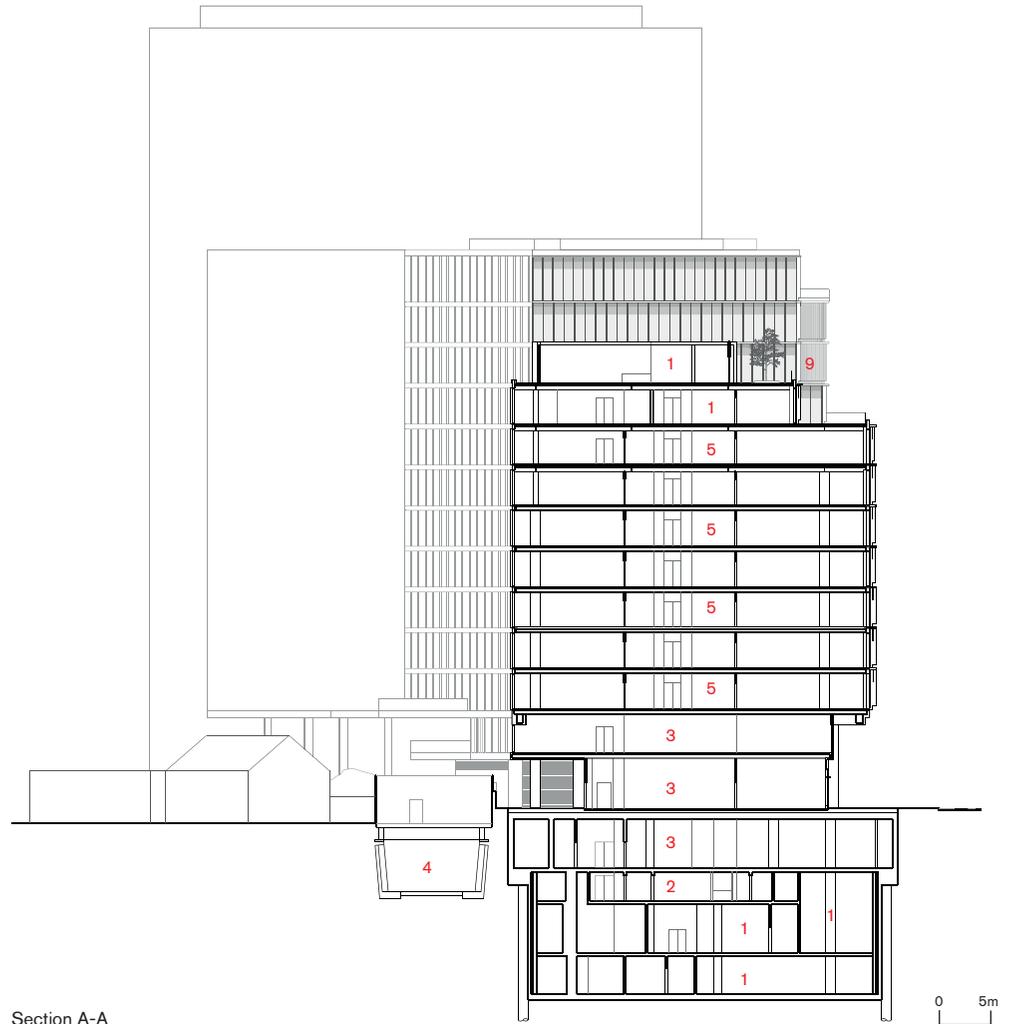


Far left, top
 Architect's sketch of the Zig Zag Building's Victoria Street elevation

Far left, middle
 Site plan illustrating how Lynch Architects has transmitted the urban grain of the mansion blocks around Westminster Cathedral to its additions

Far left, bottom
 Context model

Left View from south-west, showing how the Zig Zag Building's facade steps down, subtly genuflecting to Westminster Cathedral. Fin depths increase on successive floors, but diminish on Kings Gate



Section A-A

There are also problems on the north side of Victoria Street, where the partly submerged District and Circle Lines has created a historic rift in the medieval fabric, which a new public space and park, designed as part of Lynch Architects' proposals, are intended to heal. This will provide more permeability. 'Offices tend to be serviced from the back, have windswept plazas and spill out warm air at you,' Lynch observes. 'But there's no reason why they shouldn't be part of the background of the city.'

After a series of bold additions to the locale designed by EPR, Sheppard Robson and Pelli Clarke

The design life of the Zig Zag Building is an unusually long 60 years

Pelli Architects with Swanke Hayden Connell, which inject personality like a chorus of 'way heys', Lynch Architects' approach introduces a spirit of careful sensitivity, without grovelling to the context. Lynch's additions also take a long-term view. 'Part of what we're doing is extending the workable life of the building, which is ultimately sustainable,' he explains. This has been done by designing responsive, attractive surroundings which won't fall out of love with their occupants, helping tenants to retain staff.

The design life of the Zig Zag Building is an unusually long 60 years and Lynch argues that this strategy has been assisted by avoiding standard curtain wall ventilators. Instead solid, insulated opening panels, free of short-life components, have been inserted into a glass facade and recede behind layers of vertical fins, providing shading and privacy. Additional

Below Office interior showing slippage between regular but different modules of curtain wall and external fins

For more on this project

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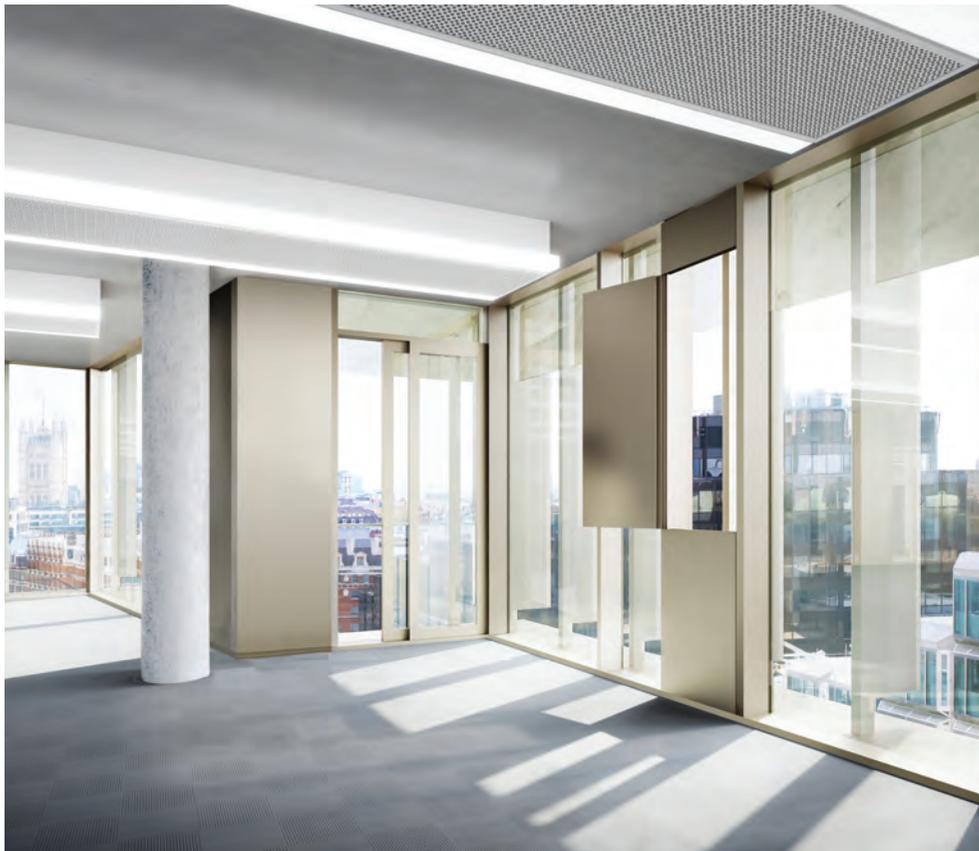
AJ Buildings Library



eco enhancements include capillary cooling pipes cast into the slabs.

A rich mix of uses and occupants will reinforce this strategy. 'As soon as you get people living in an area, things change', says Lynch. Pipelines which deliver varied office accommodation sequentially will also promote richness and viability, he explains, especially if developments are able to attract TMTs, or Trendy Media Types, along with accompanying spin-offs such as bars and restaurants, which will make Victoria Street a less sleepy place.

Lynch's philosophy of poetics plus practicality makes business sense, winning over planners and appealing to a client – Land Securities – that realises that quality and sustainable office space carry a premium. As Lynch explains: 'Every time they knock a building down, they lose five years' rent.' ■



Project data

THE ZIG ZAG BUILDING

INVITED COMPETITION WIN Spring 2010
 PLANNING CONSENT November 2011
 START OF DEMOLITION March 2012
 EXPECTED COMPLETION Spring 2015
 NET INTERNAL AREA Offices: 17,440m²
 Retail: 3,500m²
 BUDGET £80 million
 PROCUREMENT Design and build
 CLIENT Land Securities
 ARCHITECT Lynch Architects
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Pell Frischmann
 SERVICES ENGINEER Grontmij
 PLANNING CONSULTANT Gerald Eve
 MAIN CONTRACTOR Lend Lease
 FACADE CONTRACTOR Gartner
 LANDSCAPE Vogt and BDP
 ART WORKS Rut Blees Luxemburg/Timorous Beasities

KINGS GATE RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

EXPECTED COMPLETION Spring 2015
 NET INTERNAL AREA Residential: 10,090m²
 Retail: 690m²
 BUDGET £100 million
 CLIENT Land Securities
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Pell Frischmann
 SERVICES ENGINEER Grontmij
 PLANNING CONSULTANT Gerald Eve

LYNCH ARCHITECTS' COMPONENT OF THE NOVA

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
 EXPECTED COMPLETION 2018
 CLIENT Land Securities and Westminster Council
 SCOPE Offices, library, residential

Design detail

The Zig Zag Building, Victoria, London SW1

Lynch Architects

South-facing office facade

On the upper levels, above the retail units, the office facade has five main components.

The first is the internal structural columns, which are circular with minimal diameter. This avoids an awkward relationship with the second element, the curtain wall, with pale bronze anodised stable-door style openable panels on a 1.5m grid. An office storey's openable facade must be at least 2.5 per cent of its floor area for smoke purging after a fire, and a similar proportion must be insulated. Combining these parameters, shutters enable cross ventilation, forming Juliet balconies when fully open.

In front of the curtain wall, separated by a 50mm gap, the third element – 3.7m high, 65mm thick anodised fins of varying depth – shade the facade against solar gain from the east and west. At the lowest level, the fins are at 1.5m centres and 600mm deep, gradually diminishing in spacing and depth on successive floors. As they get closer together they cast more shadow, and their depth reduces to conserve material, making the building seem taller and more statuesque. The fourth element, the sill, shades the

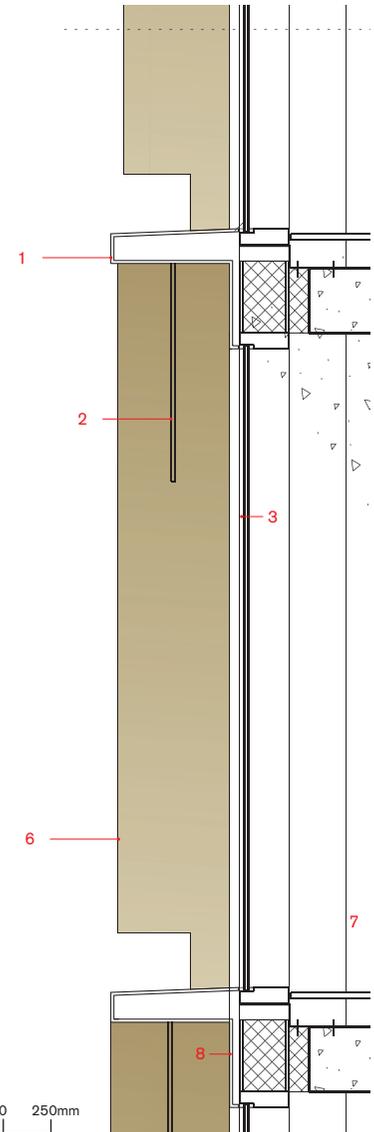


facade from south midday summer sun and has a constant depth throughout. Finally, a hanging translucent glass 'doily' protects the facade against solar gain and glare from spring and autumn midday sunlight, not quite at its zenith at noon, but often intense. The doilies comprise laminated glass with a printed interlayer depicting various images of onyx.

The building's 'zigzag' geometry will exaggerate the play of light and shadow across the facade, its variety complemented by patterns as occupants open different parts on warm days. The doilies will register another layer of inhabitation and be seasonally and diurnally responsive as, in winter, they begin to glow towards the end of the working day.

David Evans, director, Lynch Architects

1. Bronze anodised aluminium sill piece
2. Translucent laminated glass solar screening 'doily'
3. Double-glazed curtain wall unit with bronze anodised frame
4. Inward-opening split insulated panel with bronze anodised aluminium external face
5. Bronze anodised aluminium balustrade
6. Bronze anodised aluminium fin
7. Internal concrete column
8. Front face of spandrel below at constant 50mm from face of curtain wall



Above Victoria Street elevation. Fins are set out from corners with a subtle gradation of module from floor to floor

0 250mm

