

NEWS

Barge living gets revamp

Ruth Bloomfield

Baca Architects and PCKO have won a competition to remodel five river barges for a mixed-use scheme in London's Docklands.

British Waterways has hired Terry Farrell to develop a vision for the area that will see the waterways maximised as a space for more activity, with improved links and landscaping around the docks. It has already commissioned Martha Schwartz to draw up waterside landscape plans for Wood Wharf, which is being redeveloped.

And now it wants to revolutionise the "twee" image of living afloat, and believes the authentic Dutch barges, shipped to London from the Netherlands, have the

space to allow for a more contemporary design than traditional narrow boats.

Each barge is around 38 metres long, three storeys tall and five metres wide, providing around 300sq m of floor space.

The design stage will begin this month, and the conversion project is expected to take 18 months.

Both submissions impressed the judges with their ability to challenge traditional perceptions of waterspace design, whilst retaining continuity with the commercial past of the barges and their surroundings.

Discussing Baca's submission the judges said: "The approach demonstrated design flair and variety with considerable thought



Float my boat: Baca's design.

given to the three main areas of animation; the dockside, the urban space around the barges and the on-deck space."

The barges started life as commercial craft. British Waterways' London director Mark Bensted bought them five years ago after spotting their potential during a

trip to the Netherlands. They are currently being kept at South Quay. When finished they will be moored and used as homes, offices, shops and restaurants.

A British Waterways spokeswoman said: "The competition forms part of a wider initiative to revitalise the waterspace in London's Docklands. Currently the waterways of Docklands are under-utilised, and whilst they provide visual interest, they are largely disconnected from the neighbourhoods they serve."

Winning and other entries will be on show at Barge — breathing new life into Docklands, showing at New London Architecture, Store St, London WC1, from May 28 to June 27.



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