

BARONS QUAY ARTIST BRIEF, NORTHWICH

A significant Public Art Commission for an emerging artist

Location: Northwich, Cheshire

Site: Barons Quay

Client: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Architect: Broadway Malyan

Deadline: Friday 27 June 2014

1.0 Introduction

Northwich is a key market town in the northwest; the town is situated in the heart of the Cheshire Plain with an affluent rural catchment area. Northwich has seen a period of decline in recent years and under investment, as a result the town has been unable to compete effectively with other town centres in the sub-region.

Northwich is an industrial town; its landscape and urban frame defined by the salt and chemical industries. At present it is undergoing significant change. The town is benefiting from inward investment, from a number of national government agencies, local government bodies and private developments; facilitated by the stabilisation of the lower bed rock salt mines under the town. The regeneration of Northwich, within the historic, civic as well as peripheral spaces between the town centre and the river Weaver and the Dane, has given rise to a number of opportunities for embedding public art into the town.

In 2012 Cheshire West and Chester Council appointed Katayoun Dowlatshahi as Lead Artist to work with the Weaver Valley team on area concept development and integration of public art into new and existing schemes, firstly in Witton Street and subsequently across Northwich.. Barons Quay is the most significant development in Northwich and in collaboration with the client design team, the Lead Artist has proposed a series of interventions and opportunities for public art under an overarching theme relating to the former rock salt mines, which are under the town.

The emphasis of the public art commission is of high quality work and site specific, in line with the *Northwich Urban Design and Public Realm Strategy*. The Lead Artist has identified 6 character areas or zones for the development of public art. The commission offered here falls into one of the character areas: Zone 4– Regeneration within the Barons Quay Development.

2.0 Approach to Public Art in Northwich

The Lead Artist has developed a Public Art Strategy for Northwich to complement CW&C's Public Art Strategic Framework (PASF). The primary intention for a local focus of the strategy is to establish a cohesive and holistic approach to the commissioning of artworks in Northwich that are embedded into the built environment. This is in line with the vision set out by the PASF, for:

“Consistently commissioned high quality public art, that is integral to social, environmental and economic regeneration across Cheshire West and Chester”

To support this, the PASF sets out six objectives which enable the vision to be realised, these are:

- Public art should be site specific; it ought to be reflective and responsive to the character of the place it is commissioned for; the personality and identity of our city, towns and rural areas are the starting point for an artist's research.
- Public art needs to be embedded within a project or development
- Artists should be brought onto project or design teams at an early stage of the process.
- When funded, or part-funded, by CW&C, public art needs to respond to and deliver against CW&C priorities
- Public art projects should utilise creativity in its broadest sense and engage with the local and regional cultural infrastructure where possible.
- When commissioning public art we should be mindful of the wider context of creating a high quality public realm, and look to national, regional and local policies and guidance around innovative place-making for support.

When planning public art for inclusion in Barons Quay an artist would need to refer to the six objectives as stated in the CW&C Public Art Strategic Framework (PASF). These objectives provide the framework and methodology for commissioning public art.

3.0 PUBLIC ART COMMISSION:

This commission is for a visual installation to be installed to the wall of an entrance area contained a travelator leading to the main public square in the new development of Barons Quay and to the entrance to the anchor food store. This is located in character area (Zone 4) – Regeneration/Barons Quay as set out below.

Character Area (Zone 4) – Regeneration / Barons Quay

Context: This character area was prioritised for regeneration by policy **GS9A** of the Local Plan. In 2007 an award winning project to infill 4 major salt mines under Northwich, including Barons Quay, with an innovative PFA Cement mix to stabilise the mines enabled a building moratorium to be lifted from Northwich town centre. This stimulated funding and inward investment for the development of the Barons Quay site. Broadway Malyan were appointed to draw up the master plan and have since been appointed the lead architect. The development is extensive with leisure and retail facilities and a new riverside park; new routes will be created from the Historic High Street to the river through Barons Quay.

At present the town does not maximise the potential of the river, which was once dedicated to ship building and transportation of industrial cargo. With these industries gone the rivers and canals are now predominantly used for leisure. The town is currently orientated so that it faces away from the river but the Barons Quay Masterplan seeks to change the orientation with the new development facing the river creating new routes that would link the Historic High Street to the river through Barons Quay.

Design Principal for Zone 4: The new Barons Quay development is contemporary throughout with glass and black glazed tiles being dominant above ground and granite below. Street furniture is a combination of granite and blackened oak seating. The contemporary build is influenced by the black and white designs of timber framed architecture and by the industrial heritage of the locality, in particular the Anderton Lift. The development sits alongside the historic high street. The central concept underlying public art commissions in this zone are the presence of salt pillars, which sit directly beneath the development, some are as large as 9 meters square. It has been proposed that these salt pillars, within pedestrianized spaces across the whole site of Barons Quay, are to be defined by the different tones of granite for day time presence and bound by LED lighting at night, therefore, they become markers for way finding through from Barons Quay Square to the riverside. The use of repetition, scale and identifiable characteristics are the hallmarks of this zone.

Barons Quay Artist Brief - Elevator commission

It is proposed that public art in this zone has three functions:

- to establish a visual presence for the archaeology of the salt mines directly below the development and to draw attention to the importance of salt to Northwich;
- to function as gateways into the new development and to assist the transition from historic high street to the contemporary spaces
- as markers along a route to aid wayfinding from the centre of town through to the riverside.

The Brief

Barons Quay – Elevator commission

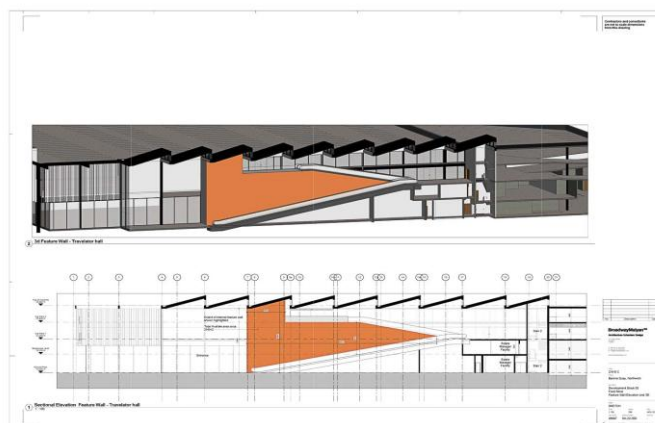
Total Budget: 50 K

The opportunity has been identified for an emerging artist, mentored by the Lead Artist, to propose an art work to feature on an elevation directly alongside the travelator inside the superstore, which leads from the car park on the roof to Barons Square, set at the heart of the new development. This is a significant gateway into Barons Quay for incoming visitors wishing to shop in the area. The elevation is in a visible location set behind glass; from outside the wall is visible through black anodized aluminium structural frames and white aluminium louvers. There is an interesting tension to be considered between the contemporary design of the building and the overarching theme of the sites relationship to salt and the river industry. The area is identified in the image below as being yellow, and orange in appendix II.

This commission is a significant opportunity for an emerging artist to receive mentoring support from the Lead Artist for Northwich throughout the commissioning process. The artwork could be proposed in any medium, but would be defined by the overarching theme of salt, as it has been established in the design principal for this zone. Weight loading, materials, and the integration of the art work within the wall would need to be considered and is achievable at this stage of the development. The artist would need to liaise with the architects, Broadway Malyan and build contractors on installation and fabrication issues and the client on the approval of the concept.



Travelator, view from Barons Square



Elevation and plan view of travelator.

4.0 Community Engagement

Collaboration is at the heart of successful engagement and can take many forms, the quality of engagement is as important as the product. All artists tendering for a commission will be expected to indicate their approach to engagement and to site examples of prior experience.

Artists once appointed and after a short period of research will be expected to propose a bespoke activity relating to the commission, for engaging the community. The project team will work with the selected artist/s to develop an engagement programme appropriate for the site and can identify potential groups to engage with.

In 2012 the Lead Artist initiated a number of temporary partnerships between significant organisations from the region, members of the local community, artist collectives and individuals, with the support of DAN Community Ltd. The initiative was called COLLECT: Memorial Capture Project and COLLECT: LIVE. Though the focus of the engagement was on the Memorial Hall, the spirit of the engagement was far wider; set against the context of regeneration. The Lead Artist is willing to share experience and evaluation of the project that could inform future engagement programmes.

5.0 The Process

Our aspiration is to work with an emerging artist. The project wants to support practitioners who are at the start of their career. For the purposes of this brief emerging practitioners are defined as *either*:

- Having completed a professional training within the previous 5 years *or*
- Are currently engaged on MA or other research courses *or*
- Have a non-institutional career development.

5.1 The Role of the Artist

An artist will be appointed to work with the project team, with support from a mentor, to:

- Liase with the Weaver Valley project team, appointed contractors and design team
- Collaborate with the design team and attend meetings relevant to the development of artworks across Barons Quay.
- Research & development with the project team, client team & local communities
- Creative community engagement using themes identifies by the Lead Artist, as per the context for each relevant Character area, and artists previous work
- Concept development
- Design proposals, to full design stage. The proposal needs to include the following information:
 - a. A description [with photographs] of the work conducted with members of the local community.
 - b. Budgets and technical information for all art proposals
 - c. A schedule for undertaking the commissions.
 - d. Evaluation of the process for future strategy development
- Design approval
- Installation/implementation as part of the schedule for the Barons Quay development
- Documentation of processes throughout project
- Artists Diary as part of Evaluation of the project

5.3 Support structure:

The main contacts for the artist will be:

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1. Carmel Clapson, Arts Officer (lead Public Art), Cheshire West and Chester	2. Jo Comerie, Project Officer, Growth and Prosperity, Cheshire West and Chester
3. Catherine Fox, Team Leader Weaver Valley, Cheshire West and Chester	4. Katayoun Dowlatshahi, Lead Artist for Northwich and Mentor for the project

5.4 Budget, £50,000

The budget is to include the artists fee including: artists' research, design and development time, expenses, design implementation costs and fabrication costs.

The Artist will work on a self-employed basis and be VAT registered.

5.5 Selection Process for: Barons Quay – Elevator commission will be by **Open Competition and is open to Emerging Artists**. The selection process will be curated by public art professionals.

The competition will be advertised in:

AN online
www.publicartonline.com
Axis
and through any other appropriate networks.

Artsjobs
Chainlinks, CCC Arts service newsletter

Application Process

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Interested artists are asked to send in a precise statement outlining their approach to the commission (no more than one side of A4), 10 digital examples of relevant work, a CV including evidence of prior community work and contact details for two referees.

A shortlist of 3 artists will be selected and invited to submit detailed proposals in response to the brief; a design fee of **£1,000** will be paid to shortlisted artists.

If you would like to discuss the commission further, then please contact Carmel Clapson or Jo Comerie. Contact details below.

Insurance

Artists must provide a copy of their public liability insurance on acceptance of the commission, level of liability to be approved by CW&C.

Child Protection

The commissioned artists will be required to provide a satisfactory CRB certificate if they intend to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Timescale for the artwork commission

Friday 27 June	Deadline
w/c 30 th June	Longlist
w/c 7 th July	Shortlisting
w/c 14 th July	Invite 3 artists to develop a design
19 th July – 8 September	Artist design development
w/c 8 th September	Artist presentation of designs
10 th September	Appointment of selected artist
September – March 2015	Detail design of the artwork

Barons Quay – build timescales

July 2014	Contractor appointed
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Barons Quay Artist Brief - Elevator commission

Autumn 2014	Work start on site
End of 2016	Build complete

Contacts:

Carmel Clapson, Arts Officer, lead public art Cheshire West and Chester Culture & Recreation, Room 235, The FORUM, Chester, CH1 2HS Tel: 01244 972836	Jo Comerie Project Officer, Weaver Valley Information Centre, 1 The Arcade, Northwich. CW9 5AS Tel: 01606288826 Mob: 07826858908
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