

Constellations Yard – Design and Access statement

Outline

Area appraisal

25 Greenland Street is an industrial yard in the 'Baltic Triangle' area at the edge of Liverpool City Centre. The area is characterized by dense, brick, industrial warehouses and fabrication buildings, in styles spanning the last 150 years. The area is run down and there are some empty sites, however, the area is also home to over 250 businesses and this number is growing fast; particularly in creative industries such as artist's studios, crafts-people and designers (e.g. Elevator Studios and Baltic Creative). This has seen employment within this sector in this area grow to 1000+ employees in the last 5 years. A number of leisure type businesses have also recently opened to accommodate these new businesses such as Camp and Furnace, Unit 51 and the Baltic Bake-house.

The Baltic Triangle has been identified as an area for regeneration in the UDP 2002, which schedules the area for A3 – restaurants and cafes, B1 – business, and D2 – assembly and leisure use categories. The 2008 Baltic Triangle Framework identified a vision for the future of the area as a vibrant, mixed use area – a place to work, live and visit. 25 Greenland Street falls within the suggested mixed-use development area. The draft Core Strategy of the LDF (2012) states "Significant physical change will take place in the Baltic Triangle" and highlights the area as "the preferred location for further mixed use development, including those associated with digital and creative industries". The area has been branded a 'Character Neighborhood' by the Liverpool City Centre Strategic Investment Framework document (2012). The Baltic Manifesto (2013) by Liverpool vision and business stakeholder group, Baltic Triangle CIC, documents the preferred approach to regeneration of those that already occupy the area: one of grassroots innovation and creative enterprise. The development for 25 Greenland Street has been created in response to this.

Site

25 Greenland Street was occupied by a light industrial warehouse until the roof was reportedly lost to a fire 20+ years ago. Since then the space surrounded by the remaining brick walls has been used as a bulk recycling collection depot by E W R recycling Ltd., though this operation ceased in 2013 and the yard has been vacant since.



Above: 25 Greenland Street – Existing Yard

Vision

Created in response to the Baltic Manifesto (2012) and led by a group of existing business owners in the area with the social aim of championing local talent, creating inspiring spaces and events and promoting local food, art, music and culture.

The proposal is to transform the yard with minimal intervention into a hidden garden that will act as a social gathering space where people are not obliged to pay to enter unless for special events. The garden will form the backdrop for a rolling programme of arts events ranging from boutique outdoor cinema screenings, music, installation and performance art, theatre and dance performance – along with the potential for craft/produce markets.



Above: Inspired by the use of vacant spaces in Budapest-Hungary and Christchurch NZ

The development of a complimentary addition to the diverse offer already flourishing in the Baltic will ensure the momentum of regeneration of the area continues. Increasing footfall to the neighbourhood, supporting the growing visitor economy and making it more appealing to potential new residents.

Benefits of the proposal to the local area and city

Local community

- It will be a value aid to developing stronger connectivity between local residents, businesses, artists, with other residents of the city and visitors to the city by providing a shared space for people to come together and share creative experiences.
- The lack of green space in the Baltic has been highlighted both by the business stakeholder group, new UTC schools and a recent Lottery funded engagement project with residents- The hidden garden can provide safe and managed access to green space in the local area.
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Cultural / creative industries

- The proposal will act as forum for local artists to exhibit.
- It will aid networking and connectivity between local residents, businesses, artists, with other residents of the city and visitors to the city.
- The flexible space allows hybrid activities that don't fit neatly into existing venues: it allows for innovation.
- The unique type of space will attract visitors to the city and enrich the offer for tourists who are particularly attracted to the Liverpool arts scene.
- The evolving nature of the exhibits and activities ensures that there will be future commissions for artists and designers. 4 local designers and makers have been commissioned to implement this proposal.

Local identity

- The proposal celebrates the gritty nature of the existing industrial building that helps to makes the area distinctive.
- It is an innovative re-use of an industrial building that could serve as precedent for other empty industrial buildings in the city.
- The hidden gem nature of proposal builds on the sense of intrigue that is part of the creative / industrious character of the area
- The proposal is in line with how local businesses and residents envisage the regeneration of the area.

Regeneration of area

- The proposal will help to attract further investment for housing and businesses to the area by enriching the local leisure amenities and reducing the number of vacant buildings.
- It will help to diversify the types of people attracted to live in the city centre by offering a range of leisure activities that appeal to all types of people - not just to young adults.
- Though not conceived as a 'meanwhile project', it is a low impact intervention that does not preclude future re-development of site.

Environment

- The garden and an environmentally conscious approach are at the heart of the design. The garden will be based on permaculture principles, use native plants, focus on biodiversity and use rainwater collection for watering.
- The design allows people to get close to plants and feel as though they are in a garden. Free to enter – the garden is paid for by the incidental activities of food, drink, ticketed events etc... which allows a more intensely planted garden that is less municipal/formal than other green spaces in the city.
- There will be opportunities for community gardening, which are much needed in this area.

Safety

- The proposal to use a redundant space would eliminate the potential for vandalism and anti-social behaviour in an otherwise unwatched-over space.
- Creating a destination that is used throughout the day and evening will make Greenland Street safer by creating a watched-over street presence; especially in the evening when other businesses have closed for the day.
- The site will be staffed while open and secured at night

Employment

- The proposal will create employment for 30+ people and incidental opportunities for independent businesses such as food/craft traders.
- The range of job types will be diverse (gardeners, bar staff, food stall vendors, craft market stall holders, artists, performers, events coordinators, audio-technicians, cleaners, door staff, general management and administration)
- The range of jobs will also be part time and full time, and suit a range of skills and experience – thereby being inclusive.
- The location is walkable from nearby Toxteth, an area identified in the Core Strategy as one where job creation is needed.
- The proposal would also act as a business incubator (e.g. food trucks allow people to dip a toe into starting a restaurant).

Design Approach

Planting

The planting will be in assorted large containers (e.g. tonne bags, dustbins, wheelbarrows, plastic barrels etc...). This will allow them to be moved using a pallet truck so that different events can be accommodated and to generally refresh the layout of the space frequently. However, the planters will not be movable without a pallet truck and so will feel fixed to the visiting public. Plant species will be native to the UK and chosen for their biodiversity value as well as aesthetic value. The landscape design will be based on permaculture principles; a system of self-maintaining planting modelled on natural ecosystems.

Canopy

The canopy takes its wave-form from the gable ends behind it and houses some fixed table / bench seating as well as a bar counter. The superstructure will be made from green oak while the roof will be made from plywood arranged into a waffle-like coffered ceiling. The intention is to use cost effective materials in a creative way, emphasising the craftsmanship that the area is becoming known for. These timber materials are renewable, cost effective and contrast the brick of the surrounding walls while complimenting the soft landscaping.



Above Left: Model of canopy as viewed from entrance to yard.



Above Right: Model of canopy structure.

Seating

The seating and tables will be made from timber and will be movable in the same way as the planters to allow a flexible layout.

Lighting

There are two forms of lighting in the proposal. The main lighting is in the form of a continuous zig-zag of fluorescent tubes fastened to the brick walls that surround the yard. They are partly for branding and partly for a functional level of light. The second form of lighting is at low level and is for ambient lighting. This will be concealed within the furniture and planting.

Accessibility

The yard has an existing flush entrance from street to all parts of the space. The existing floor surface is of concrete. The proposal may indeed be more accessible than the municipal parks as the floor surface will be level, and hard-standing which will allow wheelchair users to access all areas and get close to the planting. Some minor patching to this concrete may be needed at most. The flexible nature of the space, seating, planters etc... will allow as many accessible spaces as are needed to be accommodated for any event. There is car-parking for permit-holders-only on the street directly outside the yard, though it is feasible that disabled spaces could be created if needed (with the consent of the local authority highways department). However, Greenland Street is a wide cul-de-sac with very low traffic levels (especially in the evening) and there is plenty of space to drop people off safely.