

# Green day

We're back in Salford – a city we've visited a number of times over the past few years. Previously we've focused largely on corporate schemes, ranging from the UK's leading manufacturer of breakfast foods, through to leading media institutions and healthcare providers.



There are four main areas within the overall 515 sq m amenity provision

IMAGES: GU SHI YIN

Today, however, we're (virtually) moving away from that sector and into one that is positively thriving throughout Greater Manchester. When it comes to forward-thinking build-to-rent (BTR) schemes, this part of the North West is, giving a nod to Salford's own Happy Mondays, 'mad for it'.

The Green Rooms from Amro Living is a sleek, new, BTR scheme, located at MediaCityUK in Salford, offering a luxurious living experience surrounded by fantastic landmarks and a thriving neighbourhood.

The design of the scheme's extensive ground-floor amenity spaces has been undertaken by Manchester-based architecture and interior design practice 74, who already have a strong reputation for award-winning student amenity spaces and are now bringing that expertise to the BTR market.

Built on the rich artistic, inventive histories of Salford and Manchester, MediaCityUK is a major international hub for technology, innovation and creativity. The conurbation is home to the BBC, ITV and Kellogg's, as well as over 250

smaller media and digital businesses, independent bars, restaurants and boutique shops.

'Responding to the future growth of MediaCityUK was a key part of our strategic thinking on this project,' 74 Founder, David Holt, comments. 'With over £1billion currently invested in the neighbourhood and plans for it to double in size to 7.7 hectares – including 1,800 private sale and BTR apartments and townhouses and 55,000 sq m of additional office space – it really is 'hot property' right now. We were delighted to be involved with Amro Living on this project, helping to profile and target the development's future users with a stand-out suite of amenities.'

The Green Rooms, by AHR Architects, is made up of 238 stylish 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, with enviable views of the waterfront and Manchester's iconic skyline. 74's aim for the amenity design was to create a vibrant space that reflected the style, elegance and charm of the surrounding urban landscape and would be inspired by the arts and the people who would use it. The practice undertook a building analysis during the final stages of the base build to ensure each space within the ground floor amenity space would be used to its full potential.

Site analysis revealed the particular desirability of the location – not only because of its waterside siting, but for its proximity to Imperial War Museum North, The Lowry Theatre, MediaCityUK itself and its great transport connections, from Manchester's Metrolink system through to strong train and bus links and ample local parking.

With MediaCityUK's existing appeal to technology, media and arts professionals, the site was judged to be attractive to other demographic groups too, including students at Salford University, young families, those working at different types of businesses who would also enjoy the benefits of the location and older single people looking for a good quality of life and the added buzz of community life. The amenities also needed to be attractive to non-residents, including



**ABOVE**

The gallery features glazing and an eye-catching lighting scheme

**LEFT**

Rear elevation of amenity space, alongside the River Irwell



Responding to the future growth of MediaCityUK was a key part of our strategic thinking on this project





The fresco was created by artist Charles Snell of Aster Muro, assisted by four students, over a five day period

local businesses wanting to use the building's flexible spaces for meetings or events. Analysis of other local offerings in the area was also undertaken to ensure the new scheme's singularity and differentiation.

The urban landscape fed into the design narrative by reflecting local building forms, patterns and lighting, and interpreting this into the furniture, fittings and finishes. Major influences included the preponderance of monolithic structures and sweeping curves; bold forms, shapes and patterns; reflections from the abundant glazing and the water of the River Irwell; contemporary and organic shapes with neon hues, warm lighting and futuristic lighting shapes and the use of industrial-style materials such as steel panelling and mesh cladding.

It was important that the emotional feel of the scheme would speak to a number of different domestic aesthetics; something sophisticated and strongly linked to the neighbourhood and local community, creating a relaxing and hospitable sanctuary feel, as well as being inviting, inspirational and collaborative, for those seeking to use the amenity spaces.

'We distilled all of these influences into our design concept,' David explains, 'so that the amenity spaces feature a contemporary materiality, whose linearity reflects local architectural language, together with a softening of those clean lines via organic shapes and texture from woven patterns and perforation, as well as the tactility of rugs and throws. Furniture features colourful, bold and bright colourways, with a slightly harder edge through the use of brushed steel and metallic detailing. Health and wellbeing is promoted throughout by careful application of biophilic principles.'

The 515 sq m ground floor amenity space includes four main areas, with individual zones within those, so that the full offer encompasses reception and lobby space, shared workspace, lounge and quiet working area, post boxes, parcel store for residents, gym and shower rooms, fitness studio, staff offices, snug, flexible event space and a bookable meeting room/private dining facility.

The large lobby area at the building's main entrance is a warm, vibrant and welcoming space, featuring a reception desk and lounge space with a waiting area, post boxes and a coworking and shared workspace to the right-hand side, serviced by a dry bar. On the opposite side of the circulation corridor there is further lounge space and post boxes, as well as a quiet work zone.

A strong feature of the lobby is a 16m x 5m monumental mural across the entire rear wall of the space, created by art studio, Aster Muro, together with students from the Manchester School of Art (MSA). The mural is a unique element of the scheme and, because



**ABOVE**  
Informal lounge seating zone

**RIGHT**  
The coworking space looks out to the waterfront and features a second smaller fresco

“ The design links all aspects of the local landscape to ensure The Green Rooms is identifiably unique, providing residents with practical yet impressive elements

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of the building’s vast glass frontage, effectively also a public piece of art that is visible to those walking past on their way into MediaCity and the BBC’s offices. The fresco was created by artist Charles Snell of Aster Muro in an intense five-day time period in June 2020, assisted by four foundation students from the MSA, who had completed a training placement at the Aster Muro studio in The Wye Valley earlier in the year.

‘Our foundation students were provided with a fabulous opportunity to work on an industry-based brief alongside Aster Muro. Throughout the project, the students were presented with an invaluable experience and were able to observe the technical, complex processes of a highly skilled professional artist at work,’ Benjamin Greenhalgh, Lecturer in Foundation Art and Design at MSA, says.

The fresco uses a powerful palette of pale mint, sage, teals, forest green and rust orange. Pigmented plaster was applied to sub-layers of wet lime-based plaster, before layers of colours were worked on with spatulas, and built up with spray and by hand, in a performative and expressive installation. In addition to this fresco, Aster Muro created a smaller fresco with a softer, more organic palette in the multi-purpose Gallery space to the rear of the ground floor amenities, overlooking the waterfront. Different aspects of sanctuary and reflection inspire both impressive frescoes.

Directly beyond the large lobby area, the gym features a combination of industrial design-inspired elements, including black metal fixtures and raw plaster with a light timber flooring, gentle lighting and planting. The space also has a strong branding and kinetic graphic design element. A shower room is located opposite the gym, alongside the scheme’s cycle store.



**BELOW** The Gallery, with views across the water to the ITV building



**ABOVE** Gym

Towards the rear of the ground floor is the second set of amenity spaces, including a combined waiting area and public-facing lettings office for The Green Rooms. Although a more visibly landlord-run space, it was important to link the design of this area to the rest of the scheme, therefore it features rugs and throws, stylish storage, timber flooring and a strong joinery and lighting presence.

The Gallery covers the remaining rear ground floor space, with a number of distinct and seamless zones. The separate spaces include the fitness studio, bookable meeting room/private dining room, snug and a flexible smaller space, whilst the central area makes up the main flexible events space, and features informal lounge seating zones.

‘We are delighted with the result of 74’s design concept,’ Cara Gallacher, Regional Property Manager at Amro Property Management, enthuses. ‘The design links all aspects of the local landscape to ensure The Green Rooms is identifiably unique, providing residents with practical yet impressive elements. We are proud to have partnered with 74 on our primary BTR scheme. From conceptualisation to reality, the design is inherently modern and adds character, complementing our large contemporary frescoes.’ ♦

**Client**  
Amro Living

**Architect**  
Building by AHR Architects

**Interior Designer**  
74

**Furniture Supplier**  
Telegraph Contract Furniture, MADE

**Surfaces**  
Mural by Aster Muro

**Other**  
Enigma Lighting, MailboxesGB, Cube3