

re:store

AN IDEAS COMPETITION FROM THE ARCHITECTS' JOURNAL AND SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE



MATTHEW ANDREWS FOR SAVE

Overview

All over the UK department stores and the high streets they occupy are under threat due to changing patterns of shopping and working, which are challenging the business model of the traditional 'bricks and mortar' shop.

In the most famous high street of all, Oxford Street, controversial plans by retailer M&S to demolish and rebuild its famous store at Marble Arch are currently in doubt. Following Michael Gove's decision to reject this proposal on heritage and climate grounds, such as the release of almost 40,000 tonnes of CO₂ caused by the construction of the new building, M&S made a successful High Court challenge, sending the case back to the Secretary of State for redetermination. Amid this uncertainty, the re:store competition – launched

by The Architects' Journal and SAVE Britain's Heritage – seeks to explore the idea that this well-known building can have a viable future. We are interested in your ideas for the sustainable and pragmatic revitalisation of this famous West End building and its surroundings.

The re:store competition, which is independent of M&S, seeks to promote debate and, ideally, create a model for the adaptive re-use of other ageing stores around the UK. Through the contest – which seeks ideas rather than detailed designs – we are looking to explore some matters of real public interest:

- In keeping with other examples of building reuse on Oxford Street, such as the current refurbishment of House of Fraser, can this handsome building be refurbished and adapted so it works for

today's needs and helps to regenerate Oxford Street and surrounding areas? What alternative uses can be imagined?

- M&S Oxford Street, adjacent to the famous Selfridges, dates back to 1929. Can the best of what is already at this site be preserved so that our collective sense of place and memories are not lost?
- What lessons can we learn from this creative exercise to help inform our response to the threat posed to other high streets around the country?

Given the climate crisis, the re:store competition also seeks to encourage viable new approaches that prioritise whole-life carbon design, aligning a commitment to sustainability with respect for the commercial realities of trading on Oxford Street and its architectural heritage.



Location plan

Design objectives

1 Whole-life carbon design

Develop ideas that avoid waste and demolition as much as possible, prioritising whole-life carbon principles while emphasising other vital aspects of sustainability.

2 Adaptive reuse and multi-tenant considerations

Entrants are free to consider how the building could continue to serve the needs of a single retailer such as M&S. Alternatively, they might consider some or all of the following moves: changing or partially changing its use; accommodating multiple tenants or occupiers; and adding additional floor space.

3 Oxford Street context While recognising the importance of retrofit and reuse and the high commercial value of this site, what big idea does your approach advance in terms of revitalising this famous shopping street and the wider public realm it occupies? To what extent is this applicable to other high streets?

4 Community Could a transformed building become a genuine community asset – perhaps providing amenity space, workspace for start-ups, or even housing – in addition to more conventional commercial uses, such as retail? Can we reimagine what this

building could add to the city? What role could co-design play?

5 Heritage preservation How does your entry recognise the building's historical significance and explore strategies for preserving and celebrating its architectural and social heritage and its connection with the surrounding conservation area?

Entry criteria and instructions

Who can enter? The **free-to-enter** re:store competition is open to any **UK-based individuals or teams**, which must include at least one of the following:

- Qualified architect (ARB or equivalent)
- Architectural assistant
- Graduate of an architectural programme/s or architecture student on an ARB/RIBA-accredited course

Teams including under-represented groups in the profession and/or seeking to engage under-represented groups in their methods and/or proposal are strongly encouraged to participate.

How to enter

Please note we will only accept digital entries, limited to a single A3 PDF page and submitted via a [Google form \(click\)](#) by the closing date of Wednesday 24 April.

The competition seeks broad-brush ideas illustrated with a single drawing/illustration. We are not seeking plans or sections unless these are rough sketches or indicative. Images should be accompanied by an explanatory text of up to 500 words about the idea and how this answers the five design objectives set out above. In the accompanying text, please indicate whether or how you have used AI to produce text and/or imagery. Please avoid use of M&S branding.

You are also welcome to submit an additional short biography of your project team (up to 150 words) and any relevant links, eg to your website, portfolio, or social media.

Who is behind the competition?

Re:store is run by SAVE Britain's Heritage and The Architects' Journal on a not-for-profit basis. Importantly, this competition is fully independent of the building's owner, M&S, and entrants should be open-minded about M&S's future presence in the building, given that the retailer itself has said it will leave the site if its chosen plan cannot progress.

The Architects' Journal and SAVE Britain's Heritage are the two parties that successfully called on the government to launch a public inquiry into the M&S proposals on environmental and heritage grounds. As competition organisers, the AJ and SAVE hope that all parties, including M&S, will welcome this contest as a sincere and constructive attempt to explore a new life for this building and its surrounding neighbourhood, as well as viable routes forward for under-used or empty high street stores in general.

Entries will be assessed by a distinguished panel of judges including independent experts plus representatives from The Architects' Journal and SAVE Britain's Heritage. Honorariums for the final six teams selected will be funded by three parties: SAVE; Eric Reynolds, chair of SAVE trustees; and Basil Demeroutis, managing partner of developer FORE Partnership.

What are the timings?

Stage 1 Launching on Wednesday 27 March 2024

Stage 2 Selection of the longlist: After the closing date of Wednesday 24 April, the AJ and SAVE will select a longlist of up to 20 entries, which will be published in the AJ. All longlisted practices/teams will be expected to present their ideas and their practice approach to the judging panel online on Thursday 9 May. The format will be a 10-minute presentation, with 10 minutes of questions from the panel. No extra work is required beyond the original submission before this interview.

Stage 3 Selection of the final six: On Thursday 9 May, or shortly thereafter, our judging panel will select the final six winning teams from the longlist, who will then be informed and will be the subject of further coverage in the AJ. These six will be paid honorariums of £5,000 each to develop their ideas further. No overall winner will be selected.

Stage 4 Day-long re:store charrette. The final six will be asked to work up their ideas further, with support from the AJ and SAVE. In the week commencing 20 May, the teams will come together for a day-long charrette in London where they will work up their designs in front of the jury and other stakeholders in a collaborative atmosphere using drawing, model-making and other techniques. The results will be published in the AJ.

Why enter?

- Opportunity to receive coverage in the AJ at longlist and shortlist stages.
- Gain invaluable experience presenting to an expert judging panel.
- Engage with one of the most high-profile buildings and sites in the country.
- Receive a £5,000 honorarium for your time and effort if you are selected as one of the final six teams.
- Engage positively with finding solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in architecture and development today including balancing heritage, whole-life carbon design, and commercial realities.

Information about the existing building

1. The site

The site comprises three buildings at 456-472 Oxford Street:

- Orchard House (c 1929-32) which occupies the corner plot where Oxford Street and Orchard Street meet.
- Neale House (c 1986) a red brick extension on Oxford Street which adjoins Orchard House to the west. It is connected internally to Orchard House.
- Orchard Street Extensions 23-24 Orchard Street and 10 Portman Mews South (c 1968-70), an extension to the north of Orchard House located along Orchard Street.

2. Location

Orchard House, 458 Oxford Street, W1C 1AP.

The site lies at the junction of Oxford Street and Orchard Street, a prominent corner site on one of Westminster and London's key thoroughfares and a world-famous retail destination. It sits within the Central Activity Zone (CAZ), the West End International Centre and the West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area (WERLSPA) amongst other designations, at the western end of Oxford Street between Marble Arch and Selfridges.

3. Townscape

The site is adjacent to the landmark Grade II*-listed Selfridges building to the east. Oxford Street has a range of stone-clad, Neoclassical 20th-century department store buildings, which are mainly five or six storeys tall.

4. Heritage status

All three buildings on the site are unlisted. Neale House and Orchard House are tightly abounded by, but not located within, three conservation areas. The northerly extensions, 23 Orchard Street and 10 Portman Mews, are situated partially within the Portman Estate Conservation Area to the north and west. The Mayfair Conservation Area lies to the south, and the Stratford Place Conservation Area is to the east.

5. Materials

Orchard House is a steel-framed building, faced in Portland stone ashlar with two grand matching façades in the Neoclassical style. It features Ionic order pilasters and recessed oxidised windowpanes. The Orchard Street extension to the north is a steel frame clad in Portland stone, with small square windows set in recessed granite surrounds. Neale House diverges stylistically, with a red brick exterior.

6. Building heights (storeys)

- Orchard House – six storeys plus basement
- Neale House – six storeys plus basement
- Orchard Street Extensions – seven storeys plus basement

Points to note

The Orchard House building has relatively low floor-to-ceiling heights, particularly on some of the upper floors. The approximate floor-to-ceiling heights are:

- Ground floor – c 5m
- First floor – c 4.1m
- Second floor – c 3.8m
- Third floor – c 3.8m
- Fourth floor – c 3.7m
- Fifth floor – c 3.6m
- Sixth floor – c 4.7m

7. Floor levels

Both the Neale House and the Orchard Street Extensions have floors that are level with the original Orchard House, with the exception of the second floor between Orchard House and the Orchard Street extensions, where there is a level change requiring a ramp for disabled access.

8. New connections

There are opportunities to create new routes through the buildings and create improvements to the public realm, such as an improved connection with Granville Place.

9. Current planning use classes

Retail and nightclub (which ceased operating in 2018).

10. Existing gross internal floor area

- E use class – c 35,000m²
- Sui generis use (nightclub) – c 750m²
- Total – c 35,750m²

Terms and conditions

- The applications and the personal data included in applications will be shared with jury and competition partners as part of this competition process but will not be used by AJ publisher emap or SAVE Britain's Heritage for marketing purposes.
- The ownership of copyright of the design will be in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 – ie copyright rests with the author of the submitted design.
- All designs remain the intellectual property of the designer.
- All stakeholders of the project will make efforts to ensure wide media coverage.
- The judges' decision is final.
- The AJ and SAVE Britain's Heritage reserve the right to use images from the submissions for promotional purposes in the press, social media and publications. All efforts will be made to ensure accurate accreditation. Applicants agree to the use of their name and image in any publicity material.

Contact

For enquiries and submissions, please contact Lydia Franklin:
lydia.franklin@savebritainsheritage.org