

Request for Proposals – Public Art Commission

Cambridge House
Wellesley Road, Croydon

17.10.23

About the Development

Notting Hill Genesis are delivering Cambridge House on Wellesley Road. This strategy has been developed as part of requirements listed in Planning Permission - to satisfy planning permission 16/03368/P Condition 1 Public Art and the Public Realm Design.

Artelier Art Consultancy have commissioned a Public Art Strategy for the Cambridge House Development. Through consultation with the local community, the project team and historical research, the strategy has been developed as part of NHG's long-term investment in providing affordable housing in Croydon and bringing creative and economic benefits to the borough. At its core, the strategy focuses on the role art will play in creating a sense of place and identity in the new development, through exploring its context and engaging with diverse communities.

Wellesley Road's origins and historical setting are unrecognisable in the landscape today, which has undergone extensive development since the second half of the 20th Century. The art strategy places art as a key tool in placemaking – embedding permanent cultural and historical significance into the fabric of the public realm of the development, creating a strong link to the past as well as bringing new meaning to a contemporary context for Wellesley Road. Following a series of consultations and meetings throughout 2022, this document provides a summary of the vision and key objectives of the art strategy.

Within this scope of work, we acknowledge the collaborative nature of delivering art strategies and the vital role that the artist/s and community members will play in the development of artwork concepts, narratives, and the creation of the artworks and the final realisation in situ.

The Commission

The client team have reviewed the development site and identified a key location for the artwork. The scope can include the floors, seating, landscaping, lighting and other aspects.

Careful consideration should be given to the materials used, how it is installed and the long-term durability and maintenance. The artist should use their creative way of working to develop an artwork that responds to the unique historical and cultural context of the site to engage and inspire the passerby using this space. We imagine the artwork to have an element of architectural integration, as well as having an element of surprise and wonderment. We also welcome artistic practices which have a collaborative mode of working which may also engage with the community in some way.

Whilst we have certain parameters for the location and for the art to have contextual relevance, we are keen to free up the reins and embrace the creative responses from artists. We welcome proposal from a full spectrum of disciplines, including: sculpture; painting; multimedia; and installation; and many others. This opportunity is suited to both emerging and more established artists, preferably located in Croydon or with a connection to the area or site. We are not necessarily seeking artists with public art experience, rather we are more interested in the quality of the contextual response and creative potential of the ideas put forward to us.

We acknowledge that some artists may not have public art experience, but as long as they demonstrate an understanding of the challenges we are able to provide curatorial support and some technical expertise to help realise the artwork.

Artwork Location

Having reviewed the development site and its surrounding context in detail, as well as consulting with the landscape designer, we have identified a specific design principle and location for the public artwork.

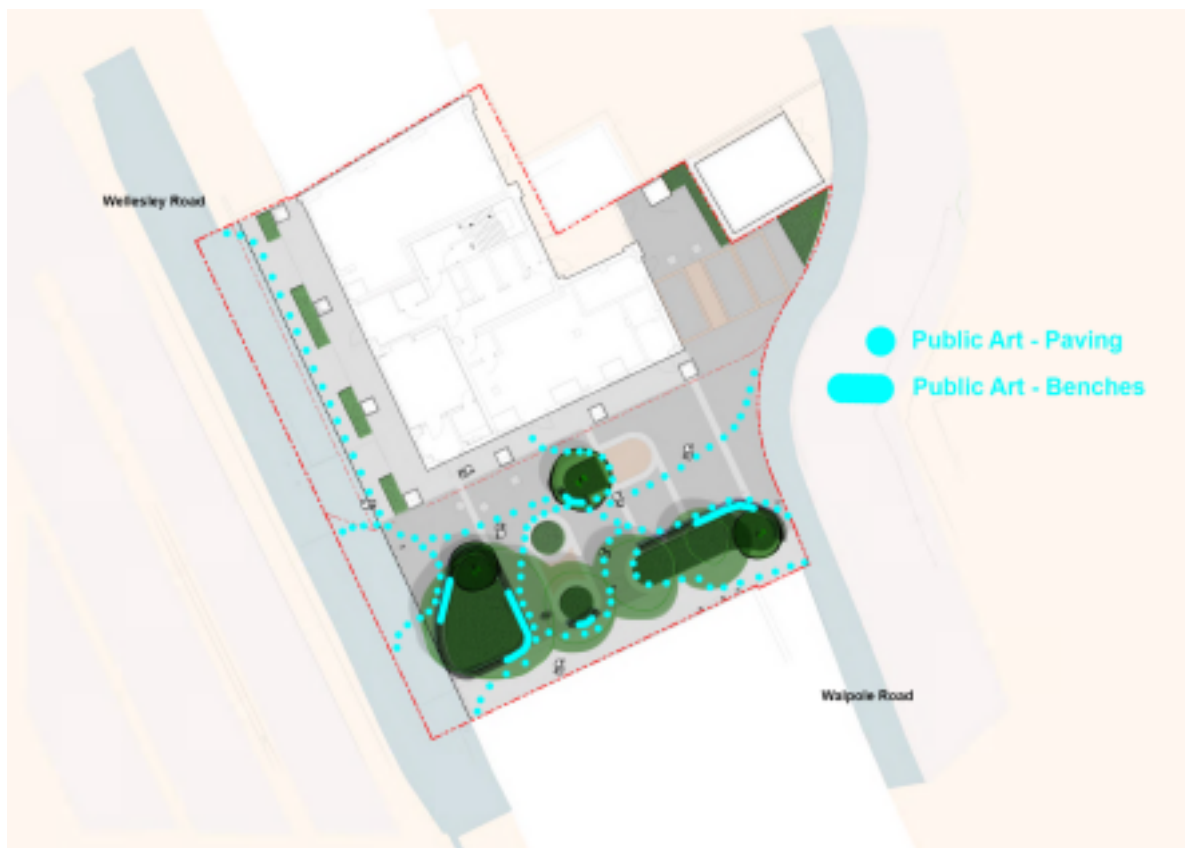
Forming part of the paving, the artwork will take the form of embedded features that will create fluid routes around the public realm site. These will lead to dwelling spaces on the benches, where the artwork will take on a new presence and focus. The embedded paving elements will pick up on walking routes along Wellesley Road and

Walpole, encouraging passers-by to take a detour and discover the public realm of Cambridge House and to spend time in the seating areas.

Within this space, the artwork will be integrated into the development's architecture and the public realm. It will focus on the key elements of paving, seating & lighting in this space in order to enhance the public realm.

View 1 – Aerial View:

Public Artwork location – catching the line of sight and busy walking routes from both directions of Wellesley Road, as well as from the approach from Walpole Road. The embedded paving elements create a lead-in to the larger elements on the benches.



View 2 – CGI View:

Public Artwork location – the paving elements create an intriguing moving network of routes that lead to focus areas for the public to dwell and engage with the artwork on a deeper level. The artwork will be developed to complement the landscape design and architecture, yet fully integrated into the public realm and accessible for public engagement.



Local Historical Contexts

Following research into the immediate local area, the following historical points of interest have been identified. These historical contexts may be creatively used by the commissioned artist when embarking on their own in-depth research, to create art interventions that form an authentic connection to life on Wellesley Road in the past and the present. However, we expect artists to also carry out their own self-directed research and discover their own themes.

1. Networks & Rail

Wellesley Road has been at the heart of intersecting network routes since the early Victorian period. Just off Wellesley Road, the first railway link in the area was built in 1839 on the site of West Croydon station. At this time, Croydon, a bustling market town of 20,000 people needed links to nearby London. The rail line at first provided access to the London–Brighton line; with the area's growth, routes continuously expanded and new stations were built nearby, such as East Croydon station at the bottom of Wellesley Road (opening in 1841). These stations made the area increasingly more commercially important, and the population increased exponentially as a result. This led to the area around Wellesley road to become transformed into one of Croydon's key community hubs. Still today, East Croydon station is one of the busiest non-terminal stops in the UK.

2. Traces of Nature

Within living memory, Wellesley Road was known as a green haven and one of the most desirable residential roads in the borough. Until the 1960s, Wellesley Road had many tree-lined paths, green playing fields for the public and the many nearby schools, with even a small lake in the fields' grounds. Beautiful houses lined the road, with spacious gardens. Major development in the 1960s and 1970s transformed the area, which is now Croydon's epicentre for shopping, business and urban residences. With more sensitive development in recent years, this area of Croydon is increasingly promoting nature in new town planning.

3. Diverse Voices

Since the mid-20th century, increasing numbers of people from diverse backgrounds have settled in central Croydon, creating a thriving multicultural community. Historically, the internationalism of the area has its roots in the Windrush generation arriving to post-War Britain, as well as Commonwealth migrants from South Asia in the 1960s and African-Caribbean people in the 1970s. This legacy continues to shape the society of contemporary central Croydon. Today, approximately 17% of Croydon's population in the area surrounding Wellesley Road are non-UK nationals, predominantly from Europe, South Asia and the Caribbean, among many others. An ethnically diverse community overall, 50.7% of local residents are from a BAME background. Many community projects have promoted this extraordinary diversity of different cultures and experiences, celebrating the many individual stories that give character to Croydon.

4. A Centre for Entertainment

Owing to its central location within Croydon, the area immediately around Wellesley Road was a popular destination for theatre and entertainment for decades. The area has boasted 9 theatre venues within a two-mile radius. Off Crown Hill, Church Street, the Theatre Royal presented world-class performances from 1868-1956, running three shows an evening at the height of its success. Next to the Wellesley Road fields, the New National Hall and Grand Circus (or the 'Empire Theatre of Varieties' as it was also known), hosted circus acts from Europe, America and the Continent from 1895 for four decades. On Wellesley Road itself, the Pembroke Theatre (1959-1962) was significant as one of the first 'Theatres in the Round' in Britain. Major West End stars performed at Pembroke Theatre, even attracting visitors from London. This heritage of artistic expression and performance is continued today through community theatres and arts projects.

Community Engagement

Introduction

The artwork's form will be rooted in the sense of a journey and connecting transient routes throughout the space. We feel that a relevant and powerfully poetic response to this theme will be to embed personal narratives of journeys within the artwork. With the community of Croydon celebrated for its multiculturalism, we feel that this artwork can provide a space to the spectrum of community members who have recently arrived from countries of conflict. Within this public art space, the rich tapestry of diverse narratives and journeys can be sensitively and eloquently interwoven to mark a moment in history. We have identified Young Roots as a key partner organisation for our pertinent cultural and social community engagement work.

"Young Roots has been working in Croydon since 2013 and has since grown to respond to the needs and interests of young refugees who live or study in the local area. We offer a welcoming and a safe space for young people to socialise and access vital support." Despina Tsiakalou, Croydon Head of Services

Young Roots works with around 300-350 young refugees each year in Croydon, of whom 35% are female and 65% male. The largest groups of young people are from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan and Vietnam. The majority of young people are or have come to the UK as unaccompanied minors, without family.

Workshops

The artist will lead a series of workshops with a select group of interested members of Young Roots, with the full support of their team. It is hard to predict the exact demographic of the members, but we aim to involve a cross generation of ages and equality of gender. The workshops will take the form of Stories & Poetry Workshops and Drawing & Visual Expression.

Timeline of Commissioning Process

Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest

- 20th October 2023 – open call for Expressions of Interest
- 15th November 2023 – deadline for Expressions of Interest

Stage 2 – Initial Proposal

- 22nd November 2023 – shortlisted artists invited to develop proposals •
- 6th December 2023 – deadline for initial proposals
- 6th December to 20th December 2023 – interviews and final artist(s) proposal

appointed Stage 3 – Proposal Development

- 20th to 6th January 2024 proposal development with the client team •
- Research and community engagement

Stage 4 – Artwork Production & Community Engagement

- 15th January – 15th June 2024 – artwork production and community engagement

Stage 5 – Delivery & Installation

- 15th – 28th June 2024 – installation onsite

Budget

Following Expressions of Interest any artist(s) invited to submit a Proposal at Stage 2 will receive a £500 proposal development fee. To deliver the project a budget of £80,000 is available, this must include all Artist(s) fees, production costs, third party fabricators, installation, and all expenses.

How to Apply

Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest

- Cover Letter – to include: why you are interest in the project; your initial responses to the context; and an impression of how you could envisage the direction of your artwork
- Portfolio – presentation of previous works to provide an overview of your practice
- Artist Statement – text to give us an understanding of how you work and your lines of enquiry • Relevant work – examples of relevant commissions or exhibitions
- CV – to include biography, education, qualifications, commissioning and exhibiting experience

Expressions of Interest should be emailed to talia@artelier.co.uk by 15th November 5pm

Stage 2 – Initial Proposal

Further information will be issued, outlining the proposal requirements if selected following the Expression of Interest stage. It is likely that the artist will be required to provide:

- Detailed statement relating to the concepts within the work and how it will relate to the context • Proposed research and community engagement
- Visuals, drawings, mock-ups of the proposed artwork
- Proposed materials and samples
- Technical consideration for durability, installation and maintenance
- Draft budget including artist fee, artwork materials, fabrication and installation
- Outline timeline

Selection Criteria

Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest

An assessment will be made on the following criteria:

- Suitability of the artist practice
- Quality and relevance of the initial proposal
- Creative potential, approach and ambition
- Achievability and feasibility of initial proposal
- Quality of portfolio and realisation of artwork commissions
- Artist's connection to the locality and knowledge of the area
- Qualifications, past experience and relevant projects

Stage 2 – Initial Proposals

An assessment will be made on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the developed proposal, the concepts explored and how it will relate to the context •
- Quality of visuals, drawings, mock-ups of the proposed artwork
- Achievability and feasibility of proposal
- Effectiveness of proposed research and community engagement
- Detail of proposed fabrication, technical consideration for durability, installation and maintenance •
- Accuracy of the budget and value for money in fabrication and artist's fee
- Realistic timeline with sufficient contingency and allowances
- Artist's connection to the locality and understanding of the area
- Artist's understanding of the projects demands and their ability to manage the process