

Roots in the Sky to start on site as Fabrix appoints Mace and Erith to deliver the next-gen HQ office with London's first rooftop forest

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Investor [Fabrix](#) has appointed main contractor Mace and enabling works contractor Erith to deliver the 430,000 sq ft next-gen HQ office building, Roots in the Sky, in Southwark.

Mace will deliver the main contract for this innovative, net zero reimagining of the former Blackfriars Crown Court. Erith will deliver the basement box and demolition works as part of the two-stage construction process. The start on site date has been set for January 2023.

Roots in the Sky will provide over 280,000 sq ft of net lettable area alongside 46,000 sq ft of external terraces, including a fully publicly accessible garden and the UK's first rooftop urban forest.

The appointment is a major milestone in the delivery of this transformational scheme designed to reinvent what a progressive and sustainable HQ office can be. The all-electric building will be net zero carbon in both construction and operation and is targeting BREEAM Outstanding, WELL Platinum and NABERS 5*.

It features:

- London's first rooftop urban forest with 125 mature trees, 10,000 plants and unprecedented community access
- 1,000 tonnes of soil on the rooftop forest which will protect against flash flooding and reduces storm run off by over 30%

- Adaptability and connectivity with up to 45,000 sq ft floorplates accommodating up to 700 people on a single floor
- Low-level air supply and chilled beams providing best-in-class air quality
- Integrated waste energy capture, from areas such as tenant server rooms, which is injected back into the building heat network and used to heat the rooftop swimming pool
- Reclaimed steel from the demolition of another building, setting a new benchmark for the circular economy in a push to save more carbon
- Technology-led user experience infrastructure

Clive Nichol, CEO at Fabrix, said: “Roots in the Sky represents a step-change for the future of the office market. The commitment to quality shown by Mace and Erith, as well as to the building’s purpose and its very unique ESG proposition, demonstrated to us that they are the right team as we start on site on this transformational project. Roots in the Sky is an office building that works not just for a progressive occupier but also for the local community and wider London. There is set to be a supply/demand imbalance for organisations looking for sustainable and impactful HQ buildings and we expect Roots in the Sky to be a major beneficiary of this.”

Gareth Lewis, Mace’s CEO for Construction, said: “We are honoured to have been trusted to deliver a development which challenges the bounds of modern sustainability and gives back to its local community. As a responsible business we are particularly proud when we successfully deliver schemes which are strong in social value. We look forward to playing our part in making this bold vision a reality in the thriving Southwark area; working collaboratively with the exceptional team that Fabrix has built to deliver this scheme.”

Steven May, Director at Erith said: “We are delighted to have been awarded the enabling, basement and core construction works package at Project Roots in the Sky for Fabrix, bringing our extensive experience of technically complex central London projects to this world-class development. The project’s aims align with our strategic objectives of sustainability and wellbeing whilst interacting positively with the local communities in the surrounding area.”

Designed by Sheppard Robson, the building delivers much-needed highly sustainable, quality office space, with unprecedented access to nature and community, at a time when occupiers are asking for more from their buildings.

The design reintroduces original features of the 1950s building through its façade retention, such as opening sash windows, which flood the spacious workspaces and six-storey atrium with light. Generous floor-to-ceiling heights of between 3.5 and 6.8 meters provide all-important volume, essential for the modern office. Natural influences inform the design of the interiors and finishes throughout, in keeping with the 1.4-acre urban forest on the roof of the building.

Fabrix is working with RHS Chelsea Gold Medal-winning landscape architect Harris Bugg Studio to introduce 125 trees and 10,000 plants, building a genuinely biodiverse space for occupiers and the wider community to enjoy. Local fauna will be introduced, including stag beetles, to support the establishment of an authentic ecosystem.

The highest value part of the building, the section of the rooftop with views of the City of London and the Shard, will be fully open for the community. Local people and the public will have their own dedicated

entrance and be able to enjoy the gardens, get involved in planting with access to potting sheds and seedbanks, and relax over a coffee or host events in the 3,000 sq ft community barn.

Circular economy principles have been prioritised in the design of the project. The structural solution incorporates reclaimed steel salvaged from a building being demolished in the City of London. Using reclaimed steel is 80% less carbon intensive than recycled steel. As a pioneer of 'urban-mining', Fabrix is the first UK developer ever to purchase second-hand steel for structural reuse.