

COMMENDATION

The Ribbon, London

PROJECT TEAM

Architect: Orms Architects

Structural Engineer: Heyne Tillett Steel

Steelwork Contractor: Billington Structures Limited

Main Contractor: Wates Construction

Client: CBRE



The Ribbon is a ten-storey steel-framed commercial development at the prominent junction of Oxford Street and Wells Street. Replacing a 1960s building, it provides retail accommodation at the lower levels and modern offices above, delivering 40% more floorspace within one of London's most constrained construction sites.

The steel frame creates open-plan offices through 12m internal spans and a regular grid, with perimeter columns positioned at 6.5m centres. This minimises internal obstructions and provides flexible floorplates capable of accommodating different tenants and future changes. Upper-level setbacks form terraces along the principal elevations, requiring transfer and partially non-composite beam solutions.

Structural steelwork is exposed throughout the interiors, contributing to their refined industrial character. Cellular beams accommodate building services within the structural depth, while selected pipework is embedded within internal columns to maintain uncluttered surfaces. Concealed fixings and carefully resolved changes in level support the clean architectural finish, alongside a self-supporting façade with its own structural frame.

The light steel solution reduced foundation and piling requirements, limiting excavation and material use. The development is targeting NABERS 5-star, BREEAM Outstanding and WELL Platinum ratings, together with WiredScore Platinum, RESET Air for the shell and core, and an EPC A rating.

With no laydown area, deliveries were offloaded from a pit lane on Wells Street and lifted immediately by tower crane. Steelwork was erected two floors at a time in coordination with the metal decking, ensuring completed slabs were available to support access equipment as construction progressed.

Restricted crane positions required an innovative basement-founded temporary support system. A steel grillage and braced frames transferred crane loads through slab openings into the foundations. The project also demanded precise detailing where the new frame met an adjacent protected building.

The permanent structure supported much of the temporary works strategy, allowing crane operations and phased erection to proceed safely without occupying scarce surface space. This approach maintained progress while reducing congestion.

Digital fabrication models coordinated connections, protective treatments and finishes. Exposed members received 120-minute intumescent fire protection and high-quality decorative coatings, applied offsite under controlled conditions before being touched up after erection.

The Ribbon demonstrates how steel can combine long spans, architectural quality and efficient construction on an exceptionally restricted site. Its exposed frame, integrated services, refined connections and carefully planned erection create an elegant and adaptable commercial building, while the lightweight steel structure and reduced foundation requirements support its environmental ambitions.

JUDGES' COMMENT

“The Ribbon is a beautifully coordinated example of exposed steel design, creating a 12-metre clear span on an exceptionally constrained site. Every element was carefully considered, from the self-supporting façade to concealed fixings and refined level changes. Strong collaboration between architect, engineer and fabricator has delivered an elegant, high-quality space.”