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New Heights on Old Foundations – Complex Crane Operations with Nine “WOLFFs” in the Heart of London

London, United Kingdom – June 2026. The redevelopment of 1 Victoria Street is transforming the site of a former 1960s office block into a modern, sustainable and low-carbon workplace in the heart of Westminster. A key feature of the project is the retention of large parts of the existing structure and foundations. By avoiding the need for new piling, the project significantly reduces embodied carbon. For the tower crane concept, however, this approach created highly unusual conditions in central London: the WOLFF cranes had to be installed at basement level, on foundations more than sixty years old – which was far more challenging than it sounds.

The crane concept for 1 Victoria Street is divided into several construction phases and includes a total of nine WOLFF cranes.

The project began with demolition works carried out by our client Keltbray. To support operations on the confined and complex site, a WOLFF 355 B luffing jib crane (TC0) was deployed. With its compact luffing jib design, the crane proved particularly well suited to the restricted site conditions. At the same time, its combination of reach, lifting capacity and precision was essential for safely positioning heavy and awkward loads. Throughout the demolition phase, the WOLFF 355 B handled all major heavy lifts, including excavators, tracked loaders, dumpers, heavy skips, generators and structural steel.

Following demolition, the next construction phase began for our client Mace Construct. Four additional WOLFF tower cranes – one WOLFF 166 B (TC 1) and three WOLFF's 355 B (TC 2,3,4) – were installed at B2 level to support the construction of the building core and early superstructure works. The cranes also supported the slipforming process used for the concrete core. In this method, the formwork continuously moves upwards while concrete is poured almost without interruption, placing high demands on timing, material flow and crane availability.

Complex Installation on Existing Foundations

The installation sequence in the basement required meticulous coordination. As the demolition crane TC0 remained in service longer than anticipated, TC2 (WOLFF 355 B) was initially erected at a

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reduced height to prevent any potential clash. Once TC0 was dismantled, TC2 was climbed to its full working height of 50 metres.

One of the project's greatest engineering challenges was the installation of the cranes on the original foundations of the existing building. As these foundations are being reused without re-piling, each crane had to be positioned directly over the available foundation support points and the crane configuration adapted to the building structure. The location of both the cranes and their support points was therefore dictated by the existing structural layout. As a result, neither the free positioning of the cranes nor the conventional practice of anchoring them into purpose-built concrete foundations, as is typical on new-build projects, was possible.

The Flexible WOLFF Cross-Frame System as a Key Solution

To overcome this challenge, WOLFFKRAN deployed its WOLFF cross-frame system. The system allows each of the four support legs to be individually adjusted to different lengths ranging from six to ten metres. In addition, the entire crane tower was rotated to align precisely with the available support points within the original foundation structure.

For TC2, the constraints were particularly demanding: four different leg lengths were required within a single cross-frame base to achieve the correct alignment with the available support points. This solution demonstrates how flexibly the WOLFF cross-frame system can adapt to highly irregular legacy structures.

As construction progresses, the basement slab will be cast around the crane bases, leaving only the tower openings accessible.

Dismantling in Extremely Confined Conditions

One of the most demanding aspects of the project still lies ahead: dismantling the cranes within the basement structure. The basement slabs are being cast extremely close to the crane towers, meaning the cross-frame and ballast will eventually become almost fully enclosed by the building structure. In addition, only very limited headroom and working space will be available below ground.

As dismantling using conventional mobile cranes will not be possible under these conditions, a combination of ceiling hoists, low-level forklifts and skating systems will be used to remove the central

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ballast blocks and cross-frame in a controlled and precise manner before transporting all crane components out of the building.

In the next major construction phase, scheduled for late 2026, the crane configuration will move to the roof of the building. Two WOLFF 355 B (TC 5,6) and two WOLFF 630 B (TC 7,8) luffing jib cranes will then take over lifting operations for the upper floors as well as the installation of the façade and building services.

The New 1 Victoria Street

Once completed, 1 Victoria Street will provide modern office and retail space in the centre of Westminster while retaining around 52 per cent of the original 1960s structure, significantly reducing the project's embodied carbon. Occupation is planned for early 2028.

For Wolffkran, the project ranks among the most technically demanding crane operations in central London due to its highly constrained urban environment and the unusual crane installation on existing foundations.

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Crane specifications on this construction site:

WOLFF	Crane base	Jib radius, m	Hook height, m	max. lifting capacity/peak load capacity, t
WOLFF 355 B TC0	Cross frame 8m x 8m	50,0	50,9	28,0 / 6,7
WOLFF 166 B TC1	Cross frame 8m x 8m	40,0	40,0	12,0 / 4,4
WOLFF 355 B TC2	Cross frame 8m x 9m x 10m x 9m	50,0	50,0	28,0 / 6,7
WOLFF 355 B TC3	Cross frame 10m x 10m	50,0	53,5	28,0 / 6,7
WOLFF 355 B TC4	Cross frame 8m x 8m	55,0	55,0	14,0 / 5,3
WOLFF 355 B TC5	spigots bolted to a steel grillage on top of core	40,0	9,0	28,0 / 11,3
WOLFF 355 B TC6	spigots bolted to a steel grillage on top of core	50,0	9,0	28,0 / 6,7
WOLFF 630 B TC7	spigots bolted to a steel grillage on top of core	45,0	9,0	28,0 / 8,7
WOLFF 630 B TC8	spigots bolted to a steel grillage on top of core	45,0	9,0	28,0 / 14,1

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WOLFFKRAN is a leading manufacturer of premium quality tower cranes with a tradition spanning over 170 years. With its own rental fleet of around 840 tower cranes it is also one of the largest crane rental businesses in the world. WOLFFKRAN is headquartered in Cham, Switzerland and has manufacturing sites in Heilbronn and Luckau, Germany. It currently employs a global workforce of approx. 950 people in its two manufacturing sites and its sales and service subsidiaries located across Western and Central Europe, the Middle East and the United States.

PRESS RELEASE – Pictures and captions



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Four of the nine WOLFF luffing jib cranes planned for the 1 Victoria Street project are currently on site. Following a complex dismantling operation at the end of 2026, the main construction phase will begin with four luffing jib cranes erected on the roof of the building.



PRESS RELEASE – Pictures and captions



Installing the cranes on the existing foundations was more complex than it may appear at first glance, as both the crane positions and their support points were dictated by the existing structure. Here, the flexibility of the WOLFF cross-frame system proved a key advantage.



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