

MORE THAN A COSTUME... THE APPEAL OF NATURAL —X



AQUARIAN
Inventive • Intelligent • Independent

“The NaturAL-X system was easy to work with, quick to install, and cost-effective. The team at Aquarian was always on hand for all our questions and was very informative throughout the build”

Adrian Radu,
MK Facades

← Willesden Junction 1
Central London via canal 9
Acton 1 1/2
Central London (A40) 9 →

SAP

CHICK LAND

VICTOR SA

Site Entrance

PROJECT NAME

**THE COSTUME STORE
North Acton**

BRICK FINISH



4005 Havelet

CLIENT

The IQ Costume Store

INSTALLER

MK Facades

ARCHITECT

Scott Brownrigg

PRODUCT

NaturAL-X Brick Cladding System

Introduction

The IQ Costume Store project in North Acton, London, is a forward-thinking response to the evolving demands of modern urban living, with a strong focus on safety, compliance, and innovative design. Situated near North Acton station, this refurbishment project seamlessly integrates contemporary living requirements with cutting-edge building materials and methods. The brick façade, delivered through collaboration between Equans, MK Facades, and Aquarian, demonstrates how thoughtful design, technical expertise, and cohesive teamwork can address complex challenges in safety, sustainability, and urban housing.

Project Overview

Opened in 2012 on the historic site of the BBC’s costume collection, the Costume Store has become a key feature of West London’s architectural landscape. With 730 rooms, including 654 bedrooms and 76 studios, it provides student accommodation for the University of the Arts London (UAL). The decision to replace the external façade reflected a proactive approach to ensuring compliance with evolving regulations and industry standards. This led to the initiation of planned external improvement works.

The objectives of the refurbishment extended beyond compliance. The project aimed to enhance fire safety, thermal efficiency, and acoustic performance while preserving the building’s aesthetic integrity. Achieving these goals required meticulous planning to accommodate the structural constraints of the existing building and navigate the logistical complexities of working in a dense urban environment.

With a strong emphasis on resident wellbeing, the project incorporated technical advancements that delivered long-term benefits while maintaining a balance between safety, functionality, and comfort. The use of innovative cladding materials was crucial in achieving these outcomes, ensuring both practicality and design precision.

Product Selection and Key Features

The success of the façade transformation was underpinned by the selection of Aquarian Cladding Systems’ BBA-certified NaturAL-X brick cladding system. This system met the project’s key priorities, ensuring safety, durability, and architectural appeal. The fully non-combustible, A1-rated NaturAL-X system satisfied stringent fire safety regulations for high-rise residential buildings, providing peace of mind for residents while aligning with modern compliance standards. Additionally, its lightweight design significantly reduced structural loads, reassuring engineers assessing the capacity of the existing framework.

The NaturAL-X system also delivered aesthetic versatility, successfully replicating the traditional look of brickwork while incorporating modern efficiencies. The system’s design allowed for an optimized cavity depth to accommodate non-combustible insulation, improving thermal performance

without compromising the overall structure. Furthermore, its flexibility enabled a phased installation approach, allowing the team to prioritise critical areas while minimising disruption to residents and maintaining project efficiency. This combination of features made NaturAL-X the ideal choice, seamlessly addressing technical, regulatory, and aesthetic requirements.

Navigating Challenges

Operating in a high-density urban environment like North Acton presented unique challenges that required innovative and precise solutions. The site’s proximity to a major transport hub and its location in a high-traffic residential area necessitated careful logistical planning and consideration of both resident and environmental impact. Noise insulation was a critical factor given the building’s position near busy transport routes, while optimising thermal performance aligned with modern energy efficiency standards.

To address these challenges, the design team adopted a phased delivery and installation approach, minimising congestion and allowing the façade system to be installed with minimal disruption to residents. Structural limitations posed by the existing building, constructed over a decade earlier, meant selecting a lightweight yet durable system was essential. NaturAL-X provided the perfect balance of technical performance and aesthetic appeal.

Resident wellbeing remained a priority throughout the refurbishment, with strategies in place to reduce disruption and maintain a sense of normalcy. Clear communication with residents and phased installations ensured that daily activities could continue without significant interruption. These efforts underscored the project’s commitment to resident comfort while demonstrating how planning can harmonise technical improvements with the human element of urban living.

Client Collaboration and Support

A key factor in the project’s success was the strong collaboration between MK Facades, Equans, and Aquarian Cladding Systems. Aquarian’s involvement extended beyond material supply, encompassing technical and logistical support. Their early engagement ensured compliance and aesthetic requirements were met without compromising safety or performance. Timely material deliveries were coordinated with the phased construction schedule, while comprehensive training provided to installation teams guaranteed precision, efficiency, and adherence to quality standards. This collaborative approach played a crucial role in overcoming the challenges of working within a dense urban environment, contributing to the project’s overall success.

Project Outcomes

The IQ Costume Store refurbishment now serves as a benchmark for façade renovation projects in urban residential developments. Enhanced fire safety was achieved through the seamless integration of the NaturAL-X cladding system,

ensuring compliance with the latest regulations while providing long-term security for residents. Improvements in thermal and acoustic insulation have created a more comfortable living environment, while the modern yet timeless brick cladding enhances the building’s visual appeal and integration within the urban landscape.

The efficient project delivery process, supported by detailed planning and execution, minimised disruption to residents while optimising timelines and costs. This focus on logistical precision and teamwork demonstrated how a well-coordinated approach could achieve both technical and operational excellence. The results underscore the transformative potential of innovative materials and thoughtful collaboration in overcoming the challenges typically associated with the removal of traditional brickwork and the installation of a new façade system.

Conclusion

The IQ Costume Store project exemplifies the effective use of modern brick cladding in a renovation setting, delivering a safe, sustainable, and visually compelling urban living space while ensuring minimal disruption to residents. By leveraging advanced materials, innovative design solutions, and a commitment to collaboration, the project sets a new standard for responsible building refurbishment. It stands as a testament to how modern architectural solutions can address the demands of today’s cities while prioritising safety, efficiency, and aesthetic integrity.

