



Rewriting history

Rick Mather's Ashmolean in Oxford starts a new chapter in museum design P.12

The shape of things to come

New technology in metal facades P.16



BUILDING DESIGN ARCHITECTS' FAVOURITE WEEKLY

12 firms vie to revive derelict Rogers site

British Land asks young architects to find uses for the City's abandoned 'cheese grater' tower

Elizabeth Hopkirk

A dozen young architects have been shortlisted for a temporary ideas competition to fill the site of Richard Rogers' "cheese grater", which was mothballed by the developer last summer.

The move by British Land has come as a shock to Rogers Stirk Harbour, which was only told of the plans earlier this month.

Opening up vacant plots is part of a wider initiative by the City of London's planning authority to force developers to turn to alternative uses for sites indefinitely put on hold by the credit crunch.

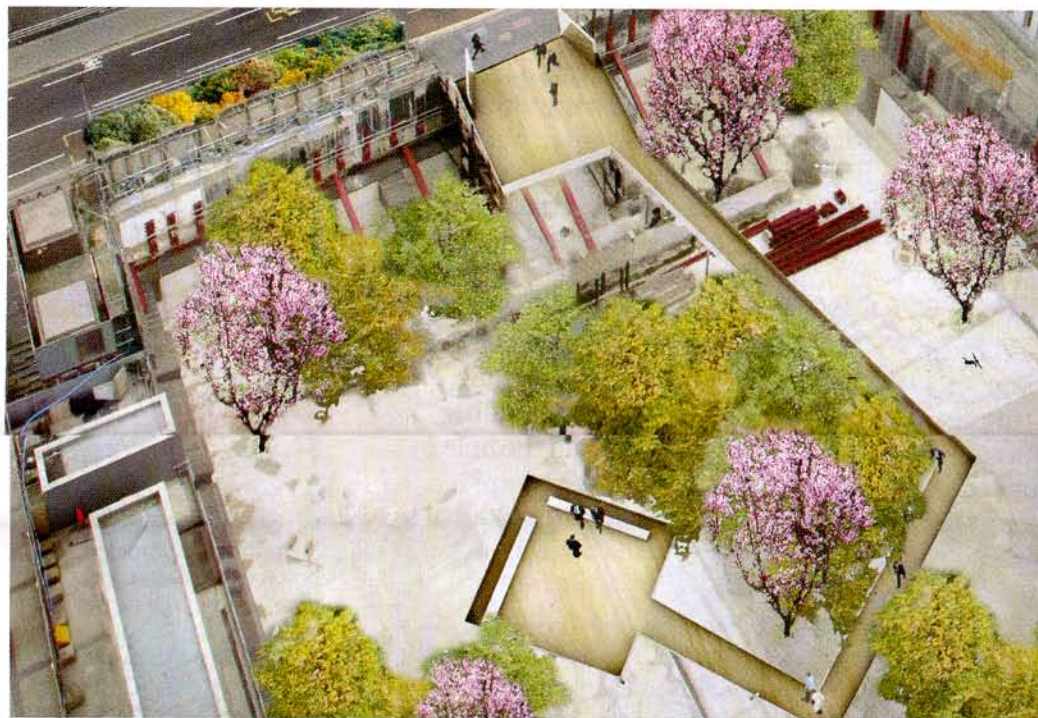
Shortlisted firms include Young Architect of the Year 2009 finalists Duggan Morris and Glowacka Rennie along with 2007 winner, Carmody Groarke, with submitted ideas for the Leadenhall tower site ranging from a city farm to a viewing platform.

The winning design, which could sit on the site for up to five years, will be announced by competition organiser Wordsearch in the next few weeks.

The Corporation of London is determined not to have the Square Mile riddled with derelict plots and one shortlisted architect said the developer had been "bounced" into the initiative. British Land declined to comment.

Christine Cohen, chairman of the planning committee, told BD: "We need something on the site rather than a hole. There are various sites in mind [for similar schemes] in the City."

Other high-profile developments across the capital are



One of the 12 proposals showing how the site could look if it was opened up for public use.



British Land's Leadenhall site in the City of London.

British Land has earmarked just £125,000 for the budget to reinvent its site, with the winning design expected to take weeks to install.

Piers Taylor, of shortlisted Mitchell Taylor Workshop, which has come up with the idea of a city farm, said the competition brief is likely to be rolled out to other mothballed sites.

"It needs to act as a prototype for other sites that are vacant in the City that have fallen victim to the credit crunch," he said.

"We were also asked to address concerns the City have with this site — to radically improve what it looks like for people in surrounding buildings and to provide some public open space in the City." He added that he was thrilled to be up against "bloody good" rivals.

Another shortlisted architect, Asif Khan, said the idea for temporary uses would help out fledgling practices.

He has designed a pier jutting over the 10m-deep, 50sq m hole which he plans to fill with mature trees in giant grow bags.

"It's very progressive of the client to enable young practices to make their mark on the City in such a prestigious site," he said.

Other shortlisted firms include Graeme Massie Architects, Platform 5 Architects, Gianni Botsford Architects, Studio Weave, Exyzt, AY Architects and Julian Hakes.

The 48-storey Leadenhall building was due to be completed by 2011 but was put on hold last summer.

also looking at temporary uses, including the troubled Chelsea Barracks, which is considering an antiques fair, and Noho Square — originally intended as a Candy & Candy mixed-use development — which may be turned into allotments.

And sites in Leeds, including Feilden Clegg Bradley's stalled office scheme at Wellington Place, have already been turned over to allotments while community gardens are being considered at the mothballed Allan Murray-designed Caltongate mixed-use development in Edinburgh.

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