

Site Life: New land of opportunity

The New Islington Maze ...helping your garden grow!



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The Idea

The idea is to develop a unique maze with a garden retailer, where all of the plants and trees that make up the maze would be for sale. At the end of the temporary use, the 'plants in pots' are removed and the land returns to a blank canvas ready for development.

The plants would change with the seasons, with a Christmas tree maze over the festive period – all for sale, of course. Within the maze can be placed garden furniture, shelters, sculptures and lightweight structures, provided by the landscape retailer and local artists.

Why?

The maze creates a landscaped, interactive place for the growing community, but remains a temporary, self-sustaining site. Local residents and visitors can have fun interacting with the site, and shop to improve their own home environment at the same time. The idea is self-financing, and is an opportunity for the retailer to access a new urban environment.

Longevity

If the maze proves popular, the plants will sell off and be replaced from nursery stock. Unsold plants would be removed by the retailer at the end of the contract. Any new surface materials would be removable, such as loose gravel for car parking areas and paths. The site will require drainage connections for a WC facility, which is proposed to be in the form of a portable unit, screened with a planted timber trellis. Rainwater harvesting will be used to water the plants, with a metered water supply also necessary.

The role of the architects

We would work with Urban Splash and the selected garden retailer to design and coordinate the final maze and site layout - thereafter, the retailer would lease and operate the site. We would apply for interim planning permission for the site, and other consultants may be required as necessary for the planning permission (for example, a travel plan / transport impact assessment may be required by the local authority). Professional involvement would be negotiated with the developer and the chosen retail operator to agree input, fees and scope of works.

Financing

This is a low budget option, and delivers a fun, creative space with a commercial twist. The maze would be free entry, and the retailer would provide all staff and site maintenance required for the maze and paths. The site would be rent-free for the retailer in return for providing and maintaining the maze environment. A cafe on the site would provide a revenue to supplement the income generated by the plant retail, and to cater to visitors of this new local attraction.

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