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Project Description: Proposed conversion of Greenbank Synagogue and new-build apartments

Site Address: Greenbank Synagogue, Greenbank Drive, Liverpool, L17 1AL





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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The proposed scheme has benefited from pre-application consultations with the Liverpool and City Council and The English Heritage both who find the design and ideas behind the concept acceptable in principle.
- 1.2. The proposed scheme aims at bringing the synagogue back in a viable use and curtail any further deterioration currently being suffered by the building due to disuse and neglect and as a result, being included in the Buildings At Risk register.
- 1.3. The viable use being proposed will safeguard the long term future of the building and preserve its importance and significance in the local vicinity and nationally as a Grade II* building.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This Design and Access Statement has been produced by NC Architecture on behalf of the client Green Drive Liverpool Ltd in support of the proposed planning application to convert Greenbank Synagogue to accommodate 22no. 1-bed and 2-bed apartments and erect a new block of 36no. 2-bed & 3-bed apartments within the grounds of the synagogue. The statement will outline concepts and parameters that have informed the design of the proposed scheme.

3. Site description

- 3.1. The site consists of a Grade II* Listed Synagogue in approximately 1.1 acres of grounds. Located off Greenbank Drive, the site is situated between Sefton Park and the neighbouring districts of [Toxteth](#), [Mossley Hill](#) and [Wavertree](#)
- 3.2. The site has accessible links via the A662 road which connects it directly to the centre of Liverpool. It occupies a central location with the surrounding residential amenities including shops, restaurants, bars as well as Sefton Park, Toxteth Park and Liverpool University all within easy reach.

4. Project Description

- 4.1. The proposals include the refurbishment and conversion of the synagogue in to 22no 1 & 2-bed apartments. And demolition of the Community Hall outbuilding.
- 4.2. The new build development includes one 4-5 storey apartment block that is split centrally by a lightweight glazed vertical access zone. The 4-storey element fronts Greenbank Drive and forms an important street scene in context of the existing Synagogue with the 5-storey element receding in the background making use of the sloping site. It will provide 36no 2 & 3-bed apartments unit

5. History and Background

- 5.1. Greenbank Synagogue was built in 1936 and consecrated on 15th August 1937 for the Liverpool Jewish community. The Synagogue is architecturally by far the most important and innovative 20th century synagogue in England and is the finest surviving in Europe dating from the inter-war period. It was built in the Art Deco style, reflecting Swedish architectural influences, setting it as a



progressive building of its time. It also has important socio-historic significance as representing a cultural expression of European Jewry before the holocaust.

- 5.2. The Synagogue has an assumed reinforced concrete and steel frame structure, with the external walls faced in golden brown hand cut bricks. There is a grand approach to the west front entrance up a flight of steps with three projecting bays with semi-circular headed curved brick arches.
- 5.3. Inside, a cantilevered gallery is wrapped around three sides and open at the east end with lunette windows. The innovatory ceiling configuration has a concrete barrel curve between the north and south of the building with intersecting concrete arches spanning west-east. This concrete canopy is understood to be the very first use of this architectural form in Great Britain and may have influenced similar concrete canopy designs during the 1960s.

6. Design Concepts – Principles, Layout, Scale and Massing

- 6.1. The proposals include the refurbishment and conversion of the synagogue in to 22no 1 & 2-bed apartments. It is essential as part of the buildings listed status that the important existing architectural features and the structure are retained as much as is viable.
- 6.2. Our concept has been based on **bringing the synagogue back to life** as a community hub which in essence is one of the synagogue functions - to congregate people together for communal functions in addition to the religious functions. This has been done by the introduction of a communal zone where the ark is presently located and accessed from a **central zone** based on a **'street' design concept**. There is Listed Building Consent already in place we understand for the removal of both the bimah and part of the ark to be relocated to Israel for use in another synagogue.
- 6.3. The apartments within the synagogue will add to the mix and drama of the internal space and will be accessed from the internal street.
- 6.4. A lightwell will be created at the existing location of the bimah to channel further daylight in to the basement level.
- 6.5. The full height windows to the east will be exposed visually from the communal central zone to bring in daylight flooding in, creating a dramatic and desirable community congregation area.
- 6.6. Our approach has been **sympathetic to the synagogue** elements, both internally and externally as we are keen to **retain significant elements** that define the internal spaces such as the clerestory arched windows, buttresses and also **re-use various elements** in certain areas of the internal space such as the pews which have been re-used within the central community zone.
- 6.7. With the sympathetic approach, we propose to use a **lightweight metal frame structure** within the internal fabric of the synagogue which offers minimal disturbance to the existing structure. Our vision is that this form of construction **is, if needs be, reversible** in the future to reinstate the synagogue in its original form should the need ever arise.
- 6.8. Externally, the fabric of the synagogue will be retained as existing, re pointed and cleaned, with new soft and hard landscaping, and illuminated.
- 6.9. Secondary glazing will be installed and secured to the metal frame. Existing windows will be refurbished in-situ and re-glazed where required.



- 6.10. Around the gardens, the existing Community Hall outbuilding will be demolished and a new contemporary-designed apartment block will be erected. The design, mass, scale and material specification has been designed with a view of keeping it subordinate to the Synagogue which will thus retain its dominance presence within the site and the wider area.
- 6.11. Habitable distances have been considered and special glazing such as Pilkington Mirrorpane will be used where one-way vision is required to prevent any overlooking issues.
- 6.12. In total, the scheme is proposing to provide 22 apartments within the synagogue and 36 apartments within the new build apartment which forms the enabling works to make the whole development viable.
- 6.13. The development in principle has been agreed by EH and LCC

7. Amenity Provision

- 7.1. The development aims provides a delicately landscaped scheme that compliments with Synagogue and occupants can relax and take walks around the development.
- 7.2. The new block apartments have been provided with balconies.
- 7.3. The street design concept (see 6.2) provides a community congregation area and also leads up to a proposed cafe area.
- 7.4. The application site is in very close proximity to Sefton Park which provides the wider area with fantastic amenity facilities.

8. Proposed Uses

- 8.1. The scheme changes the Synagogue to residential use but retains facilities to serve the local Jewish community such existing Shul to the south of the building, a new gallery will be formed to showcase the Synagogue's rich history and artefacts and a cafe.
- 8.2. The residential properties will be of a high-quality specification and are designed to appeal to a diverse population by virtue of the different-sized accommodation.

9. Sustainability

- 9.1. The site is in very close proximity to public transport, with major bus routes and main road network connections. The buses run regularly. The site is also in very close proximity to big supermarkets and medical facilities. A transport statement has been provided in support of this application and reflects the transport credentials in more detail.
- 9.2. A Sustainable Urban Drainage system will be proposed at detailed design stage.
- 9.3. The use of high-performance windows and doors will be employed to reduce heat loss from the building and heat gain from the sun. Acoustic properties will also be improved above the minimum requirements as a result.
- 9.4. Provision of waste recycling bins has been indicated in both the submitted landscaping layout and the site plan.
- 9.5. Efficient construction methodology will be adopted and seeks to reduce inherent carbon content of the building fabric/structure and minimise energy consumption during site operations.



- 9.6. Where possible, the materials used will be locally sourced and will be of recycled materials and have been certified under ISO 14001, International Environment Management Standards.

10. Site Access (Vehicular and Pedestrian)

- 10.1. The scheme proposes to retain and make good the existing vehicular accesses off Greenbank Drive.
- 10.2. The pedestrian access will also be reinstated.
- 10.3. A new pedestrian access will be formed between Shalom Court and the application site to grant controlled access to occupants of Shalom Court

11. Disabled Access – Greenbank Synagogue

- 11.1. A disabled platform lift has been proposed to the North of the building, adjacent to disabled parking bays and near to the new access between the site and Shalom Court. The disabled platform lift will ensure wheelchair access is granted to the principal floor. Within the building, all floors are accessible by way of a Part M compliant passenger lift.

12. Disabled Access – Apartments

- 12.1. All entrance in to the apartment block will be served by a level access. Upper floors will be accessible via Part M compliant passenger lifts. There will be a separate fire-fighting lift for evacuation of any disabled occupants in the event of a fire.

13. Parking Provision

- 13.1. The proposed scheme will be served by 54 parking spaces. Given the close proximity to the bus route, this level of parking provision will provide for the on-site requirements of the development. This is also supported by a Transport Statement which forms part of this application.

14. Cycle Provision

- 14.1. Secure cycle storage has been provided within and around the new apartment block. It is anticipated to offer a stacked storage system to allow for minimum 58 cycle spaces