

theCoLAB Temple Rooftop Terrace: The Artist's Garden
Planning Application Number: PP-09844410
Design and Access Statement
25 May 2021

--

Project Outline

This project is to create the 'Artist's Garden' to activate the underused and underappreciated Temple Station Roof Terrace. It is a collaboration with Westminster City Council (Richie Gibson) and will form part of its wider outdoor spaces/Inside Out activation programme across Westminster especially by linking the Northbank cultural spaces and Strand/Aldwych pedestrianisation.

theCoLAB is commissioning prominent British Ugandan artist Lakwena Mclver, whose work is of broad appeal, unfailingly positive and highly colourful. The overlooked site is the perfect place to showcase the work of underrepresented artists, in this case a London-based woman of colour.

The aim of the Artist's Garden is to bring culture to the outdoors and attract the public to use this underutilised and grim, if potentially beautiful outdoor space for meeting and appreciating high quality artwork, the river and exploring the surrounding areas.

It is a temporary pilot scheme with the installation of the works aiming to be installed by 19 July 2021 and remaining in place until 30 April 2022.

The installation by Lakwena will include her:

- Artist's Hut – to be used as a visitor welcome space, invigilator shelter, for storage of marketing/cleaning material and (if Covid-safe) for community engagement activities
 - two temporary floorscapes of uplifting colourful work which can be walked on as part of her basketball court series (subject to advertising consent),
 - temporary interventions on the entrance and exit steps including welcome arches (subject to advertising consent) to signal the journey up to new highly coloured and joy filled space
 - a temporary moveable plinth for a rotating display of smaller sculptures, the first of which is collaboration with Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Royal College of Art as part of their Graduate Art Award scheme by Steph Huang.
 - possibly a temporary art bar aesthetically in keeping with the artist's work operated by a high-end specialist as a way of drawing in the public and giving them further reason to stay on site (exact design/operator of the bar forthcoming and subject to WCC/theCoLAB approval);
- It will remain a publicly accessible open air leisure space so no change of use is required.

Design Considerations

The Artist's Garden is conceived as an immersive and enveloping experiential space for all to enjoy. The artist's work aims to complement the site and draw people into to reflect on good things and positivity.

It is located near the new Strand/Aldwych pedestrianisation, opposite a development and 180 Strand and adjoining other cultural hubs including Somerset House, the Courtauld, Two Temple Place. The rooftop is highly visible from the roof terraces of King's College London and Somerset House River Terrace as well as from the building site opposite and some offices. The bird's eye view is essential to this. It is also the tail end of the Victoria Embankment Gardens, which it overlooks, as well as the mighty Thames.

theCoLAB wants to create a cohesive environment and has consulted via face to face or via telephone meeting with the following local organisations:

Westminster City Council (Cllr Swaddle/Westminster City of Sculpture Panel; Michelle Salerno Head of Culture, Rebecca Cloke Strand Aldwych; Richie Gibson Events; Ramiro Levy Urbanism and Placemaking; Ashley in Planning helpdesk), Northbank BID (Alison Gregory) Somerset House (Diana Spiegelberg Deputy Director and she has consulted Jonathan Reekie Director), Vinyl Factory (Mark Wadhwa, Director and Sean Bidder, Creative Director), Two Temple Place (Anneliese Davidsen (Director) and Rebecca Hone (Curator), King's College Culture (Leanne Hammacot Head of Programming for Culture), Salsa/Stonegate Pubs (Liam Martyn and Shawn Grant). All welcomed an intervention on the rooftop.

The artist's intervention will be:

Welcome arches/steps

To give some visibility to passersby and to herald the entrance to the new and unexpected experience of colour and happiness that the installation will bring, the artist is proposing to create welcome arches at each entry/exit point and to create a crescendo of colour on the steps drawing viewers upwards.

The Artist's Hut

The Cabman's Shelter one of London's iconic and treasured features, one of which sits on Temple Place and adjoins the site, at once attracted the attention of the artist. Working with its basic shape, the Artist's Hut will create a new version of the Cabman's Shelter shadowing its outline, and reflect as many of its features. The design will include the details on the ridge of the roof (but not including the chimney as although desirable, this was thought too high). It will serve to reveal and enhance existing heritage assets.

Floorscapes

These floorscapes (and pathways between them if executed) will be highly coloured, very low level highly coloured pieces of work which aim to create an experience of being inside an art work, by walking, sitting and using it. They form part of her basketball court series which she uses as a mechanism to draw people together in a democratic and peaceful way.

Plinth

For small scale rotating show of work which relates to the main intervention starting with Steph Hueng's work as part of the YSP/RCA collaboration.

Access

The site is served by Temple Tube station and Embankment Tube and the many buses that run along Strand. It is barely used at the moment and few, even local workers know that it is there.

The site is accessed by two sets of steps on the East and West ends of the site on Temple Place. theCoLAB has discussed the possibilities for making it wheelchair accessible both with Westminster City Council (Richie Gibson and Ramiro Levy) as well as WSP, theCoLAB's structural engineers. While all are thinking of ways that would be cost-effective, low maintenance and quick to realise, we did not come up with a solution. We considered lifts (difficult to maintain), a ramp on the North face of the building (would need an architect and substantial investment). All parties will continue to think of ways of solving this issue.

There is car parking locally.

Facilities

There is no toilet on site but if the sculpture park is successful and its longevity is extended, it is possible to connect the site to the mains drainage. In the meantime, there are toilets at Somerset House by the Embankment entrance, Embankment Tube, Blackfriars Tube and at 180 Strand.

There is currently no electricity to the site but there is an electricity source (black box) just outside the West Entrance on Temple Place (next to and serving the Cabman's Shelter).

Circulation and Layout

To ensure Covid-compliance it is possible to institute a one-way system as there are two entrances. It has gates that are locked in the evenings by Westminster Parks and Gardens. For events, the entrances make it easy to control the number of visitors to the site.

Materials/Safety

The art works are non-invasive and function as floors, a hut to act as a place to carry out workshops and for general storage.

- Floorscapes: the materials used will be either marine ply 18mm which site on a subfloor made of batons to ensure it is flat and treated/painted to ensure it is fire retardant . Alternatively, professional basketball court flooring for outdoor use is also available. Both provide good drainage, non-slip surfaces
- Steps – exterior grade non slip vinyl. The intervention is likely to make the steps safer. Where the bitumen is melted, the vinyl will be attached around it. It is easily removeable.

There is an existing balustrade with an extra railing above it to make it a very safe place to lean and look at the river. There is ample wide escape via the two sets of staircases. There are issues about the rough sleepers who currently use the space which are being addressed by Westminster rough sleeping team. The next step is to approach local homeless charities for advice/action.

