



V&A Announces Planning Permission and Major Pledge for Exhibition Road Project

11 July 2012

Today the V&A announces that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) has granted it planning permission for its Exhibition Road project, for which £25M has now been pledged out of a total project budget of £41M.

The approved design by AL_A will now be developed to create a new purpose-built underground gallery for the V&A's internationally renowned exhibitions, a magnificent courtyard space and a new entrance from the recently landscaped Exhibition Road on the west side of the Museum. The V&A is currently enjoying more visitors than ever before and the project is intended to sustain its increasing audience numbers.

The scheme will transform a previously inaccessible back-of-house space into an open courtyard for installations, events and a café which, by revising the existing screen designed by Sir Aston Webb, will create a new relationship between the heart of the V&A and Exhibition Road. From the new entrance lobby, the gallery space will be accessed by a staircase with prominent views of Museum's historic facades. The large, uninterrupted major exhibition space will allow the V&A to significantly improve the way it designs and presents its world class exhibition programme. The project will also reveal the beautiful Victorian facades on the west side of the V&A's Grade 1 listed buildings which have been restored to their former glory but never before been on public view.

AL_A won the international competition to design the project in March 2011 and have since been developing the design. Enabling work will begin this autumn to divert services within the site and building work is planned to start in 2013 and complete by the end of 2015, opening to the public in 2016.

Sir Paul Ruddock, Chairman of the V&A Board of Trustees, said: *"We are delighted to move a significant step closer to signalling this new era of the V&A's remarkable history which will transform the way we present temporary exhibitions and reinforce the Museum as a world leader of art and design. Not only will the development continue to improve the presence of Exhibition Road as an international cultural hub but it will provide us with the building and facilities to welcome more residents and visitors than ever before."*

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A added: *“This is a significant moment for the V&A and we look forward to progressing AL_A’s exceptional designs which will provide a dynamic and exciting space sympathetically set within the V&A’s beautiful historic facade. We’re thrilled to we have now secured £25M, which sets us in a good position to embark on the project.”*

Amanda Leveté, Principal of AL_A said: *“This is a defining project for AL_A. We’re reimagining the dialogue between the V&A and Exhibition Road and in doing so, creating a new public space in the cultural and learning heart of London. It’s made particularly special by the V&A collections having inspired so much of our work.”*

David Adjaye, Architect and former V&A Trustee said: *“From its very beginning, it was envisaged that the buildings of the V&A would be models of contemporary design, representing the ideals of the Museum as much as the collection. AL_A’s scheme considerably embraces the original Victorian architectural and decorative fabric of the Museum while unlocking the Exhibition Road side of the V&A with an impressive and welcoming public space, with dramatic state-of-the-art underground galleries.”*

Richard Rogers, Architect and Chairman of Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners said: *“The scheme is an outstanding design, as well as, a natural part of the continuing development of the museum. It is inspiring to see a new public space placed at the heart of a project. AL_A’s design is an important and elegant step in the evolution of the Museum; it helps continue the programme of opening up the V&A to everyone, whilst revealing the previously unseen historic façade. The project will provide a beautiful addition to one of the UK’s cultural gems which will enhance the V&A’s position as one of the world’s leading museums.”*

Sir Malcom Rifkind, MP for Kensington said: *“I am delighted to learn the V&A has been granted permission to move forward with this project. It will provide the Museum with a fitting entrance off the Exhibition Road and a useful space for temporary exhibitions, both of which will be sympathetic to the surroundings. I wish the Museum every success with the next phase of the project.”*

Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage said: *“English Heritage keenly supports and encourages the principles involved, both in terms of the restoration and enhancement of the historic fabric of the Museum and the creation of new public access to the Museum from Exhibition Road.”*

The project will allow the V&A to achieve the long term aims of the second phase of FuturePlan, the ambitious scheme through which the Museum is creating beautiful and contemporary new settings for its outstanding collections while restoring much of the building to its original Victorian splendour and improving visitor experience.

The historic South Court galleries were not originally intended to be used for the V&A's temporary exhibitions and currently conceal some of the finest Victorian interiors within the Museum. The construction of the new underground exhibition space as part of the Exhibition Road project will enable these galleries to be restored and reinstated and in time, display some of the Museum's most popular permanent collections.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

About AL_A

AL_A is the international design and architecture studio of Amanda Levete. A former partner of Future Systems where she won the Stirling Prize, Levete has received worldwide acclaim for seminal designs such as the Selfridges department store in Birmingham, and the media centre at Lord's cricket ground – the world's first aluminium building. A diverse range of current projects, from a 1.5 million sq ft luxury retail outlet and six star hotel in Bangkok, to a new city-defining subway station in Naples, designed in collaboration with the artist Anish Kapoor, demonstrate AL_A's depth of conceptual thinking and commitment to design excellence.

www.amandalevetearchitects.com

For further PRESS information please contact Zoë Franklin in the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2497 z.franklin@vam.ac.uk

A selection of high resolution press images are available to download free of charge from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>