

St Botolph's

COLCHESTER'S VIBRANT NEW QUARTER





Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of Alumno's approach. That's why, over the past decade, we have played a positive role in communities, towns and cities across the UK. That includes working with local people, getting involved positively in the life of communities, and investing in local initiatives.

This is fused together by cultural place-making: creating places that make a positive contribution in social, economic, cultural and architectural terms.

From St Andrews to London and Birmingham to Norwich, we have worked alongside councils and communities and have achieved great results. We have built nurseries, invested in significant public art and opened a community theatre for young people, for example.

We see an opportunity in Colchester to help deliver a new community and cultural hub, using our experience from across the country as a starting point but ensuring it reflects the town.

What we are proposing here in Colchester is what we have delivered successfully elsewhere across the country: cultural place-making.

Our approach to regenerating this site, especially its architectural approach, has also been guided by the Council's detailed and rigorous planning blueprint.

We would like to make a positive contribution to Colchester and are looking forward to bringing forward these plans in partnership with the Council and the local community.

David Campbell
Managing Director, Alumno

CGI of the St Botolph's Quarter proposals showing the new John Ball Square, the town wall and the path to Berryfield

OUR PLANS FOR ST BOTOLPH'S QUARTER WILL THEREFORE DELIVER SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE:

- New affordable creative space for local artists delivered in partnership with SPACE Studios
- 50% of the site will be public realm or open space, and through a link with Firstsite there is the potential for local groups to curate event spaces around the Quarter alongside regular markets
- Business space set aside for community use, for example as a visitor centre
- New student residents alongside investment in new retail space and a Travelodge hotel will bring a £2.7m boost to the local economy each year and 40 new jobs

ABOUT ALUMNO

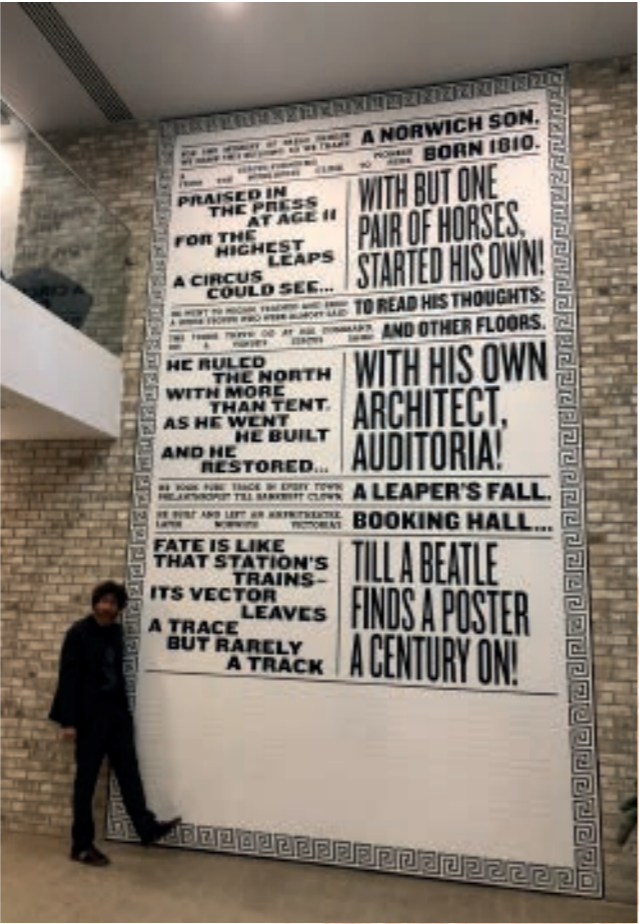
Since establishment in 2006, Alumno has specialised in creating purpose-built, high-quality and modern accommodation for students. We have worked with universities, colleges and other key stakeholders to provide homes for more than 5,000 students in cities such as London, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Norwich. We believe there is an exciting opportunity to bring this vision to life in Colchester.

To show what we want to bring to Colchester, we wanted to showcase what we have done elsewhere:

CULTURAL PLACEMAKING – PUBLIC ART

Alumno has a strong commitment to commissioning new work by artists, poets and designers within its developments. Arts curator and consultant Matthew Jarratt has worked on a number of successful public art projects across the UK, including here in Colchester.

Matthew will work with national artists like Gillian Wearing to produce three new sculptural artworks that take John Ball and equality as their starting theme. This will include a new ‘art wall’ as part of public realm improvements and a long term commitment to outreach and art workshops amongst local schools working with Firstsite, Space and Signals.



INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES - NEW PUBLIC SPACE

We aim to provide an abundance of shared space for local communities to enjoy. It stimulates interest in the place and makes it memorable. Well thought out amenities encourage local people to gather, dwell and interact. We deliver placemaking through developing strong community hubs which can deliver a sense of place and public benefit.

EXTERNAL SPACES - LANDSCAPES

Our landscaping takes into consideration the existing character and topography for each of our sites, as we understand that planting is central to defining and shaping spaces. The landscaping is maintained by the appointed management company. It should look as good on day one as year ten.



Examples of previous public art, public space and landscaping

OUR VISION FOR COLCHESTER

With our track record in mind, our vision for St Botolph's Quarter is to tie together the aspirations for a new creative business hub, a hotel, retail space, restaurants and new accommodation with the thread of place-making. It will become an exciting and vibrant place, drawing in the local community and visitors, local partners, student residents and new investment in the area.

CULTURAL QUARTER

We are working in conjunction with Firstsite to deliver creative spaces that complement their existing offer rather than seeking to compete with it. We want to create spaces that are affordable to local people, and managed by them.

INTERACTION

50% of the site is public realm, of green space which will bring life and vibrancy to this part of Colchester. With Firstsite and Space Studios working together to curate events in these spaces as well as the potential for regular markets, it will help bring local people to the area alongside the new community space.

ECONOMIC BOOST

Our proposals will deliver a new hotel, commercial space and students which together will bring a **£2.7m boost to the local economy each and every year**. This cannot be discounted, and neither should the 40 jobs the scheme will create. Travelodge, who will be running the hotel, also have a policy of working directly with Jobcentre Plus to help those on benefits transition to the world of work in their hotels.

A view of the scheme from Queen Street



OUR PROPOSALS



Indicative plans of the public realm at St. Botolph's Quarter including examples of the types of businesses that might set up in the development

KEY BENEFITS

Our plans for St Botolph's Quarter will deliver a vibrant creative and cultural space, supported by student accommodation as well as business and commercial space which together will create a new hub for Colchester.



NEW STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

336 units, meeting an identified local need
225 ensembles, 93 studios and 18 shared WC
Available at a range of rent levels



NEW CREATIVE SPACE

Artist studios to Space Studios on a long term, affordable basis
Long term facility for Signals' art and design community workshops
Provision of community allotments, managed by the local student residents group



PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Promoting the work of local artists together with works by internationally recognised artists
Promotes the town's investment in culture and run by Space Studios
Overseen by public art expert Matthew Jarratt



A NEW 87-BED TRAVELODGE HOTEL

25 year commitment
25 new full and part time jobs
Staff recruited directly from Jobcentre Plus



SUSTAINABLE COMMERCIAL SPACE

1,200sqm of new business premises across the site
Commercial space on the ground floor under the hotel
Additional range of kiosks around the site encouraging 'pop ups'



A NEW COMMUNITY MEETING SPACE AND FACILITIES

Helps meet a local need with current lack of available meeting space
Potential to provide new facilities for the community



NEW PUBLIC REALM

50% of the site will be accessible

The public space will be bigger than Culver Square and Lion Walk combined
Space for regular markets and initial discussions with Made in Colchester
Public events held in conjunction with Firstsite
Open Air Theatre and cinema in conjunction with Firstsite
Street food and arts events to support Space's annual programme

Open and not gated



NEW CIVIC SPACES

Firstsite Square
John Ball Square
Rampart Walk



View from Berryfield

BESPOKE DESIGN, SENSITIVE LOCATION

CREATING A VIBRANT NEW QUARTER FOR COLCHESTER

The site lies in the historic heart of Colchester but is currently blighted by the disused bus garage and other remnants of the bus station. The proposals seek to create a vibrant new quarter for Colchester, enriching the town centre with extensive new public realm, shops and restaurants, and linking with Firstsite, the new Curzon cinema, and Minorities Gallery.

Commercial units are planned throughout the newly created public routes and are available to lease by arts and cultural and community organisations. Behind the public frontages a new hotel is proposed on Queen Street, and student rooms are planned on the site next to Berryfield.

RESPECTING LOCAL HERITAGE

The proposals will enable a heritage trail to be created all the way from Firstsite and the Minorities running south through the Town Wall (by enlarging an existing opening in a less sensitive nineteenth century part of the Wall), linking through to the Priory ruins, St Botolph's Church, and to the station beyond.

The design also seeks to enhance the conservation area and improve the setting of the Ancient Monuments and listed buildings. The old bus garage, atop the Town Wall, will be removed, and the new buildings will be set back from the Wall leaving it unencumbered. Visibility of the Priory ruins will also be improved.

TYING INTO THE TOWN CENTRE

The Masterplan envisaged building heights in keeping with the predominantly three and four storey character of Colchester, with 'points of height used to provide unity'. The proposed design follows these guidelines. The tallest building is at the centre, with an attic storey of limited extent rising to five storeys. The buildings step down to the north and the south, falling to three and then two storeys next to the Town Wall.

The new buildings have to mediate between larger scaled developments of the last fifty years (the Curzon cinema, Firstsite, Priory Walk shopping centre etc) and the finer grained older buildings running southwards on Queen Street and along Priory Street.

The architecture is modern but takes cues from older buildings in the town to guide the proportions and choice of materials; predominantly brick and reconstituted stone. Each side is responsive to its closest neighbours to vary the architectural language and give distinctiveness to the various parts. Stepping parapets and modulated elevations enrich the architecture and skyline.

NEW PUBLIC REALM

The proposals include the following public routes and squares which are designed to create an active, lively ambience, with open spaces potentially used for events and gatherings;

A new pedestrian street running north-south, (possibly called Southgate, after the old name for Queen Street) lined with shops and other commercial units, and incorporating the eastern frontage of the Curzon cinema. A community room, is to be provided on this street for use by community organisations, for meetings and events.

At the north end of this street will be 'Firstsite Square' providing access to Firstsite, the Curzon, and the Minorities along with the entrance to a new flexible commercial unit, which could be used as a performance/rehearsal space, or as a café/bar, shop or other uses.

At the southern end, 'John Ball Square' (named after the first person to use the word equality in a community sense) next to the Town Wall and the new steps/ ramp through to Priory Street. On the western side will be the remains of the bus garage, to be redeveloped by the Council with a pedestrian route through to Queen Street. To the north an active frontage is proposed in the new building, spilling out into the Square.

Running next to the Town Wall at the upper level will be a new Rampart Walk, incorporating a landscaped public garden in front of the buildings. In the future it is hoped that the Rampart Walk will continue through into Berryfield and beyond.

A new link road running from Queen Street through to the new 'Southgate', passing a large new retail/ commercial unit under the hotel.



Examples of Alumno's recent schemes

CULTURAL & CREATIVE IMPACT

Alumno's proposals will bring added life and vibrancy to an area that already benefits from nearby Firstsite, Space Studios and the Curzon cinema. Having engaged with them, our plans seek to compliment what they already offer, and therefore includes:

- Provision of artist studios to Space Studios on a long term, affordable basis
- Long term facility for Signals' art and design community workshops
- Provision of community allotments, managed by the local student residents group
- The delivery of a public arts brief, promoting the work of local artists together with works by internationally recognised artists, all to promote the town's investment in culture

In addition to this, we recognise the need to draw more people – both local residents and visitors – into this area which is why our plans also deliver:

- New high quality public space and improved links across the site
- Space for regular markets with early discussions with 'Made in Colchester', and public events held in conjunction with Firstsite
- Open Air Theatre and cinema showing in conjunction with Firstsite/Curzon
- Street food and arts events to support Space Studios annual programme
- The potential to celebrate the historic context of the site by connecting into Colchester's heritage trail
- Providing technology for the partially sighted benefiting the wider community and linking in to a wider wayfinding strategy for the town and a visitors trail.
- The permanent display of any significant archaeological finds found on site

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Whilst our plans have been underpinned by the Council's 2005 Masterplan for the area, we have made a number of significant changes to our plans following feedback from the local community.

THESE CHANGES ARE:

- **ROMAN WALL:** We have moved the southern part of our scheme further back, so it is now 7.1 m from the Roman Wall.
- **PUBLIC SPACE:** Pulling back further from the wall now means over **50% of the site will be public realm.**
- **ENHANCED PUBLIC ART:** We are working with Matthew Jarratt to lead on our public art plans. Matthew spent 15 years at Arts Council England and specialises in projects that bring together the public sector, the private sector and local creative communities.
- **ARCHITECTURE & THE WALL:** Queen Street will be a key link between the new scheme and the existing street network. That's why this area will be the focus for public art and landscaping. It will also be the main focus of the commercial element of the scheme. The scheme will also step down in height in this location, and the brickwork will knit into the historical architecture of this part of the town.
- **MATERIALITY:** We have amended our proposed range of materials on the upper floors.
- **REDUCED HEIGHT** of the student block.

ECONOMIC BOOST

The Council currently receives no income from this site which has been vacant for over a decade. Our plans, which will see the Council retain long-term control over the site, will deliver:

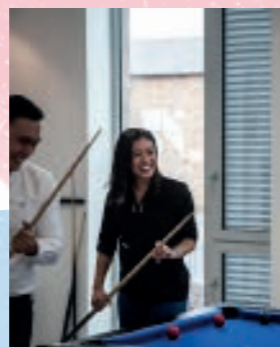
- The comprehensive regeneration of this underutilised town centre site
- A capital receipt for the Council through securing a leasehold with Alumno, but retaining the freehold
- Considerable payments and contributions towards the local NHS, improvements to the local road network especially on Queen Street, money for the Council's travel plan, and additional CCTV provision, in line with relevant policies

In addition, once the scheme is completed the long-term benefit will be:

- An additional **£2.7m spent in the local economy from 336 new students and those staying in the Travelodge hotel**
- The creation of around 40 new jobs, with Travelodge working directly with Jobcentre Plus to help unemployed local people move from benefits and into work
- New commercial retail space at ground floor level close to Queen Street suitable for independent outlets and 'pop ups'
- A car free, highly sustainable scheme

Cafe in a recent Alumno scheme





STUDENT DEMAND & A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Alumno carry out independent research for areas they consider investing in to ascertain the current and future demand for purpose built student housing. Currently, in Colchester there are approximately 400 students already living in the CO1 town centre postcode - predominantly in unsuitable family housing split into HMOs - so there is already proven demand for purpose built student accommodation.

In the future, with the University of Essex set to expand significantly in the coming years, student numbers are expected to grow. There will be a requirement for more choice and options to be made available to address this, over and above what the University can deliver and what is already under construction elsewhere locally.

Our plans therefore fulfil an identified need for modern, safe and secure student residences. We would not commit to a project without some certainty that it is sustainable and meets a specific requirement, and it is also widely acknowledged and recognised that student accommodation can act as an attractive alternative to local housing, which families and local residents need.

SCHEME MANAGEMENT

Alumno's plans for Colchester will operate with management staff on-site who will monitor and enforce the strict standards of behaviour that Alumno expects of all its residents. While we aim to create a welcoming environment for all the students, any anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated and any residents breaching the clear and strict rules outlined within their tenancy agreement face appropriate disciplinary action, including the termination of tenancy.

The management team also serve as a point of contact for neighbours should they wish to make contact with operators, and they will seek to engage with local residents and community organisations and work closely with local people on any issues.

The annual move-in process will be carefully managed over two weekends each academic year. To stagger arrivals, each student will be advised of a date and time to take up occupancy of their room. During 'move-in' days we will provide an increased management presence and, in order to minimise disruption, we will provide a methodical approach to the appointment times that students can arrive and unload. Students will move out over a longer, staggered time period, which means the impact on the local community is further minimised. This period will also be closely monitored.



A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Alumno is clear that their scheme should have a long-term positive impact on the local environment. That's why the proposals will deliver:

- A car free scheme, with strict enforcement of the no student car use rule
- A contribution to the Council's travel plan
- Provision of an electric charging point located in the Priory Street Car Park
- Energy efficient measures including blue roofs, low energy lighting, and an energy centre for the provision of domestic hot water to help reduce emissions
- Redevelopment of a brownfield site meeting the Council and national government's planning policy
- Roofs will store water to minimise the amount of surface water run-off

View of the scheme from Priory Street

VIEW FROM OUR PARTNERS

Ultimately, we believe our plans for the future of the St Botolph's Quarter will bring a vibrant new hub for the local community to enjoy in the future. But we don't want you to just take our word for it – here are just some of the comments from our partners:

"Urban Splash have always been interested in great architecture and developing exciting projects. Although we've had many opportunities to get involved with student housing we'd never previously done it, because so many student developments add nothing back to the city. Alumno was like a breath of fresh air. Clearly people interested in architecture, interested in placemaking, interested in art and design and more than happy to embrace challenges. It's been a joy working with David Campbell and his team. Indeed we've enjoyed the experience so much, we're looking for further projects to do together."

Tom Bloxham OBE,
Founder of Urban Splash

"Alumno have been sponsoring a year-long studio bursary for one graduating student in financial need since 2014. They provide this generous support at a critical moment of transition from student to professional and always encourage new and experimental work."

Alison Jones,
Lecturer in Art Practice
Goldsmiths, University of London

"From the beginning I was impressed that David Campbell's focus was on changing the perception that developers are putting financial returns ahead of local communities. David and Alumno were highlighting the importance of student communities as part of the wider place-building agenda"

Terry Collins,
Chief Executive
Durham County Council

"The Union by Alumno provides an excellent fully managed student residence into the heart of the Old Town in Leamington Spa. Not only does it bring the benefit of high quality ensuite accommodation for students, but it has regenerated a former industrial area and added to the Councils drive to improve our much neglected canalside through the town. I enjoyed the nod to a famous local artist that has been incorporated into the communal areas, making them that little bit different to the usual standard design"

Councillor Alan Boad,
Liberal Democrat,
Leamington Crown Ward

The Community Room is working very well. The local community use it for all manner of events and meetings as does the College. The café is open to the public during the day time and we have groups such as the local knitting group – up to 13 in number – and the local weaving group who come in regularly. The local Area Action Partnership (AAP) hosted a Christmas Festival in the public space the majority of which we hosted indoors due to the weather. 800+ children and adults attended and Father Christmas and Elvis the live reindeer were huge hits. There was music, puppeteers, food stalls etc and the whole event was well received within the local community and with the students."

Ian MacDonald
Durham University

'It has been great to work with David and his team at Alumno to realise the first Durham Business Game. The company understands that place-making is much more than design and construction, but is also about forging a meaningful relationship with the people who will inhabit the space and bring it to life.'

Dr Anne Allen
Major Gifts Officer,
Durham University Business School

View of Alumno's canalside scheme in Leamington Spa





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