Former George Ward site, Melksham Wiltshire
Public Art Commission Opportunities

Brief for Artists’ Commissions

Invitation for Expression of Interest

Persimmon Homes are calling for expressions of interest in one or more of three commissions within a residential development at former school site, George Ward in Melksham, Wiltshire.

Development and Site Context

The site is located approximately 1.2km to the north west of the town centre, in the Shurnhold area of Melksham. The site is currently occupied by a former secondary school. The school dated back to 1953 and was the first post-war secondary school in Wiltshire. The application site is divided into two separate parcels by Dunch Lane Residential (up to 270 dwellings – 7.16ha). The development includes 30% affordable housing located in clusters throughout the development. A mix of housing will provide a variety of property sizes suitable for all lifestyles and households. This provision will attract a diverse mix of residents, which will in turn assist in creating a vibrant and active community. A large amount of open space has been provided to cater for the needs of the new and existing residents on both the residential and playing field components of the proposed housing development. Strategic planting will be instated and improved at key locations to maintain privacy of existing development and to soften the visual impact from views into the development from the wider landscape where necessary.

The development is now nearing completion with approximately 95% occupancy. The public art commissions will be within locations managed by the management company for the site.

Commissioning Principles and Themes

The commissioned Public Art Plan has highlighted the following commissioning principles and themes for this site:

Integrated Commissions which enhance the development aspirations
This Plan advocates a commissioning approach which avoids stand-alone pieces of artwork separate from the surrounding public realm, and which promotes physical and functional commissions which are integrated within both the design of great public space and the cultural life of its users. Art is about collaboration and the integration of ideas, often between artists, architects, landscape architects, urban designers, engineers, planners and other professionals, and the public, as well as with the commissioners.


**Green Spaces**
Commissions which enhance the identity of non-car routes to the wider neighbourhood, for commuting and pleasure, provide creative interventions that will increase user confidence and give motivation to explore the wider network and identify complementary opportunities for play, education and interpretation with ecological clues and things to learn.

**The former school and local history to reflect heritage and bring distinctiveness**
There are many interesting and historic aspects to Melksham which could be referred to or used as inspiration across the site. It is proposed that the Plan uses the George Ward School and before it, the Shurnhold School as one focus of creative and historic commissioning. There should be opportunity through the community engagement within commissions to link activity with this theme.

**Engagement**
Each of the two main commissions should include an element of community engagement within their commission proposals. The emerging Bursary artist will assist in carrying out creative consultation and engagement opportunities.

**The Commissions and Artists’ profile**
This brief invites expressions of interest in one or more of the following three commission opportunities:

1. A series of integrated, functional commissions such as benches and creative wayfinding
2. A trail of interpretation markers in areas of Public Open Space and at Pedestrian entrances and routes in and out of the development
3. A Bursary for an emerging artist to be mentored by the other artist(s) to help to plan and deliver community engagement

**Commissions 1 and 2 may be delivered by the same Artist.**
Promoting walking, bus journeys and cycling to access schools, the railway station and local places of leisure and employment might involve a range of creative interventions to make key routes more attractive. Mechanisms such as the placing of ‘hidden gems’ that only travellers can discover and decode, or revealing local history and ecology, can aid interpretation, ownership and wayfinding. Integrating creative design approaches can help to increase legibility, identity and enhance the experience of walking and cycling, which will in turn help to promote increased and regular use.

This series of commissions will bring benefits across the entire development. All permanent artworks will need to be durable, meet safety standards and have minimal maintenance needs.

Details of the commissions follow:
Commission 1: A series of integrated, functional commissions such as benches and creative wayfinding

The commission or commissions should be placed within and focus upon the Public Open Space, links in and out of the new development to integrate within established communities for example towards the railway station, secondary school and canal. As the Landscape plan is already well considered and creative any artworks should pay careful attention to the landscape scheme and where possible liaise with the landscape architects and/or contractors.

There are clearly many potential users and uses on the site across generations and communities of interest from the former use of the site, to the station, the canal and the secondary school. The site offers opportunity to subtly reflect the history and use of the site, local flora and fauna, the working heritage of the town and the opportunity for play.

This commission would like to see a series of integrated seating and benches and a series of integrated creative wayfinders at agreed nodes. The seats can range from informal perches to substantial seats in metal or timber or a combination. The seating and wayfinders should be from the same ‘family’ but each one should be distinct according to its user and placement. The seats may have some elements which form discreet reminders of the former use of the site and the surrounding area and should be placed and designed in sympathy with the landscape surrounding them.

The Artist will need to be confident and experienced in delivering art within a public realm and landscaping context and be prepared to consult and work with the design team to realise the commission.

As the commissions will be maintained by a management company, the commissioner seeks works which will require minimum ongoing care and maintenance and will develop a costed ongoing care and maintenance schedule with the Artist at detailed design stage.

The commissioned Artist must be positive about mentoring an emerging Artist who can help to plan and deliver community engagement throughout the development of the commission.

Commission 2. A trail of interpretation markers in areas of Public Open Space and at Pedestrian entrances and routes in and out of the development

Some interventions will be developed in the Public Open Spaces to enhance the character and use of those spaces so for example, an intervention in the POS with the NEAP to encourage play, an intervention in the POS with the balancing pond which explains the reason for the existence of the hidden pond beneath your feet.

Some interventions could be sited in pedestrian routes and entrances across the site for example the Hoggin path and the pedestrian access to the site as well as the existing footpath to Addison Road. This suite of works could include interpretation, creative wayfinding, markers and crafted details along the route or at nodes to tributaries and gateways to major non-vehicular routes, emphasising names and facts particular to the site which could be teachers’ names, local businesses, flora and fauna and/or cycling and walking distances to key local services and landmarks echoing the visual language of old milestones. The materials and form should be reflective of the environment to which the node is a gateway and provide reassurance and information on destinations and distances. The eventual works should complement standard wayfinding components whilst creating distinctive and memorable elements within the new landscape. They may form a subtle trail along the main streets and/or be grouped around seating and meeting spaces or key community buildings.

The commissioned Artist must be positive about mentoring an emerging Artist who can help to plan and deliver community engagement throughout the development of the commission.
Commission 3. A bursary for an emerging artist to be mentored by the other artist(s) to help to plan and deliver community engagement

In line with the Wiltshire Council’s art and design in the public realm guidelines, this commission offers an opportunity for a local emerging artist who is eager to develop their socially engaged practice to be mentored by one or both of the Artists from commissions 1 and 2 to help in the planning and delivery of community engagement and creative consultation as the commissions develop.

It is always important to include community engagement in an Art commissioning plan. Here it is particularly important. The former school which sat on the site is still a place which holds important stories and memories for many of the existing residents who ring the site and beyond. It is clear from consultation that there is an appetite for developing initiatives which involve the new and existing residents in accessing Melksham’s amenities and in enjoying and respecting Melksham’s heritage and its green space.

The exact nature and format of the engagement will be determined after discussion and briefings between the Artists and the Commissioner but may involve walks, mapping, family wildlife events, meet the artist opportunities or other.

The Commissioner, Project Manager and the local authority can offer contacts for a wide range of local resources and organisations.

*Documentary photos from Melksham including George Ward teachers, a temporary hospital at Melksham House and a Melksham family who sailed on the Titanic.*
Project Management

There is a steering group consisting of representatives from the developer, the local authority, parish representation and others within the local community. The Artists will report to the steering group at milestone points within the Commission. There will also be opportunities for the artists to meet each other. Day to day liaison will be with Diana Hatton who will project manage all public art commissions on behalf of Persimmon Homes and will oversee contracting, calling meetings, steering group and artist liaison, budget issues and milestone delivery including concept and detailed design, testing and permissions, subcontracting, fabrication, installation and maintenance scheduling.

Budget

Commission 1 A series of integrated, functional commissions such as benches and creative wayfinding
There is an Artist's budget of £34,000 for the project to include all associated costs including but not limited to artists fees and expenses, materials, fabrication and installation and fees for time spent in research, design and consultation. If required, any other fees or expenses such as structural engineering and product testing fees should also be covered by the budget.

Commission 2. A trail of interpretation markers in areas of Public Open Space and at Pedestrian entrances and routes in and out of the development
There is an Artist's budget of £20,000 for the project to include all associated costs including but not limited to artists fees and expenses, workshop and consultation costs, materials, fabrication and installation and fees for time spent in research and consultation. If required, any other fees or expenses such as structural engineering and product testing fees should also be covered by the budget.

Commission 3. Bursary
There is an Artist's Bursary of £2,500 indentified to cover time and expenses helping to create, manage and deliver the community engagement with the other 2 commissions.

In addition to the bursary, there is a total budget of £2,000 for engagement costs across all commissions.

Timescales and selection process

Closing date for submission of expressions of interest: 5.00 pm on Thursday 25th April 2019
Shortlisting: Week commencing 29th April 2019
Interviews with shortlisted artists: TBC, possibly week commencing 20th May 2019
A project timetable will be agreed with the artist on selection.
Indicative commission timetable is as follows:

- Finalising artist briefs: February 2019
- Formal approval of art plan (with indicative dates for delivery) through planning: February 2019
- Formal notification of project management appointment by Persimmon: January 2019
- Setting up of public art plan steering group: April 2019
- Advertising the artist briefs and appointing etc: April-May 2019
- Finalising design proposals: early July 2019
• Project delivery (including fabrication, testing and installation, engagement and bursary mentoring): August 2019 to March 2020
• Project completion: Celebration of project/installations – no later than Summer 2020

The project manager working with the Steering Group will produce a definitive timetable for delivery which dovetails with the site construction timetable as the concept designs are developed.

Expressions of Interest and application process

Interested artists should email expressions of interest to Diana Hatton the Project Manager stating clearly whether they are applying for Commission 1, Commission 2, Commission 3 or a combination.

Applications for Commissions 1 and 2 should include:
• A copy of your cv
• Some examples of your work – preferably which show work in a similar context.
• A short statement about why you think you are suitable for this project (No more than 1 page of A4)
• An outline of how you would approach it and any initial ideas (No more than 2 pages of A4)
• Details of 2 referees relating to public art projects
• Confirmation that you hold a minimum of £5 million Public Liability insurance cover
• Confirmation that you hold or would be prepared to undergo DBS checks for work with children and vulnerable adults

Applications for Commission 3, the Bursary Commission should include:
• A copy of your cv
• Some examples of your work – preferably which show work in a community engagement context.
• A short statement about your current practice, how this commission would develop your practice and how you would like to use it to develop future public art work in Wiltshire (No more than 2 pages of A4)
• An outline of initial ideas on how you may be able to document or disseminate your experience (No more than 1 pages of A4)
• Details of 2 referees relating to relevant projects
• Confirmation that you hold a minimum of £5 million Public Liability insurance cover
• Confirmation that you hold or would be prepared to undergo DBS checks for work with children and vulnerable adults

Shortlisted applicants for commissions 1 and 2 will be offered a fee of £250 to work up initial ideas before they are invited for interview.

The commissioning agreement will be between the artist/s and Persimmon Homes.

For further information please contact: Diana Hatton dianahatton@btinternet.com

Attachments:
• Plan of Site
• Arts Scheme Former George Ward School Site Melksham (Revised Nov Plan 2018)