



TAMMINGTON
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LANDSCAPE DESIGNING PROCESS REVERSE READING Exploratory Design Research on J&L Gibbons studio fieldnotes Claudia Mezapesa

landscape designing process
reverse reading



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Research on
J&L Gibbons studio

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Fieldnotes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRO

TEN PROJECTS

1/ Alexandra Road Park	10
interview Neil Davidson	
interview Elizabeth Knowles	
2/ Walpole Park	30
interview Neil Davidson	
3/ Brighton Circus	50
interview Neil Davidson	
4/ Canal Park	66
interview Johanna Gibbons	
interview Philip Askew	
5/ Angel Building	96
interview Johanna Gibbons	
interview Wade Scaramucci	
6/ Old Bearhurst	120
interview Johanna Gibbons	
7/ Marble Hill	132
interview Neil Davidson	
8/ Sidgwick Site	150
interview Johanna Gibbons	
interview Bob Allies	
9/ Whitechapel Public Realm	170
interview Johanna Gibbons	
interview Aranzazu Fernandez Rangel	
10/ St John's College	188
interview Johanna Gibbons & Neil Davidson	

OTHER INTERVIEWS

interview Anthony Blee	208
interview Tilman Latz	224

BIOGRAPHIES	228
--------------------	-----

GLOSSARY	239
-----------------	-----



INTRO

Nel saggio “*I am a Fieldnote*”: *Fieldnotes as a Symbol of Professional Identity*, l’antropologo Jean E. Jackson così definisce *fieldnotes*:

“I have argued that fieldnotes and fieldwork do represent an individualistic, pioneering approach to acquiring knowledge, at times even a maverick and rebellious one. [...] If ‘the field’ is anthropology’s version of both the promised land and an ordeal by fire, then fieldnotes symbolize what journeying to and returning from the field mean to us: the attachment, the identification, the uncertainty, the mystique, and, perhaps above all, the ambivalence.” (Jackson, 1990, pp.16-17)

Fieldnotes sono note qualitative registrate nel corso della ricerca sul campo, durante e dopo l’osservazione di fenomeni specifici oggetto di studio.

Sono note concepite per essere lette come una prova che dà senso e aiuta la comprensione del fenomeno e allo stesso tempo consentono al ricercatore di registrare ciò che osserva.

Sono note composte da informazioni descrittive e riflessive. Informazioni descrittive sono i dati oggettivi, quelle riflessive sono vincolate all’osservazione diretta del ricercatore, sono idee, domande, pensieri e riflessioni correlate.

Questa appendice della ricerca è un taccuino di annotazioni sul campo, Fieldnotes di appunti, immagini, schizzi e parole ascoltate, rielaborate e trascritte.

Tutto il materiale è il risultato della *research in residence* presso lo studio J&L Gibbons, a Londra.

Gli appunti sono raccolti e sistematizzati in undici schede progettate per ospitare i dieci casi studio (Ten Projects).

Le schede sono state strutturate al fine di rendere più chiare le fasi del processo che hanno permesso lo sviluppo del progetto stesso, gli obiettivi dichiarati in fase iniziale e i risultati raggiunti al termine dei lavori.

Ogni scheda si conclude con la trascrizione di una o più interviste a progettisti, per lo più architetti, e persone coinvolte attivamente nelle fasi della progettazione. Questi dialoghi sono stati i momenti più intensi e stimolanti del lavoro di raccolta dati.

Tra gli altri, sono stati intervistati anche Anthony Blee, architetto e padre di Johanna Gibbons, e Tilman Latz, dello studio Latz+Partner, collega e amico di Johanna Gibbons. Queste sono state preziosissime occasioni per entrare in contatto con parte del background artistico e professionale della paesaggista, in parte frutto di un patrimonio familiare con una lunga tradizione nel campo dell’architettura e dell’architettura del paesaggio.

A seguire, le biografie dei personaggi intervistati (Biographies) e il dizionario di parole e termini tecnici, particolarmente diffusi in ambiente anglosassone (Glossary), chiudono l’appendice della ricerca.

Fieldnotes nasce per essere consultato contemporaneamente al testo principale della ricerca.

In particolare, *Design Tale* e *Design Map* (cap. 5 Fieldwork) hanno una diretta corrispondenza con le informazioni raccolte in questa appendice.



532 / Alexandra Road Park



542/ Canal Park Design Guide



538/ Pitzhanger Manor
486/ Walpole Park



581/ Marble Hill



549/ Angel Building

TEN PROJECTS



586/ Sidgwick Site Cambridge



598/ St John's College Cambridge



J&L Gibbons
10 projects

- 1/532 _____ Alexandra Road Park
- 2/538 _____ Pizhanger Manor
- 486 _____ Walpole Park
- 3/545 _____ Circus Street/ Brighton
- 4/542 _____ Canal Park Design Guide
- 5/549 _____ Angel Building
- 6/571 _____ Old Bearhurst/ Sussex
- 7/581 _____ Marble Hill
- 8/586 _____ Sidgwick Site/ Cambridge
- 9/592 _____ Whitechapel Public Realm
- 10/598 _____ St John's College/ Cambridge



592/ Whitechapel Public Realm



545/ Circus Street Brighton



571/ Old Bearhurst Sussex

A photograph of a park featuring several birch trees with characteristic white bark and black lenticels. The trees are situated on a grassy slope. In the background, a modern walkway with a metal railing and a glass railing is visible. The foreground is filled with dense green foliage and a metal railing. A yellow circular graphic is overlaid in the bottom left corner, containing text.

1/532
**Alexandra
Road Park**
London

1/532 Alexandra Road Park

data

date: 2012 - 2014

location: London, UK

area: 1.7ha

client: Heritage Lottery Fund & Camden Council

Why this project?

This is the reinterpretation of a modern park originally designed by Janet Jack, the landscape architect who prepared the proposals in the late 1970s.

It is a good example of how the community can be engaged in the whole design process.

design team:

Lead consultants and Landscape Architects: J&L Gibbons
 Architects: Erect Architecture
 Cost consultants: Aretlia
 Structural engineers: Jane Wernick associates
 M+e engineers: Skelly and Couch
 Project manager: Around the Block
 Landscape Management planners: Around the block
 Activity planners: Mtw consultants
 Historic Landscape advisor: Sarah Couch

Historic Landscapes

funding institution: Heritage Lottery Fund & Camden Council



key stages RIBA: 0-1-2



before

Site location and context

The Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate is located in the London Borough of Camden. The whole area is bordered to the north by the East Coast Mainline railway, to the east by Loudoun Road, to the south by Boundary Road, and to the west by Abbey Road.

The park has a linear layout and is structured by a series of paths which create an arrangement of 'outdoor rooms' with different purposes: relaxing, playing, walking.

The structure is enlivened by the three-dimensional landscape which create long views over the space and allow room for more intimate spaces.

The original scheme included five playgrounds within the park, each designed for a different age child, with various playable landscape features and custom-made and catalogue furniture.

By 2012 the playable landscape features were almost completely lost. But the overall structure of the park as laid out in the late 1970s survived even if it was eroded by removal of fencing, play equipment, planting and inadequate maintenance of the whole area structure and the proactive management of the tree structure.

As a result, the park was under used and in a state of decline.

'The most significant landscape of its type in the UK'

C. Croft

Twentieth Century Society

Historic context

Alexandra Road Park is a 20th century landscape design by Janet Jack (1979) with Neave Brown who designed the Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate in the late 1970's for LB Camden: 520 homes for 1660 people, a tenants' hall, underground parking, shop and steps and ramps of the park.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The Alexander and Ainsworth Estate and the park are Grade II* listed, by Historic England, as a good example of integrated modernist design, for city living. The listing boundary includes the residential buildings and the 'walls, ramps and steps', the community centre and the boiler house.

Dossier



Assessing significance:

Evidential value

It's a modernist design, an example of integration between landscape and architecture. The whole landscape is of international significance and it has been extremely influential, achieving iconic status.

Historical value

The role of the landscape architect and architect's approach to planting and children's playground design is a source of transferrable knowledge. The park is significant even for its natural and scientific interest.

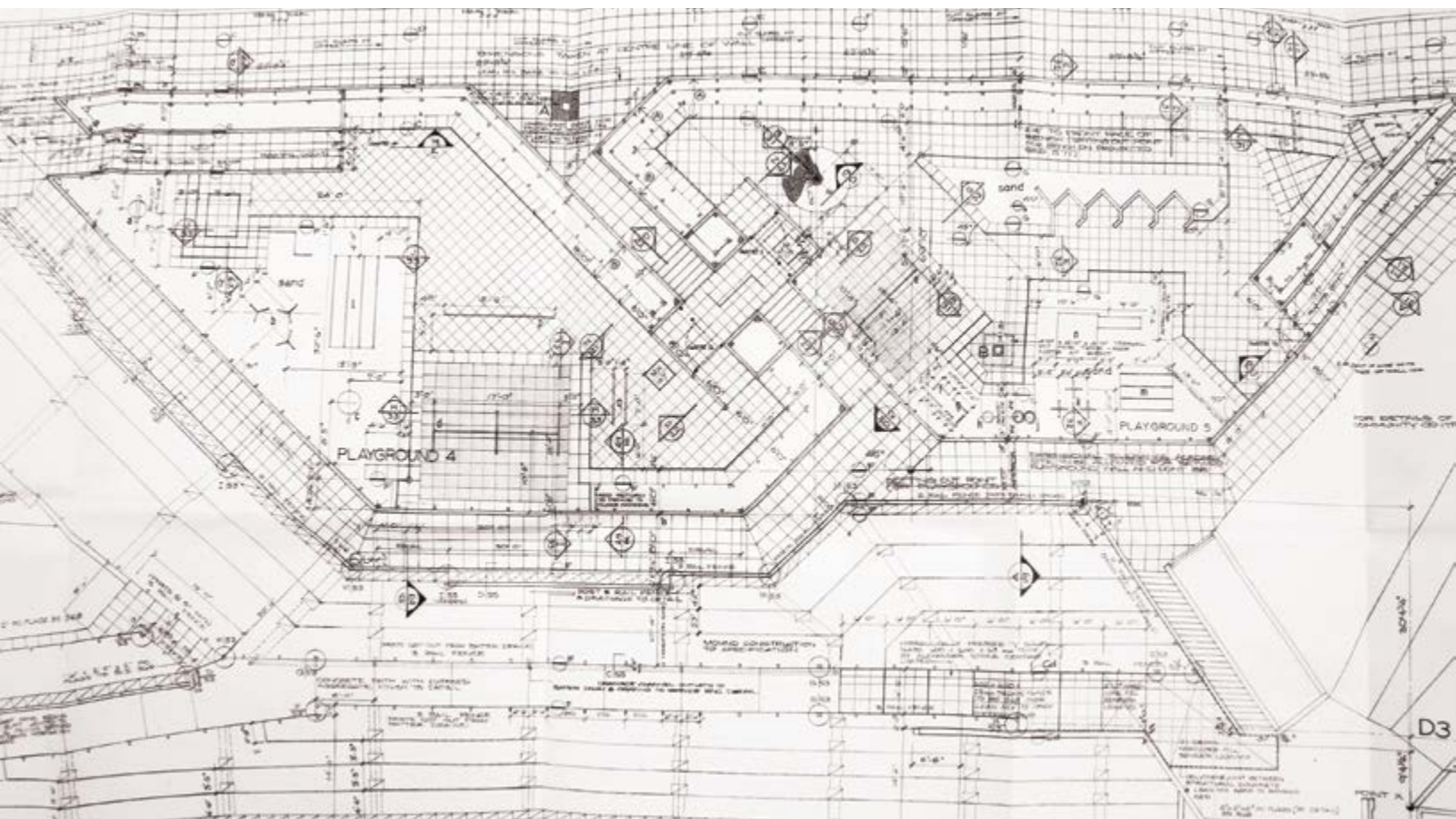
Aesthetic value

It is considered the most important modernist housing scheme in Camden

Communal value

The park provides a great social value for its community. It is a good example of mid-twentieth century approach to design, social inclusion and play.

- Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate
- Janet Jack's drawing





design process and key stages

The project was granted a £90,000 contribution to develop detailed proposals for:

“...Sensitive works to restore the character and quality of the hard landscaping in the park and allow the soft landscaping to flourish and once again create distinct places across the park”

From the Heritage Lottery Fund decision letter, 2011.

The brief for the Alexandra Road Park project required the submission of a Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People Round 2 submissions in February 2013.

It follows a masterplan project undertaken in 2010 for the whole of Alexandra Road and Ainsworth Estate and the pre-cursor application was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Found in February 2011.

The brief identified several key aims for the project which have been tested during the design development phase and have been reviewed with the client and park users.

J&L Gibbons and Erect Architecture prepared the restoration and revitalization proposal for the park developed to support the Stage 2 funding application, including authoring the management and maintenance plan with Around the Block. The whole design process was supported by the original landscape designer Janet Jack, who was engaged in dialogue about the reinterpretation of the park throughout the whole design process.

During the design development several key areas have been subject to design evolution where external factors have helped to refine the brief and influence the proposal contained within the application.

These factors have included:

- Modification of client requirements
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Additional feedback from park users and local interest groups through public consultation
- Design review with the Heritage Lottery Assessor
- Expert advice via technical surveys and reports commissioned as part of the project.

At work stage D (stage 3, Developed Design, RIBA Plan of work 2013) a comprehensive capital cost review was undertaken by the design team to determine an accurate value of works relative to the Parks for People Round 1 application.

Current stage: 7 / In Use / Riba Plan of Work

Design objectives:

“The vision of the masterplan was to improve and rejuvenate the park, enabling the original design intent to be experienced and appreciated by a wide range of local residents and visitors.

This was achieved by a programme of works to improve the existing planting and repair existing park elements which were derelict, including:

- Restoring the hard landscaping and improving access
- Provide new play opportunities
- Sensitively reinstate planting and enhance biodiversity”¹

The proposal aims to restore and preserve the layout of the park and to reintroduce the playable landscapes that were part of the original design.

There are a number of features that make Alexandra Road Park special, some of these were lost due to insufficient maintenance or removed and damaged. The project helped to restore the park adding new features where appropriate to make it more enjoyable for current and future generations, all set within the framework of a robust and achievable maintenance and management plan to ensure the park is more sustainable.

¹ J&L Gibbons (2012), *Alexandra Road Park, Planning submission, Design & Access Statement*



general and specific key questions

In this case the client isn't the London Borough of Camden which commissioned you for the project, but the inhabitants of the surrounding apartments. How did you manage to satisfy the multitude of interests of such different stakeholders?

Which was the role of the Friends of Alexandra Road Park in the consultation process? Is their activity still ongoing?

How was the professional team chosen? Was there a competitive process?

This is a not common case of restoration of a public park. The opportunity to be supported by the landscape architect of the original project has in some way influenced the design process. Which are the benefits and the inconveniences of this exceptional situation?

Why did you use models during the design project?

Concrete walls, playground, colours, textures, hard landscaping and soft landscaping. Which were the most important features that you have maintained, restored, transformed and re-built in this project? Which are the consequences of these transformations in the social, cultural and environmental background?

Here the park is a source of knowledge. Analysing such an important modernist design have you discovered something that has changed your thinking, your ideas during the design process?

REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.
Illustrations are from the same reports.

KLA Kinnear Landscape Architects (2011), *Alexandra & Ainsworth Estate Masterplan*

J&L Gibbons (2012), *Alexandra Road Park, Planning submission, Design & Access Statement*

J&L Gibbons Erect Architects (2014), *Alexandra Road Park, Play proposals, Tender documents, Stage F*

website

Friends of Alexandra Road Park, available at
<https://friendsofalexandraroadpark.com/>

ALEXANDRA & AINSWORTH ESTATE Tenants and Residents Association, available at

<http://alexandraandainsworth.org/gallery/the-parks>

The park (2016)



interview tale
Neil Davidson



18 November 2016

Alexandra Road Park is a neighbourhood park in the heart of the Camden Borough. It is a green oasis in a built up urban area of inner London, and it is a rare and highly acclaimed example of late 20th Century landscape and architecture design. Which are the relationships built up by this landscape?

There's an interesting relationship in this park which is the same kind of relationship that landscape architects and architects often have.

Originally, when Janet Jack, the landscape architect, started working on the project, the architect was Neave Brown.

And he actually designed the structure of the park. So, he designed the walls and the outdoor rooms in collaboration with Janet.

This project is quite unusual because you had the unique occasion to collaborate with the designer of the original plan. Which was her role in the project and how Janet Jack helped you in this restoration work?

Originally Janet had to work with the structure defined by Neave, she basically had to design the soft landscape, the engineering, but also to find the program for those spaces. So, the original idea emerged out of a concept of thinking about the park as a series of outdoor rooms, Janet just told me that she was inspired by Scandinavian design, particularly projects where landscape had been used to create containment and structure.

You can see it in Alexandra Park, particularly in the oval space with the yew hedge. Here she created distinctions between quite formal internal space and wild external face of the hedge.

When we started working on the project she was quite ill, and for the whole process she was either fighting cancer or recovering from cancer and had many ups and downs, in terms of her health.

One of the residents, Elizabeth who you met was instrumental in helping broker the relationship and discussions with Janet.

She has lived on the estate since the estate was finished. So, she is one of the original residents and she knew Janet from the beginning.

She initially helped me and introduced Janet. To start with it was a sensitive matter to discuss potentially changing somebody's design, and also because she wasn't well.

There was a process of getting to know one another and building trust.

I went to visit her house several times, and started with talking really not about Alexandra Road Park, but just understanding what she was interested in as a designer.

In fact, she's been involved in a lot of important projects even if she wasn't very well known for them. Although the projects were well known, she worked for a very large company for a long time (BDP-Building Design Partnerships) and she basically started their landscape department. Her

The park (2016)



'The most significant landscape of its type in the UK'

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Twentieth Century Society

husband, Bill Jack, was an architect and he was the Global chairman of BDP, at the time that it was one of the largest architectural practices in the world. She acted as a landscape architect for BDP and she was also doing works for her home practice.

It's interesting to look at it, because one of the amazing things, working with her, was that she lent us all of her original drawings. So in these drawings, on some of the title blocks you can see the BDP and some of the title blocks say Janet Jack.

At that time, in the United Kingdom there was the change from the imperial measurement to the metric. It was 1970 when the housing development started, and the 1979 was the first phase of the park. So actually, quite of the drawings are in feet and inches and some of them are in meters and millimetres.

How did you plan to restore the park? Did you choose to work on specific areas first and then proceeding by phasing of work?

The way the housing estate was built, it was occupied in phases, and parts of the park were built alongside the housing estate.

When we came to work on it, really the phasing of work was because of its physical constraints because it's very long and thin and we didn't want the contractor to build something and then have to come back and somehow find a way to move over what was just built without damaging it. It seemed to make sense to start as far away from the road and move out.

Did Janet Jack ask, for some reason, to change something in the park?

Yes, but that was generally from me asking questions. Because, in the middle of the process, she really was not very well at all, so she couldn't walk, she was in a wheelchair.

If I would ask the questions of Janet, she would respond, like an interview. I would say to her: «if you could change something, what would you change or why? Can you help me understand why?»

And often she would say that the reason for design decisions was because there was very little money to pay for it. So, part of the character of the park is the fact that she used some of the cheapest materials, there is very cheap paving concrete and quite simple timber details.

Soft landscape was supposed to be quite low maintenance and Janet always mentioned that once, she was told to design a park with very low maintenance park, but she didn't appreciate that she was going to design a park that should require no maintenance. And that's basically what happened.

There's an area of lime trees. She planted 30 trees expecting maybe only nine trees to be left to grow into specimens but all trees remained without management.

This is where one of our main challenges was in the reinterpretation of the park, that on one hand Janet had a vision and on the other we now have a condition that's different to that vision. And looking back, the original vision might not be appropriate now.

Also, the people who live there, support the consultation process, may not want to reinstate what was originally designed, for example small trees compared to a tree 35 years old tree now creates a very different landscape character to design within.

The residents are actively involved in the park decisions. How did you engage them and the Friends of Alexandra Road Park?

I did a lot of tours with residents to explain why some trees needed to be removed, some of them were not healthy, some were dangerous, and others were self-seeding species, so they just grow by themselves.

And so, in the case of the lime trees, we removed about four, just to give a bit more space, but we recognized that actually, the character of that was

quite different and interesting the way it just evolved without the intended management.

We began quite a lot of discussions with local people saying ‘you cannot remove any trees’.

In this consultation stage, you realize that, as landscape architect, you have an expertise, and if you can help people understand why you’re making this suggestion, they will appreciate that knowledge and insight.

One of the main features of the park are the playgrounds. How did you restore these areas?

We also worked very closely with Erect architecture on the playgrounds it was a good collaboration.

Susanne, who’s the director, and I would also go to visit Janet.

And we would ask: «there was a lot of play in the park originally, and to reinterpret 5 playgrounds now, would probably more than you would normally have in a park?»

We might have too many plays spaces in a park for the size it is, and there might be opportunities to introduce more programme, but it was designed to be a place for young children and a lot of young children lived on the estate.

So, we were trying to take inspiration from what Janet had done, and then bring it into line with the way that children play in urban settings now, an approach to play that’s become more sophisticated.

The new proposals provide opportunities for more social play, physical play, interaction, some children like groups and some people like to be on their own. We tried to find opportunities for all of those different things to happen while respecting the original design intent.

I think today, if you are going to start from scratch, you wouldn’t design one of play rooms for young children, one for middle age and one for older children. You would try to combine that.

But because that was the original way it was designed, we respected that. So, there is a progression in age through the spaces. But then, what tends to happen is that young children might play more than the others.

Janet understood that this wall structures was part of her brief originally.

It was a fix much more for us because now it is all listed and protected and because of this restriction you couldn’t change it even if we wanted to.

We started from the point that we didn’t want to move walls, for example, or the playgrounds.

The park (2016)



What about the heritage listing? How did you transform the design according to these restrictions?



The park (2016)

The listing is quite unusual because it lists the whole housing estate and it only specifically mentions walls, ramps, steps and the park.

The walls were completely authentic to the ones originally designed, they are walls built in 1979.

And they have a quality that's quite unusual and quite beautifully textured, you can see the board markings of the timber used to create the concrete formwork! That's quite an unusual detail from that period to be preserved like that in a public space. A similar place like it in London is the Southbank Centre but there are not many other examples.

The park is the setting for all of these, so it's still listed but it's not specifically mentioned.

And so, in a way, it was quite good because there was a constraint there to work with, and where possible we tried to make modifications.

The main changes were made to improve accessibility and to allow people with wheelchairs to get into parts of the park they couldn't because the access was too steep, or because of the steps.

We didn't really change the physical structure of the playgrounds too much. But we did, for example, reintroduce black timber elements, we were going to try to keep a lot of what was already there even it was in a bad condition. And in the end, we replaced all of it with new timberwork to have another 30 years too, hopefully.

We were able to do things we didn't think we could afford to do at the start of the project, as there were savings on budget that we could reinvest.

This process made it more complicated on site, building and designing at the same time.

There are some quite nice subtle things about the detail in the park, for example in the timber, Janet told me that it was her reference to the building profiles.

It was quite interesting because she never said to me this was deliberate, but I always thought it was a very graphic quality with white walls and black timber.

She was quite modest about her work.

Did you modify the Janet Jack's planting design?

We analysed all of her planting plans, and what was quite interesting is that originally a lot of planting was much more diverse than when we first visited the site 2013, what happened was that a lot of delicate plants have been overcrowded by the more vigorous shrubby plants.

So, we used the structural planting, trees and hedging or shrubs and we managed them to reinvigorate growth through coppicing and pollarding and then we looked at Janet's original planting plan to add back original plants. Where there were specific characters we used the same plants, and added some new plants to add more seasonal variations.

For example, some of the roses that she has planted, are just not available as cultivars anymore. And at the time it was an experiment to plant climbing roses in public parks in the UK. And some of them weren't very resilient to the location.

So, there's a kind of change, and the soil is also quite different than it was at the original time.

Did you treat the soil on site?

In some places, we did and in others, we just used what was there, and it's because the park was so huge and because there were so many trees and if you started to do something with the soil you would have a huge impact on the existing tree roots.

There is a model of the park in your office and at the entrance of the park, there is also a tactile model for the blind people. What is the role of models in your design process? Is it a way to better present the project or a tool for designing?



Even if you look at the section it doesn't tell the whole story. It is complicated because of the third-dimension landscape of the park. The park was even more complex when we first visited in 2013 it was completely overgrown, so you could not see from one space to the other. At least now you have some longer views to help orientation.

For some people they didn't have the confidence to go in to explore what was there.

The model seemed the good way for us to understand the design and what was going on, but also, we had a public consultation and we brought the model with us and we showed the people who lived there and they all said: «I didn't understand how complex the levels were before».

During the design the process, Erect made many working models for playgrounds, we had really large models for all of the playgrounds. They were really useful to help young children understand what was going to happen and so we had a lot of very engaged young kids. Yes, it was a great communicative design tool.

And it wasn't a kind of formal presentation it was definitely a design tool.

We sometimes make models, it depends on the project, we would do it when we feel the need to do it, we don't do so very often actually in the office.

Last one bid was for Playground that we did in Walpole park.

The Walpole Park playground was quite unusual because we are actually building it and more money became available. So that one changed when it was being built, the model was useful because we were able to explore how we might be changing.

How did you communicate the project during the designing?

I also did two public lectures with Janet as part of this process.

And I like to think that the project gave her extra motivation in the last years of her life. She enjoyed being involved in the design process again. And she also developed so much confidence that she gifted all of her drawings to the Garden Museum.

I helped broker this process with the Garden Museum, which has been interested in her drawing collection.

The mockup



How did you were engaged in this project?

The way we were engaged in this project... We were actually approached to do the Conservation and Management Plan, originally, and so we said we should probably contact a specialist.

One of the people who recommended us is a resident Eleanor Fawcett. We knew Eleanor because Eleanor was also, at that time, Head of Design for the Olympic Park Legacy Company, she had been a client before.

So, she recommended us to go on to tender for the job.

In many ways, she was critical because she was a resident who had a design background, who was also used to dealing with complex stakeholder groups.

How did you engage people in the consultation stage?

We did do some open events and then Eleanor and Elizabeth and Sara, (who was the other key local resident), they were able to take the message out and tell more people. It was quite a good way of doing it rather than trying to meet 500 people individually.

And there were lots of activities, it was like we actually put activity into the spaces that weren't being used and said: «would you be interested if this became a play-area again? »

If you ask someone, what do you think could happen here? Nothing, they couldn't imagine anything.

The consultation was probably about a one-year process. It happened at the same time of designing.

I personally spent a lot of time going to site and meeting people it was important to spend time listening and to explain the proposals.

For example, the birch trees near the end.

They were completely covered by ivy, so you couldn't see the trees. And so, we went through a really delicate process. «What do you think of just taking off some ivy or some of the trees in the first instance? »

The answer: «no, no, no. There is no way we can do that. »

We may say: «just a couple to see, because Janet original idea was to have the white with a dark background».

And we did it with two trees originally to see the reaction. So with those kinds of gentle steps, we found a way of making recommendations that people could support. Project specific is audience specific and you need to try and understand the best way to communicate with your audience. Because people have different skills and understand in different ways. And quite often the best way is to have some local intelligence.

And in this case they were Elizabeth, Eleanor and Sara, who were able to get messages out. This is one way to do it.

A formula for consultation doesn't work it is not transferable. And you have to be more flexible in the way you approach it. For example, in Walpole Park the audience (again it's a public park) they were much more used to previous experience as a group or sitting in a lecture hall and having a designer present. So I did a mix there of engagement approaches I did two sessions formally with 200 in a Church Hall. And then we also spent a weekend in the park actually just talking to people walking through because quite often the people who just walk through the park never go to the formal meeting.

And that's a challenge. I think we learned that with that experience.

You know at the other point is that we have to do it for planning and we have to do it for funding. So there are certain requirements that planning and funders need you to do as well. Basically, they have three things: heritage, environment and people. One of the main things is that you can't just make a project better for the people that use it you have to think about future users and intergenerational experiences, particularly people who maybe in the past didn't feel welcome.

Often quite a lot of the heritage landscapes are in areas that are quite affluent with communities are not particularly reflective of the the diversity you

find in a city like London. And then you need to think about areas that are more deprived and how they can use these spaces to be more inviting and welcoming to many ethnic groups or people who feel disenfranchised such as people with disabilities or groups who are quite vulnerable. We are very interested in supporting greater inclusion in public space.

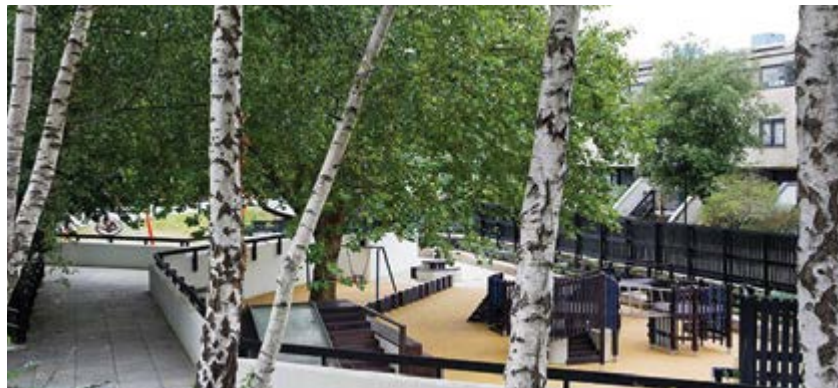
Is it the proper word 'consultation'?

Well I mean 'consultation' is a funny word. 'Consultation' to me is somebody speaking to someone. I think it's more 'participation', 'engagement', 'transferring knowledge'.

So I would you say 'engagement' or 'dialogue'. The HLF call it 'activity planning'. The activity plan is the foregrounding of space, seasonal, ephemeral, temporary activities to help make it active. And the audience development basically is the process to achieve that: «How do you engage with that schools never be in the park? How would you encourage to come?» And sometimes it works really well sometimes not so.

Did you involve the architect Neave Brown in these discussions?

Neave Brown was not involved in the discussions at all because he trusted Janet. He said «if Janet's happy, I'm happy». But when he came to the opening he said to me: «I'm so pleased you made with the park what I hope to do with the whole estate». He's an interesting architect because he's the only living architect in Britain that have every single project that is listed. He's very important as a modernist Brutalist architect (In 2017 he was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal).



How is this park perceived now by the community and which is its future?

What was amazing about this site is that it is incredibly well researched by Architectural schools from all around the world because of the housing and so they get students coming from the US and all of Europe, but they usually ignore the park. To help change this attitude I participated in a programme called Open House/ Open City.

Have you heard about what was starting to happen across the world now? It started in London, during this weekend the general public would visit architecture and landscape architecture and get guided tours by the designers.

So I took tours of the park. This is a site where there is a very interesting connection between the architecture and space. The original design concept was to create a piece of city, architecture and landscape public realm. So in a sense, it is a source of knowledge. There's a film that was made about the estate. It tells a story of the estate 15 years ago. And this is what life was like on an inner-city estate in London. And it shows how tough it was in the past because in the late 80s early 1990s the place was subject to lots of vandalism borne out of broader societal problems, but is very different now, a much more optimistic space.

interview tale
Elizabeth Knowles



16 January 2017

What does it mean engagement for you? Do you think it is necessary for a project like this?

What does it mean for me? Not necessarily it has to be done. I accept people that are professional.

That could be a proper engagement. There is engagement and engagement. I think that J&L Gibbons are very good in engaging.

In this case, for the restoration of the park, there was a lot of engagement. I think the real way is to find someone who's really enthusiastic about the project and ask if he could give access to other people and then meet them. We need someone able to talk and listen to the people. Maybe trying to understand their vision.

The silly thing to do with your business is to impose your idea.

Last Saturday I had a seven minutes presentation and I took some pictures with me, most of them of this engagement stage.

Showing pictures...

Here you are, that was just from the very beginning before J&L Gibbons I think were involved. That's a very early one, it was 2012. Right at the beginning.

That one is a J&L Gibbons one, also earlier you can see when they first started to engage all the residents.

Did the Friends of Alexandra Road Park exist in that moment?

Loosely, when this came up we had to formalize it.

And we just knew that we had to.

How many people are involved in the Friends group?

Always there have been a lot, a lot of students came and we always catch them, we catch everybody who visits.

But most Friends group have a core, and it's usually four or five people who have to do the active work.

I'm one of them. I often go to the City Hall, on the Southbank, to represent the Friends of Alexandra Road Park and there are the national societies of the Friends of the Parks.

The Friends represents each park but there are parks that don't have these groups.

But it's a good thing to have because if somebody comes along and say «I want to build something in your park», then the Friends are very powerful.

Could you please tell me more about your personal history, about the engagement in the Friends of Alexandra Road Park?

You know I lived here since it was built 1969, so I've been here from the beginning. And I met Janet Jack very early on.

And one day there was a public meeting, she just was there to listen. And on that occasion, after a discussion on the design, I said to her that we didn't know how lucky we were. And she said: « Oh, thank you! »

And from that moment we were friends. And when the park was really neglected she often went there.

So, when we actually thought to apply for the HLF she was unwell, but at the same time she wanted to take the part in this work, and she was very happy.

J&L Gibbons did this symbiotic work with her. Neil and Erect architecture and I used to go to Janet sometimes.



Which kind of tools are appropriate to make the design idea clearer? Do you think that models could be a good tool for this kind of dialogue?

I think models are great.

At the beginning which were the priorities of the park?

First, at the beginning, all the trees were high. Everything just grew. And there was a big issue with the safety, it was really dangerous walking through the park at that moment.

Showing a picture of that period...

This picture was right from my window. Look at this!

And then the management of the place started to disintegrate. In that moment, I was particularly involved in it.

The problem was that in a few years the park was completely neglected. And the worst thing for me was that I came back from work one day and all the things that were in the playgrounds, a lot of little concrete blocks, they were all removed.

That was just awful. But the funny thing was that we had a plan B. If we couldn't get HLF, I wanted that it would become a Nature Reserve.

One day someone arrived from the Garden Museum and we walked through the park, and he found it beautiful. So, all started from this.

Which are your activities now in the park?

Now we have a program of activities in the park and a person, Anna, who is responsible for it. This is for the HLF.

I will only do two things myself and I also organize the 'Open Garden Square Weekend' (<http://www.opensquares.org/>) that is a national thing on June. And I could help Anna for everything else.

And we can get the garden together as well. Camden is responsible for the maintenance of the park but we would like to have a proper head gardener. And I often walk around the park, usually once a week, to listen to people and pick up what they notice.

I like gardens and I have my little garden on the balcony, it's my passion!

Elizabeth's house and her photos (2016)





2/538-486
Pitzhanger
Manor
Walpole Park
London

2/486 Walpole Park 538 Pitzhanger Manor

data

Why this project?

This is one of the most important parks in Ealing: the reinterpretation of the summer residence, formal Regency gardens and parklands of the well-known English architect Sir John Soane.

The consultation process that engaged the local community helped determine the success of this design, with the aim to giving new life to the Manor House, museum, and the historic landscape.

It is an interesting example of the reinterpretation a landscape of historical significance to provide programme and landscapes to support the needs of current generations.



key stages RIBA: 0-1-2-5

date

2009

2014 – the park is opened to the public

2017 – the Pitzhanger Manor restoration work is on site due for completion Spring 2018

location:

London, UK

area:

12 ha

client:

Heritage Lottery Fund – Parks for People programme, Ealing Council

design team:

Landscape Architect: J&L Gibbons

Architects and Lead Consultant: Jestico + Whiles

Historic Landscape Consultant: Sarah Couch
Historic Landscapes

Landscape managers: Land Management Services

Interpretation Designers: Ralph Appelbaum
Associates

Cost Consultants: Artelia

Soil consultant: Tim O'Hare Associates

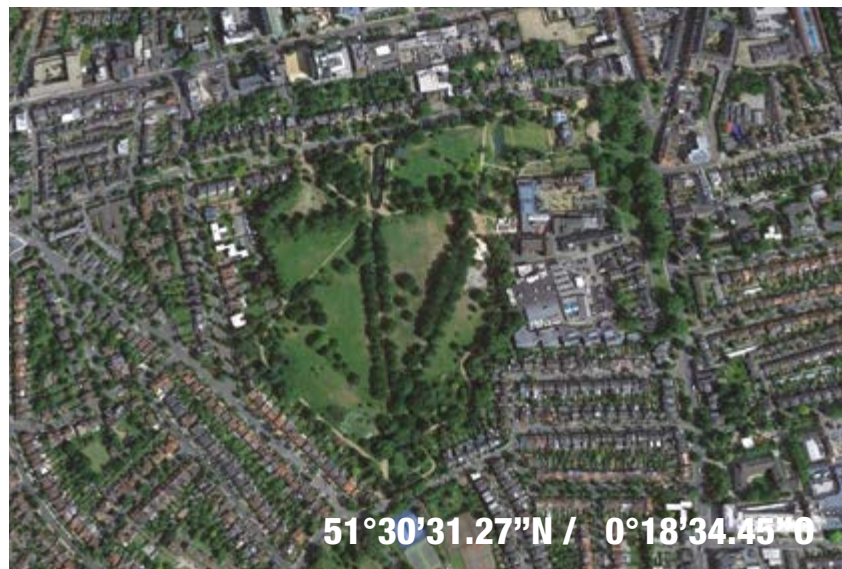
Historic Buildings Architect: Julian Harrap
Architects

Structural Engineer: Ellis & Moore

Service Engineers: Kingshaw Associates

funding institution:

Heritage Lottery Fund, Ealing Council



Walpole Park is located in London Borough of Ealing

The park provides the main formal and informal recreational public space for the surrounding communities in the centre of the London Borough of Ealing, including opportunities for active recreation, contemplation and relaxation. It is strategically significant as an open space because it's a key part of the green corridor which connects Ealing Town Centre to the River Thames. The adjacent town centre is undergoing huge investment and renewal.

The proposals for the park are developed alongside those for Pitzhanger Manor House in a complex masterplan which vision is to set a new common framework for the museum, the architecture and the park.

The park significance is strictly related to the architect Sir John Soane who is the author of the manor house and collaborated with John Haverfield of Kew on many features that embellish the park. Its importance is also related to the intensive public use since it became a public park in 1910.

Historic context

In 1800 Sir John Soane purchased the estate and started to rebuild the previous residence. He intended that it would become a suitable residence for his elder son when he became an architect.

John Haverfield of Kew, who worked frequently with Soane, advised on the laying out of the grounds and the resulting landscape was a miniature landscape park suited to Regency country villa, with lawns, shrubberies, exotic trees, flower garden, kitchen garden, a serpentine lake with rustic bridge and arbour above, an ornamental shrubbery walk and a great number of classical fragments, all set within a small park.

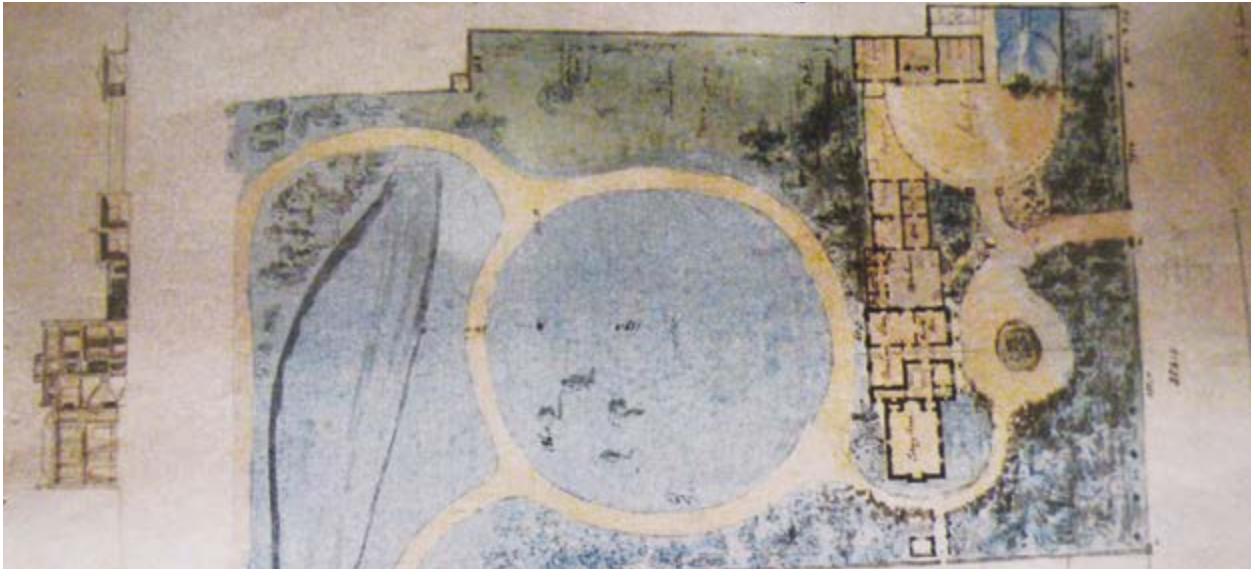
There are detailed records of fruit and vegetables grown in the kitchen garden and Soane had a keen interest in food; as a member of the 'Committee of Taste', he advised on a book of recipes, which includes recipes for many of the vegetables grown and fish caught by Soane at Pitzhanger.

Disappointed by his son, Soane sold the Manor to General Nevil Cameron in 1811. There followed a series of owners who made relatively minor changes to the landscape, including the addition of hothouses, removal of many of the original trees which were sold for timber and possibly the round lily pond; the Serpentine was drained by 1839 and the north wing of the manor was rebuilt.

In 1900 the land was sold to Ealing UDC and it was opened as a public park. The initial intention was to maintain the park "as a park and not a garden"

Pitzhanger Manor (1835)





and that “no steps be taken towards floricultural development”, new planting, park facilities, new paths and avenues were added and water bodies redesigned. The fishing pond was widened, lined in concrete and redesigned as a skating and model boating lake, with islands, a fountain and ornamental planting.

Over the time the addition of ornamental trees, hedges and bedding changed character of the gardens into that of a municipal park and the gardens around Manor became visually isolated from the rest of the Park. The kitchen garden was closed in the early years of the public park, then used as a botanical school to teach students gardening and was reopened as a secluded rose garden in 1920.

Then it accommodated a public library, an exhibition galley and a museum. The Park is a site of a great number of memorials, including the extensive Mayors Avenue of trees, other memorial trees, the Great War Memorial and the Empire Windsrush memorial.

Most of these historical features were retained in various states of repair.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The park is included in the Historic England Register of parks and garden of special historic interest, Grade II. It comprises the gardens and lawns which form the setting of the Grade I listed Pitzhanger Manor House.

The Soane's garden (1801)
Walpole Park (1901)





Assessing significance:

Evidential value

Walpole Park is one of the most visited parks in the Borough of Ealing and one of the few parks with significant heritage features. Part of the strategy is to consolidate the relationship between Walpole and Lammas Park combining the facilities offered by the two parks. The adjacent Lammas Park provides several sport facilities in the area.

Historical value

“The project will restore Walpole Park as Ealing’s premier heritage park and reveal the original Regency landscape with new opportunities for participation learning and volunteering. Walpole park, Pitzhanger Manor and its immediate setting, as well as being much loved local facilities and landmarks, are of national importance. The project will create a unified design for the park and the manor house and celebrate the history of the public park and the significance of Sir John Soane’s legacy”¹.

Aesthetic value

The use of classical antiquities “established both the house and garden as places of learning, antiquity and taste”².

Communal value

The park represents a great social value for its community. It is a good example of how a good engagement process could enhance a successful design.

design process and key stages

The proposal for the park was successful with a Parks for People Second Round Application in February 2011 securing a Heritage Lottery grant of £2.4m. The park was separately funded by HLF Parks of People. The Manor House received a First Round Heritage grant in March 2012 and is now proceeding with the development phase.

The proposals for the park serve to enhance and support the functions already offered in Pitzhanger Manor.

Since the HLF award, a series of workshops, consultation meetings and measured survey and site visits have been undertaken. A detailed application was submitted and planning was granted in February 2014 and the design team have continued to develop and refine the proposals with the client through the technical design stages, including the necessary consultation with specialists and statutory authorities.

Design objectives:

Walpole park will enable Ealing’s vibrant, diverse community to explore their heritage and share it with visitors from London and beyond.

The project gives new opportunities for learning, volunteering and other activities. The project creates a unified design for the park and Pitzhanger Manor and celebrate the national significance of Sir John Soane’s legacy.

Pitzhanger Manor House is locally, nationally and internationally significant and restoring it is conserving Soane’s ‘dream home’ and making it accessible for all. Restoring and interpreting this historic villa, the Gallery and Lodge will provide inspirational heritage exhibition and renew a community culture.

One of the key aspects of increasing accessibility to the site and increasing visitor numbers is ensuring that appropriate facilities will be available for

¹ from ‘Ten year Management and Maintenance Plan, February 2011

² ivi



the increased visibly members of the public and educational groups. The café proposed within Sloan's kitchen garden discretely locates the catering need essential for the viable use of the heritage asset, away from the heritage buildings in a new single storey structure designed in sympathy with its surroundings.

Current stage: Pitzhanger Manor / 5 / Construction / Riba Plan of Work
Walpole Park / 7 / In Use / Riba Plan of Work

general and specific key questions

This is a project where the client has an important and strategic role in the process. Could you tell more about this collaboration?

How was the professional team chosen for this project? Which figure had the most important role in the decisions of the restoration work in the park?

In the crucial stages of the process how did your approach in reading the historical layer change the team decision?

Which are the lesson learned from Walpole Park that you are applying now in the construction of the forecourt, the flower garden and the walled garden?

How the consultation was conducted in this project? How did this process start and how did it evolve till now?

Which is the role of volunteers in an historical park like Walpole Park?

The trees in this park seem to be important witness of the past. Which were the attentions and considerations made on this? Which were the technical solutions adopted to preserve them?

REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.

Illustrations are from the same reports.

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Julian Harrap Architects (2014), *Pitzhanger Manor, Stage E Drawings*

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website

Pitzhanger Manor House & Gallery Walpole Park, available at <http://www.pitzhanger.org.uk/>

interview tale
Neil Davidson



16 January 2016

How was the professional team chosen for this project? Which figure had the most important role in the design team? Could you tell me more about the first stages of the process?

This project was an open European tender because it was such a big project. We were in a team led by Jestico + Whiles who we've worked with mostly on school and university projects before. And Ralph Appelbaum Associates who we had not worked with before. RAA are international museum designers, content and exhibition designers, with a main office in New York and a small office in London.

The initial starting point was Pitzhanger Manor and Walpole Park and to reconnect the manor and the landscape. So, we produced a venn-diagram as part of the interview proposals for the project, with three overlapping circles: architecture, landscape and interpretation and in the centre, there was the project.

It's quite unusual for local authorities to commission projects that have all these three themes at the same time. They quite often have a museum and then you need adapt the context and the landscape to that proposal. It's more common for Historic England to be the custodian of this sort of property.

The interview was quite strange because they short-listed fourteen teams which is far too many. This meant 14 teams all have to put in a lot of time and effort to prepare for the interview. It is always a dilemma, on one hand you don't want to bring any proposals to an interview and give away your ideas without the opportunity to start a dialogue with the client but on the other it is evitable that some teams will bring developed proposals. And of course, when we went to the interview you see other teams have built models and they've done all sorts of that.

And in fact, actually they quite like the fact that we didn't it. We went in and said: « we want to start a dialogue with the client to understand and help you make a brief. »

Because their brief was very high level and they didn't really describe the detail of what they wanted very much so, we said «we're an expert team talking with the client and helping you to determine what your priorities are. »

So, we were awarded the job in June 2009. And then the intention was to submit the park round one application in August 2009.

And then the house application was planned to follow in December.

The reason they were different is that the funding comes from two different sources and is determined by different committees.

Although all of the funding comes from the same source, the Heritage Lottery Fund. They have many different funding streams and depending on your project may or may not be eligible for one but for another. So, for the park, it was 'Parks for people' which is the same as Marble Hill House and park. But for the 'Parks for people' projects generally they have a kind of 'funding limit'. So, if your project requires more than five million pounds, then you can't apply to 'Park for people' budget because they don't provide funds greater than that. However, 'Heritage Grants', which is the one that was used for the house, can be almost, within reason, limitless. So generally speaking, that's used for very large projects or very large landscape projects or projects that have buildings that require lots of investment.

They then have subcategories, so in 'Heritage Grants' they consider a project under five million to be just a normal project, over five million to be a major project. And then they get assessed by a panel of different people.

So, when you win the major project it's more competitive. And rather than being assessed locally, by being assessed by the London committee, it is assessed by the National Committee, so just gets more and more rigorously assessed when more money is involved.

So Pitzhanger Manor initially was a far bigger project than it is today.

Originally we entered into a dialogue with the Heritage Lottery Fund and this is where these things are all quite intriguing because the advice

Walpole Park (2016)



changed. The Heritage Lottery Fund, and this is the same with all project including Alexandra Road Park and Marble Hill, do not give you all the money, so you have to come with some money as a client, know as 'match funding'.

In this case Ealing, it is quite fortunate in the sense that there are lots of new developments. And from that comes money to support projects in the form of Section 106 contributions from planning applications which have to be used for the greater public good. So, the park actually had quite a lot of money that was being paid by developers to Ealing which filter through to pay for parks and other public realm projects. And they basically can only be used for parks or public realm.

In this case there was quite a lot of match funding for the park.

The proposals for the Manor house included several cultural facilities including a museum and art gallery, that often are subject to other grant funding opportunities, so they had quite a bit of money to bring to the table, and the National Heritage Lottery said: « we encourage you to be ambitious and encourage you to submit for a major application. »

During the funding decision-making process, which involved some other very important and high value projects, they had to make the decision. I think the time the Manor House application was first assessed in December 2009, the Imperial War Museum was also under consideration. The Imperial War Museum is considered to be a project of international importance, and the decision based on where the greatest public benefit could be realised in this case where an international audience would benefit. Whereas parts of Pitzhanger Manor are considered to be of international significance, but not all of it.

In retrospect, the decision was probably based on the ambition of the first proposal and probably required a more modest proposal, initially the gallery was going to be demolished and a brand-new building rebuilt. The buildings to be retained were going to be the George Dance the Sir John Soane elements only and a reinterpretation of what used to be on that site. In the first submission, the proposal included a brand-new gallery, that could be purpose built and provide a grade A art gallery space, with all of the necessary security and air conditioning.

The park was awarded its funding, we submitted in late 2009 and by the start of 2010 we received a letter informing us of the decision.

In essence what that decision means is that funding will be provided to develop design concepts in readiness of a more detailed application at Round 2. So round one gives you money to develop your ideas and then round two you re-apply for money to build the project.

To approach the project thoroughly, you must talk to the Heritage Lottery

Walpole Park (2016)



Fund, to the planners and to identify and significant obstacles to the project progressing, in theory, once you have worked through these matters you can submit the round two with as many risks identified and mitigated against, and usually, except in very rare circumstances, if a project is deemed suitable for funding at round one they should get funding at round two or get although this all dependent on planning permission.

With this project we didn't have planning permission prior to the round 2 submission but we had two letters of comfort, which are these two letters here, which basically are saying: «we don't have any issues». When this is submitted for planning, English Heritage also supported this position. This was largely due to the through of the historic analysis and careful justification of the proposals.

The Manor House was submitted again, but failed again, on this occasion advice had been to submit a much smaller project scope and paradoxically the proposals actually weren't ambitious enough. So, what happened was the park and the house got completely separated on their journeys towards delivery.

The park has now been completed for two years and the house is now on site, which is a shame in the short term, but in the long term the vision because the team worked at the cost project.

It was important that the Manor House proposals didn't evolve in a way that was cognisant of the landscape proposals, with Jestico + Whiles as a lead consultant across both projects, they were were involved in both and had an overview of proposals, and this was overseen by the same director, the whole design team were involved in both projects. So, the opportunity is to make sure the joined up in terms of form, function was preserved.

Which is the difference between the English Heritage and the Historic England?

This is an important distinction to make. The role of English Heritage is different today than when we started the project.

English Heritage used to be the property owner and also the historic building and landscape authority.

In April the first of last year, as part of austerity measures implemented by the UK Government cutbacks, a lot of government agencies had money withdrawn, and English Heritage was one of them. And so, what they basically the commercial side was separated from the advisory role, so English Heritage became the organisation that runs and manages properties to make income, was: «we are going to give you some money and then after six years, that's it».

Ealing (2016)





And then they set up a new organization called Historic England to provide statutory advice.

So, the office that we went to, housed both of those organisations, Historic England continues to perform the role that they would do in terms of making sure the heritage is conserved and to stop people doing things they shouldn't do to valuable heritage assets.

Their role is that of a statutory consultee maintaining standards for historic landscapes and buildings. And English Heritage, has now become an organisation that curates and manages a lot of historic properties and it needs to start making those properties make profit to maintain these sites sustainably. In the past, they used to get subsidized by the government and the government took a new position for example: «if you own Stonehenge or you look after Stonehenge on behalf of the nation and you're charging 15 pounds to visit it. You've got to make sure that's enough to management and maintain the site sustainably. We're not going to give you any more money to look after, if that is not enough alternative funding sources need to be explored».

There are limited ways of generating money to provide revenue funding for sites. So, for example at Marble Hill the approach has been to design a better cafe, to help generate more income for the site as a whole.

So, it is quite an interesting transition.

It's a challenge for everyone who works there, because some of these sites have very few visitors. The opportunities to make money from them are limited and actually in some cases you really wouldn't want to create a new intervention just to generate income as that might be to the detriment of the building or landscape that it would service. The pressure is to start putting commercial offers into very sensitive landscapes or buildings. The site stewards balance this need in the light of no further government funding, it's going to be a challenge to see how well this can be done across the nation.

Stonehenge is quite a good example. For many decades there was a very inappropriate visitor centre. A international competition was used to select a design team for a new visitor centre which was built around 5 years it is now located quite far away from the stones with lots of new infrastructure to service the facility and to access the Henge You can't park next to Stonehenge now, you have to park several miles away and get a shuttle bus. So, the setting of the archaeological features is dramatically improved. But the paradox is that there is now a very large visitor centre, with the potential to generate lots of money but how do encourage people to stop and spend money?

Historic England (2016)
Walpole Park (2016)



And then there's that balance between what is the right size, because the whole of the landscape is of Neolithic origins so very important, it's amazing. But it's on a site that's considered to be not as sensitive as the Henge itself. So, there's a real challenge about the commercial offer not becoming more dominant than what you're actually going to see.

Their only input at Walpole Park was as a statutory consultee to decide whether or not the proposals were going to damage or improve the historic landscape or the house.

The point, I wanted to conclude on, is that a lot of the landscape architects who worked for English Heritage before, have now gone to Historic England or left the organisation entirely.

So people who had roles that were quite distinct, who supported the property management side of things or could share information, but now effectively they are two different organizations even if there are some overlaps that are a legacy of the previous structure. This means that some of the landscape architects that we worked with before are no longer part of English Heritage, now they made be part of Historic England, so they are not in that kind of practical role of how do you make this landscape evolve and what the future generations are in.

And it's kind of ironic because almost exactly the same time in Scotland we did the opposite. So, in Scotland we had Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and they've just made it into one called Historic Environment Scotland.

Are there some conditions to respect, some suggestions on how to make profit in a heritage asset?

One of the challenges is that an organisation like the Heritage Lottery Fund, has a strong remit to increase access and make places that are not accessible to people who have been previously excluded or who felt a sense of perceived exclusion, this includes but not exclusively groups from different social, ethnic or economic backgrounds or with various physical or mental disabilities. The Heritage Lottery Fund want to encourage new people to come and visit.

And part of that approach is often to say: the Heritage asset needs to free to avoid economic discrimination. The position may be that if money is granted by the HLF you can't then charge people entrance fees to visit the site or building.

So, for example at Marble Hill, the house is free or will be free when it's reopened, so the money needs to come from somewhere else for the long-term maintenance of the site. And generally speaking, the problem I can see is that if you've got lots of historic landscapes in a city like London, if they all propose the same revenue generation scheme such as a cafe and then it is difficult to distinguish a unique offer at any one site and all historic landscapes begin to compete with one another.

How was to work with the design team?

Generally the design team was quite aligned, and it wasn't the case of the design team generating an idea that was divergent from the client's aspirations. Everything needed to stack up in terms of design authenticity but it also needed to generate money to sustain the project into the future. The biggest change really was that the cafe, which is being built in the walled garden, was originally not part of the proposals and was a later addition to increase potential revenue streams. It was going to be one big walled garden and the cafe was introduced because the Heritage Lottery Fund advised that the project was not being ambitious enough with the cafe in terms of revenue generation and destination offer, they suggested that bigger cafe should be considered but that it shouldn't be in the house and it can't be a separate smaller building in the park. We then had conversations with English Heritage to talk about the footprint, massing and height, its

relationship to the Grade I listed building, how big it was in that walled garden, does it start to make the walled garden less important? And all sorts of important material considerations.

But these discussions were happening almost when we were on site with the parks being restored actually.

Could you consider this project a 'restoration'?

It is not 'to restore' but 'to re-interpret': you're taking the historic elements and reinterpreting them.

The main message is really to celebrate what was there before but you also want to make it relevant to the people that are using it today. So, you couldn't just put back something that was historically accurate if it meant that people couldn't use that park for some reason.

The main example in Walpole was the water garden in front of the house which was in quite a different form from the original designs, if you look at the old plans, it was a miniature Serpentine lake.

And in 2009 there was now a feature there that people quite liked, a more recent public park pond. So, one of the key things in Walpole was to be re-established the historic lawn and views from the building out into the park. And in the wider context, to accommodate reinterpret other layers of history. So, you can't just blindly restore the 1810 Soane designs you must look at the layers of landscape history and assess the significance of each layer, for example the fish-pond had taken on whole new meaning as part of the park use. The pond, prior to being a park feature, was a ditch for fish in it. The design proposals need to find a balance between these two realities.

And the same applies to the very specific heritage features like the Soane bridge. Julian Harrap Architects have worked with Soane museum for years, and they are the experts on Sir John Soane, their approach there was not to take it back to the original where that was not appropriate or , not to start putting replicas of what it might have been in 1810.

You are restoring elements of it to make sure it's structurally sound and repairing some stonework this process is not conservation for conservations sake.

A good example of this process is: in the middle of the bridge, there's a little cherub's face and one approach there would have been to conserve and to remake that stone cherub as an originally intended, but what they did was they just cleared all the debris and all the things that shouldn't have been there, then applied a preservative technique on it and left it as it was with the patina of 200 years still obvious.

Walpole Park (2016)
Water Garden



There were discussions about all those matters with English Heritage. The English Heritage representative was always involved in discussions and they would meet with the Ealing Council Conservation Officer to provide feedback on the proposals that were emerging.

The process of not trying to recreate but to proactively manage and telling the story maybe can be much more engaging for the public on some projects.

We must always remember that Walpole Park was not designed as a public park it was designed as a private landscape, designed as a large pleasure grounds. It's original purpose was very different and it was part of a choreography directed by Soane, if standing on the top of the bridge he would have been telling stories to his guests in the past, how can we make those stories relevant to the users of the park today?

And the park is open everyday from dusk to dawn so everything has to be more resilient and robust to withstand the wear and tear of hundreds of thousands of visitors rather than a handful of guests.

It was quite an interesting design process to be involved in.

How did you preserve the arboricultural heritage?

One of the most interesting things for me was that it was the first time the significance of living elements had been on the top of the heritage agenda in one of projects, in this case the cedar trees. There are paintings of those trees looking quite large by the time Soane designed his contributions at Walpole Park.

We don't know how long they were there before Soane but they were the most important designed historic assets apart from the buildings which were the first features of occupation on the site.

It raised lots of challenges in terms of the difference between how a local authority would normally deal with very old trees in a public landscape. It needed Ealing Council to consider an unconventional approach to management.

So, you have to find a balance between how the landscape is being used today and the importance of the historic features.

We approached one the main expert on ancient trees in Britain, and indeed the world, he is called Neville Fay.

He is an arboriculturalist but also, he's the chair of the ancient tree forum. And he is specialized in techniques to prolong the life of trees, and this is a case of preserving, some of the oldest Cedar trees in Britain. He also travels the world talking about his work, he's quite an innovator, using





cutting edge technology to analyse tree health and structural integrity. The processes that we employed on this site was called stress testing, which you use to determine whether or not a very strong wind would blow a tree over. This all costs money, the Heritage Lottery Fund reviewed the implications and offered more money to the project to support this innovative work.

The collection of veteran trees included the two cedar trees and the two adjacent lime trees and in the historic paintings by Gandy you can see all four trees at a large size so most probably pre-Soane specimens. By looking at historic maps, there are oak trees on field boundaries which are probably even older but not part of the designed landscape but retained by Soane in his proposals and subsequently in ours. There is an avenue where there are some lime trees which are of very rare genetic clone. We employed a specialist who was undertaking research into that particular lime tree clone with the National Trust. And so those trees were then propagated, alongside the to create as stock of new trees for replanting.

This was quite challenging for the local authority because they don't have to deal with these issues very often.

Some local authorities have historic parks but maybe not at this scale and maybe not with trees with this particular importance.

How long did it take to design and realize the park? How did things change?

One of the biggest challenges for us is that it's been quite a long project. It's a 2009–2015 for the park and we're still involved now with the house.

Most of the people who work for Ealing Council that we dealt originally no longer work for Ealing Council a. So continuity can become an issue, you must explain decisions again.

For example, if you discuss proposals with a new tree officers when there has been a three year process of define an approach with their predecessor this can present challenge. We have worked with two different project managers, two different landscape officers, three different tree officers and two different park managers.

What about the maintenance?



They have a park manager who has horticultural training.

There are also framework contractors who are not directly employed by the council, they do a lot of the maintenance projects like this. Every green space in Ealing is maintained by one company a private company, in this case Veolia UK.

And those sorts of companies are enormous and they work across the whole of Britain. There are a few of these companies and what they manage and implement are basic management regimes. That's unfortunately the way it's set up so it's just maintain it as it is with limited scope or budget to be proactive.

They were talking about putting a greenhouse into the walled garden. If they start propagating plants it would be great

There's a big issue in Britain at the moment with landscape maintenance and it's no different from Marble Hill. Once these projects have been finished, how are they maintained? How do you put measures in place to continue to maintain them at a high standard how do you find the money to do this? The Heritage Lottery have started to carry out spot checks, when they go back and visit the projects ten years later to ensure the appropriate management and maintenance is still in place.

If it wasn't being maintained properly they were unlikely to receive further funding from the Heritage Lottery in the future.

What about the consultation process?

This was actually a really good example of doing consultation properly and partly because at the round one submission we put in an adequate allowance

to fund this part of the project properly.

We designed a very large format exhibition. So, we had a really good budget in for an outreach officer and an education officer and we worked with them very closely to develop the consultation events.

We did something quite unusual, we actually made double A0 size boards. We printed them on metal and we put them in the park for a year.

It was a story about what we were going to do, and in each area we had a view, so we put one near the fish-pond with the explanation of what used to be like and what it was going to be like.

Myself and colleagues spent two weekends in the park talking, answering questions and listening.

And the A0 boards stayed up for a year, and there was no vandalism.

We also did quite formal consultation.

I presented the project in a church hall to around 150 people and it was the most amazing one I've ever done because everyone clapped at the end! I think that people were just happy that someone had taken the time to explain the process and not be patronizing about it.

We created a temporary kitchen garden to see what interest would be.

So, we need really to have ways of engaging people who would never come to the formal events. So, we engaged with a variety of groups in a one on one basis offering tours of the park. I did it in a way which was like a walking lecture.

And then in parallel, the outreach officer ran loads of activities to encourage possible new users to come to the park. This was before we'd even done any construction work, it was to start up interest.

And then when you're finished this engagement process you may have a new audience of people who become the people who use the facilities in the future. So, I think this was done really well.

And I think it was very well done because they had the money to do it.

The activity program had a budget that was very generous, but essential. This allows you to do lots of creative engagement, to do really interesting things. When that finishes you hope to have in place a structure to allow these events to happen by through self-initiation, it allows the organizations

Consultation process
Walpole Park(2016)



to continue to make its own program.

I think there's an interesting topic.

You have just to find your way with that sort of process because you don't know quite how it is going to work and sometimes can start out very negative. If you are good at listening but also offer up your expertise, then hopefully you can find a way to come to a solution that is acceptable to all parties.

There was a process called 'Planning for real'. This was a consultation process that was very popular in local authorities. Basically, you go into a room and you'd say: «okay we've got a park, this is your park, what would you like?» So, you get kids asking for a swimming pool, a rollercoaster, a gym a huge playground. So, it's really kind of pointless. It is not a conversation because you know that you can't do all this stuff. But this is what they used to do.

It is much better to have a process saying «okay we need to work within these constraints, this is what's important. And this is why we're doing this. What do you think?»

Are there the 'Friends of the Park' group?

A group called 'the Friends of' has quite strict operational rules to structure their organisation.

And so sometimes you can have 'Friends of Parks' which are not very welcoming.

A bit like a club that you're not invited to. So, if you live locally, and you're not invited to 'the Friends of' then it can become very exclusive, the Friends at Walpole Park did a lot of work to make their group very welcoming and inclusive. At Crystal Palace at one time there were seven groups of Friends with different objectives.

The Heritage Lottery Fund said to the Friends: «you need to be much more open, you can't just be this group of 25 people you need to expand your membership and to do that you need legal structures in place, so you need to have a structure there, you need to be accountable to prevent situation where the select Friends are all powerful, like political organisation».

So, the chair has to change, the committee has to change and new members



are allowed to come in.

At this time it was quite a small group and we did work very closely with the chair and a few others.

It can be quite challenging when you have a group of Friends who want to be very closely involved in design, which was the case here.

For example, the bee observation hive is basically like a glass window into the beehive, so the Friends fund-raised themselves to find enough money to build this, they are a very proactive and engaged Friends group. Great Friends make a massive difference in these parks.

It can be an important thing because it is a voice alongside the land owners voice because ultimately the Heritage Lottery Fund is provide from public money for the wider public good.

Were there artists involved in this consultation stage? Which were the most transformational collaborations of the whole process?

There were a number of artists in the activity program that brought their expertise into the engagement process.

There were chefs involved in the kitchen garden and they cooked food from 'The cook's oracle', a recipe book that Soane helped to write.

And there were a lot of architects and artists.

We end up having to find a space for a piece of art which was a challenge, we were almost finished and suddenly we had to find some a suitable location.

I think if you're engaging an artist it can be really productive, but they should be part of the process as well as making something. Making Space in Dalston is a better example.

But we did hear work with lots archaeological experts. We facilitated several archaeological digs in the park and children were directly involved in those activities.

We had bat surveys and specialist ecologists and hydrologists involved throughout the project too. There's lots of specialist consultants involved.

But I think the most transformational involvement of specialists on this project was the Arboricultural advice received for the Cedar trees.

Walpole Park (2016)





3/545
Circus Street
Brighton

3/545 Circus Street

data

date
2012-ongoing

location:
Brighton, UK

area:
1,5 ha

client:
Cathedral Group PLC (U+I)
University of Brighton, Brighton and Hove City Council, South East Dance

design team:
Architects: ShedKM
Landscape architects: J&L Gibbons
Structural Engineers: PEP
M&E Engineers: Atelier 10
Quantity surveyors: PH Warr

Why this project?

It is a transformative project in which the reinterpretation of the historical urban landscape has added value to the whole design.



key stages RIBA: 0-1-2-3



before

'We need you to make this come alive. To create an identity for a place that will capture people's attention, imagination and the spirit of Brighton...a new place that can evolve, support itself and contribute to the growth of the city socially, culturally and economically'

Aims of the design competition
Cathedral Group

Site location and context

The site is situated not far away from the Royal Pavilion on the main green corridor of the city which ends with a panoramic view of the Palace Pier. It is set on a steeply sloping ground more recently occupied by the former municipal market building. The market has been relocated and the building was used for short-term uses. The area is not a homogeneous area in terms of its historical development but significantly influenced by the original land-use pattern.

Historic context

On a map of the site dating 1825 there are just few stables behind the Grand Parade frontage. That was the Royal Circus, the site of the Prince Regent's circus animal's, and this is the origin of the name Circus Street.

Over 220 years ago the Circus street site was laid out in a patchwork of lines. This long-established method of subdividing land into long, narrow strips with many landowners explains why many of the later developments took the form of terrace housing. Some of the fields were used for lime burning and market gardening while the majority were farmed by individuals. This pattern greatly influenced the development of the town in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The site is located in an area formally known as 'Hilly Laine' and 'Little Laine'.

By the early 19th century the use of the site had changed from agriculture to residential with a group of mews buildings. In 1937 the Brighton Municipal Market was erected.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The area is not listed but all around there are many listed buildings.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

"Brighton and the Hove City Council considers the Circus Street Municipal Market site to be a major opportunity for development of the highest quality which fully embraces the concept of sustainable development, from design to construction' 'the Circus Street Municipal Market site is redeveloped to create an open accessible and vibrant mixed use area which maximises its employment, education and housing potential and acts as a model of urban design and sustainability"¹

¹ in the Supplementary Planning Document





Historical value

The topography, the original patchwork and the many listed buildings all around the area add value to any development.

Aesthetic value

There are many viewing corridors within and from the area across the city. The site is set on the main north-south green corridor of the city providing a new occasion to develop the public realm.

Communal value

The project is enhancing new uses to transform this neglected site in a more vibrant area. The main aims of the project are to link this site with the nearby neighbourhoods to enhance integration and regenerate the area.

Historic streets and field patterns
The Royal Pavillion
(2016- © Alessandro Intini)





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design process and key stages

This project follows a public competition held with five competing design teams. After developing the brief and the concept, the team went onto develop the planning and construction proposals.

The vision is to create a productive quarter in Brighton. This is inspired by the idea 'Grow Brighton' which is translated both in terms of creativity of ideas and productivity of home grown produce right on the very site of the old fruit and vegetable market.

The proposal draws inspiration from the tightknit streetscapes of the city, especially the North Laine area.

The proposal aims to create a beautiful and biodiverse development as a best practice in nature conservation and development, integrating the site as a fundamental part of the Brighton's green infrastructure.

The 6 key factors, the principles for the masterplan were:

- How to respect the historic grain of Brighton
- How to acknowledge current desire lines
- Where to enable cross routes
- Encourage a 'patchwork' of lanes and squares
- Consideration of 'landmark' building locations
- Organisation of a variety of public realm

The tallest buildings for residential uses are located in the north-western corner and all the 6 different buildings are characterized by a material palette influenced by Brighton buildings.

The public realm for the site is defined by the surrounding uses making a direct relationship between outside and inside.

One of the peculiar aspects of the design proposal is the movement and circulation in the site and the accessibility. Vehicle traffic is limited outside the site allowing only emergency accesses. Green roofs, green walls and structural tree planting create a high-level habitat in this urban environment. The public space creates multifunctional landscapes providing benefits in terms of biodiversity and habitat creation.

A large new events square is planned to host performances, street parties and much more.

Circus Street on site, Brighton i360
(2016- © Alessandro Intini)





Design plan and section



Design objectives:**Hard landscaping:**

The general principle is to minimise objects in the public realm, using materiality of Brighton. The spaces are an informal mix of natural spaces in the shape of an Orchard Court, a Glen, a civic square and a shared surface street, no formal play is provided within the site.

The external lighting is presented as art installations and at the same time ensures the safety of the place.

In 18th Century the hill was sculpted with a natural slope for agriculture terraces, later this topography was modified and excavated to create a level plateau for the market. The proposal is to reconstruct the hill to provide a fully accessible environment from the east and west boundaries of the area. The masterplan will create a hierarchy of routes across the site and inclusive environment and access.

Soft landscaping:

The main issue is to propose a strategy to create a richer and more biodiverse public realm, one of the important thing is to integrate food production on site, vertical planting and roof gardens.

Landscape sustainability

Rain gardens, permeable surfaces, localised water storages, street trees, green roofs, vertical planting, bird boxes, bat roosts and balconies are the sustainable structure of the design.

Current stage: 5 / Construction / Riba Plan of Work**general and specific key questions**

The mayor of Brighton is heavily invested in the transformation of this city into an entertainment city. I360 became one of the symbols of this transformation. Does your project respond to this trend or not?

How was the professional team chosen? Was there a competitive process? Were there specialists that have played a key role in the design process? Or did you feel short of some expert figure?

The design is divided into 5 areas with different uses and functions. Is it a way to organize better the construction phase?

In the Circus Square the design provides solutions for a flexible space with the access to all. Which are the main features used to answer to this specific project's vision?

In the Circus Court you are designing a space characterised by an orchard. Is it a specific request arose during the consultation process?

Which is the most useful and essential analysis provided in this project? Which were the most useful expert advices?

REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London. Illustrations are from the same reports.

ShedKM (2013), *Circus Street Masterplan, Research, Evidence and Conclusions*

J&L Gibbons with contributions from Michael Grubb Studio Standing Start (2013), *Circus Street, Brighton. Design & access statement. Landscape and public realm*

J&L Gibbons (2015), *Circus Street, Brighton. Tender Drawings*



interview tale
Neil Davidson



14 November 2016

Which are the main issues in this design process?

This project was a competition. It was an invited competition, we one of five teams. The client selected their favourite team.

Circus Street, Brighton is an interesting project in terms of model and in terms of team as well. We were part of a bigger team.

So, Harry and Finn, Jo's nephews, made that presentation model for us. And it's really beautiful, they made it like a piece of sculpture.

The mayor of Brighton is heavily invested on the transformation of this city into an entertainment city. I360 became one of the symbols of this transformation. Does your project respond to this trend or not?

Brighton has always been an alternative city. And they always had a very strong environmental influence.

So, they've always had a progressive way of thinking about managing the city, that's environmentally friendly. It is also, it is a place that's very open minded about sexuality. It always had a very liberal character. And it is becoming an entertainment city.

It's a place where you can get away from London. Because transport makes it easy for a lot of people that live in Brighton and work in London.

Our project was much more about trying to create a new piece of the city, that was less about something alien, and more about extending the existing fabric of the city. It has a structure that is close to the historic lanes.

Brighton historically had a very distinctive land parcelization. So, we used that idea as an initial concept, to think about what was there before, how it evolved and how became a market.

There's a definite change when you cross that road from the Royal Pavilion and so we wanted to somehow embrace both sides, so thinking about it being a place of activity but also a place for people. Brighton is changing quite a lot. It is a big student city, but they are living in different locations... So, there's a lot of change here in quite a small space.

And there are a lot of summer schools for international students.

It's an appealing place because it's a city on the coast and a quite reasonable cost and it is a nice place to live.

Generally, it's an interesting city in the way it is evolving.

They have adopted the 'One Planet Living' ethos at a city scale. It's a program that puts the welfare of the planet at the core of any new development, it is well explained on the website.

And so, we need to manage the resources carefully.

And what we did, we adopted these good principles for this development.



I360 (2016- © Alessandro Intini)
One Planet Living

One Planet Living

One Planet Living is our vision of a world in which people enjoy happy, healthy lives within the natural limits of the planet, wherever they live in the world, leaving space for wildlife and wilderness.

Our One Planet Living framework, based on ten easy-to-grasp principles, enables those we work with to plan for, communicate and deliver sustainable development. The framework provides a clear, practical route map for those who are seeking a better way to live and do business.

[Find out more >>](#)

How was the professional team chosen, was there a competitive process?

So, in terms of the team, it was a competition. So, we did the concept design, then did an interview in the market space before it was demolished, and then we were selected in a competitive process.

And the jury involved were the developer, the Council and representatives of the university and then some local people.

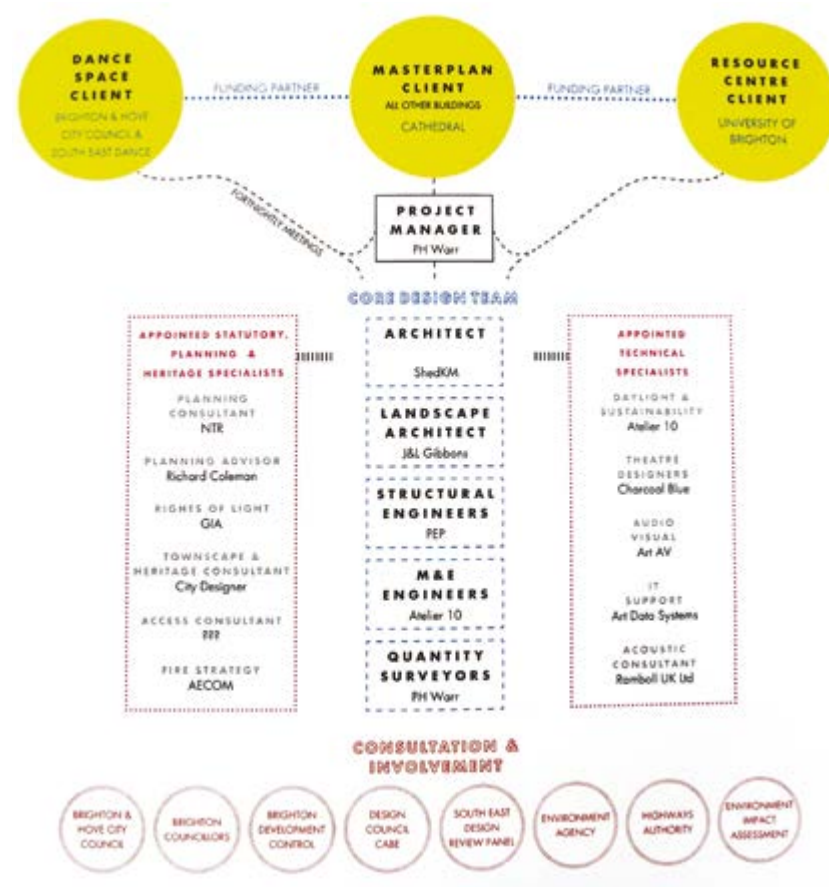
The main client is the developer.

We then spent months working on the design, testing things, doing surveys and finding everything before we went back the public.

So, we had this concept, which was called 'Grow Brighton'. The idea behind this was a process, a development that emerges from a process.

We were starting with the seed which can then grow into a piece of the city. And we used the market space as a place to exhibit designs and ideas. Then, there were activities for bicycle workshops, the university used it as an exhibition space.

It part of the process of reinvigorating a place that had been not used for years.



Who were the stakeholders in the consultation process? How did you make a proposal for something like this, which is very dense?

It's going to be a new community so there are no existing people to engage. So, what was most important was to engage with neighbours.

So, I went there to speak a lot, but they were like: «why should we be interested in this? What it's going to be, it will be noisy, it will block our view. What good is it going to do for us? » Which were all completely reasonable questions.

This is a very difficult one, I know people who lived there who are moving



somewhere else because of the project because they didn't want it to be on their doorstep or that they fundamentally objected to the prospect of change.

We also talked to a lot of people who are encouraging fruit growing in Brighton. And we set up a network of partners to become involved in temporary activities in the market, and then it was taken on by the client. And now the goal will be that the management company has to look after the whole estate.

Then you can have opportunities for people who are living in the estate to appreciate that they can grow their own food, pick up from apple trees and then eventually engage schools to come down because it's going to be a big mix of ages that are going to live here.

But again, it's the sort of idea of 'Grow Brighton'. Food production is being something seasonal and we re-engage people with nature, rather than it will just be a nice square you can look at.

The biggest challenges on this site are the density of the proposals (to meet the brief) if you see at three dimensions.

Why the development is so dense and how have you supported the public realm point of view?

The density of the development on the site is not defined by the developer. It is defined by Brighton & Hove City Council as part of strategic plan for this part of Brighton.

In many ways, the developer and the team were working to a brief and the city had set itself which created a challenge to balance density with public realm.



We were looking for ways to enhance public realm as an integral part of the development proposals and not to create, as previous proposals had done, super blocks one building dominating the residual public realm.

We worked very closely with the architects on this and the masterplan is something we did in collaboration with them.

So, there were many studies into town scale, mostly to help the proposals feel like a piece of town, scaled and portioned on the medieval small streets but with elongated tall heights.

What the proposals end up being, is effectively those proportions multiplied in the vertical scale.

The opportunities for incorporating nature into these narrow spaces required a very specific approach based on microclimate

And these buildings cast significant shade. So, we needed to develop a palette of shade tolerant plants species.

In terms of the orchard it is potentially an orchard in conceptual but not

going to be a highly productive orchard, with a high yield of fruit. And another reason for using orchard is because the trees are smaller and then they don't create much more shade. The main public space will be in the Circus square, and it will receive the most sun. This core of the site starts the transition between some of the spaces that have a more civic character with the spaces adjacent to residential uses which are more intimate.

Why did you suggest these flexible spaces in public realm? Which were the challenges in the site?

It is a very challenging site in terms of brief because of all the new buildings. And as a result, in some cases, some of the public realm has to perform a number of functions rather than be optimised to one use. But I think in terms of a piece of the city, it works. We proposed a street that looks like a pedestrian environment but allows cars to go through. Everything else is 'no cars' except access for emergencies and there is some car parking underground. In terms of the flexible space, it's a term it's used too much, probably. What does it really mean? It just means it can be used in lots of different ways. Because this is brand-new development our stakeholders were new and had a mix of requirements. One is a Dance School, we talked to them to understand what they would like to use that space for. So, these dancers would like to use as an outdoor stage. So effectively the centrepiece is the exact proportion of the indoor performance space, externally. The university would like to use it perhaps for exhibitions and markets and projections outside, an outdoor cinema. What we did is we analysed its size, looking at the capacity of the space to see what can fit. It can fit, for example, a tennis court. And the rest of time it's effectively a place of movement, most of the ground floors will have active uses such as cafe and restaurants and so there will be activities on the ground floor. So, it is a kind of place of interchange. Interchange in terms of pedestrian movement, interchange in terms of activity and, if it's programmed effectively it should be a very lively place.

Design visualization



These spaces seem to be designed with a clever reference to the narrow streets in the city centre. Isn't it?

Exactly we have used that as the reference.

We did a lot of analysis to try and make this feel like the experience you might have in the rest of Brighton, so you walk in narrow streets and then you have a little court.

How that will be translated into the building project.

Across the masterplan, the public realm and the architecture we tried to find

- Brighton(2016- © Alessandro Intini)
- The Market before



a texture that is inherently Brighton.

One thing I described was that before the market it was a hill, and then they excavated to make the level for the market.

Basically, what we've done is rebuild the hill.

And so in terms of the materials, it was almost like where it was exposed, treating on the site is only on those edges where you have the excavations into the hill.

And there are several reasons for it.

So basically, there are three levels where buildings correspond to the adjacent level and by the time you get up to this one, which is a podium, and then allows some car parking underneath and servicing.

In that way you start to use the underground spaces. But the public realm is related to the adjacent spaces ground floor spaces.

There is a section that explains it a little better actually.

Did you have ideas that didn't find a design solution?

We did quite an interesting interim proposal for this project, but it didn't happen as planned, which was to create a garden in the market. We wanted to take the roof off the market and then make an indoor garden.

And unfortunately, it didn't happen because of the structure of the market was not stable enough, it was such a bad condition that no builder was willing to do it by cutting the iron structure.

Which have been the best design tools used in this process?

We did scale comparisons so this was looking at the other square dimensions. So, to say that this was a pocket park.

Small archetypes, a piece of the public realm that can be really successful.

So, you can have a space that shaded that can still be a pleasant place to be in.

I mean this one, we picked because it's an existing space in Brighton, so we were trying to find an example that matched that. But this is pretty much the biggest public square in Brighton. That's not very interesting.

But we selected it because it has similar character even though the use is very different.

So, it's useful to see what's possible elsewhere, sometimes.

The attitude is similar to the Nolli's plans. Describing the city underlining the public realm and drawing in black all the public space. So, the ground being the important thing not the buildings.

So when you're at a very early stage of the design, this kind of comparison is very helpful.

And there's an interesting thing in terms of landscape design because quite often you have to visualize the process to achieve the final result.

And we did the same with the scale of trees and how they compete with the architecture around trees. Example is actually on site, that's 11 meters high, it is an Ulmus, Brighton is one of the only places in Britain where English elm is not affected by disease, both because of the sea wind and the topography.

Models and cross sections are also tools to understanding, communicating and testing your ideas.

With the cross sections you understand the underground, if you have enough space and the structure you can do it. And it's amazing how many landscape architects make drawing without understanding how it might be realised.

How are you going to build this design now?

So we have completed stage 4 of the Riba.

The way that this project is going to be built is 'design and build'.



It is a very popular way we're building project like this in Britain which is that you develop the details, and then it's tendered to a contractor.

And then that contractor continue to develop the design.

It's very popular to have it with buildings, very popular because it's thought to be the cheapest and best way to build to making use of the contractors expertise.

But it is very problematic for landscape and public realm.

So quite often what happens if you as a consultant, the part of the tender you will be transferred from the client, the developer, to the contractor and we will then work for the contractor.

However if we continue on this we will be in a role for the developer (retained client side), you know kind of quality control.

So, we won't be doing any more drawings, we won't be doing any more applications but we will review progress.

For example, to put these trees we had to move some services

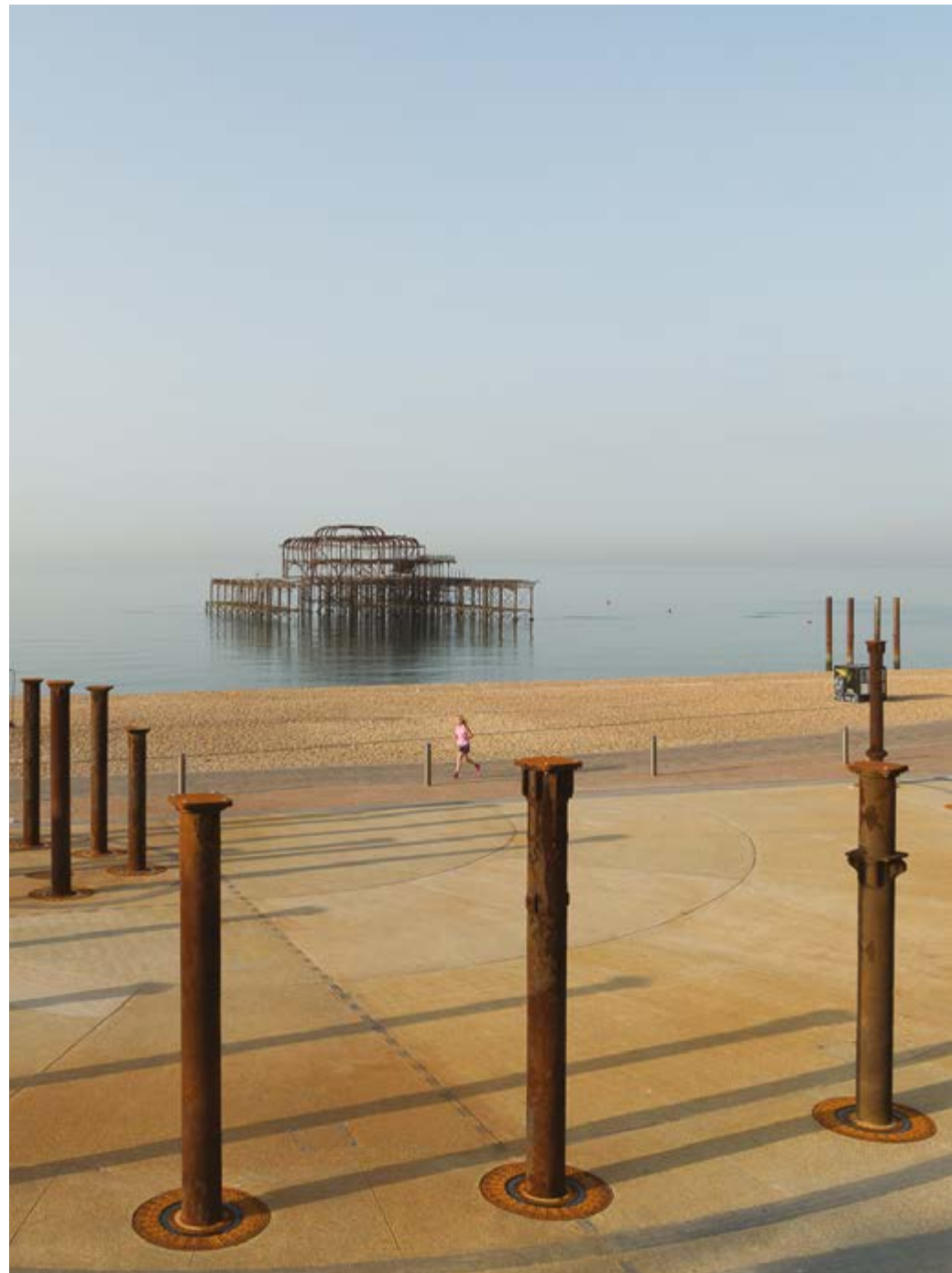
But the contractor said: «that's going to cost too much». Yes, but the quality of this space is going to be so much better if you have something that humanizes it alongside the large buildings.

The long-term benefit of having things like this is huge.

We'll see what happens.



The wooden model
Circus Street on site
(2016- © Alessandro Intini)





4/542
Canal Park
Design Guide
London

4/542 Canal Park Design Guide

data

date: 2012-13

location: London, UK

area: 5 ha

client: planning authority: London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)
local authority: London Borough Hackney & London Borough Tower Hamlets

design team: Landscape architects: J&L Gibbons
Architects: muf architecture/art, East, Phil Meadowcroft

Engineers: Civic Engineers
Quantity Surveyor: Artelia
Lighting Design: Dekka
Ecology: The Ecology Consultancy
Soil consultant: Tim O'Hare Associates
Landscape manager: LMS

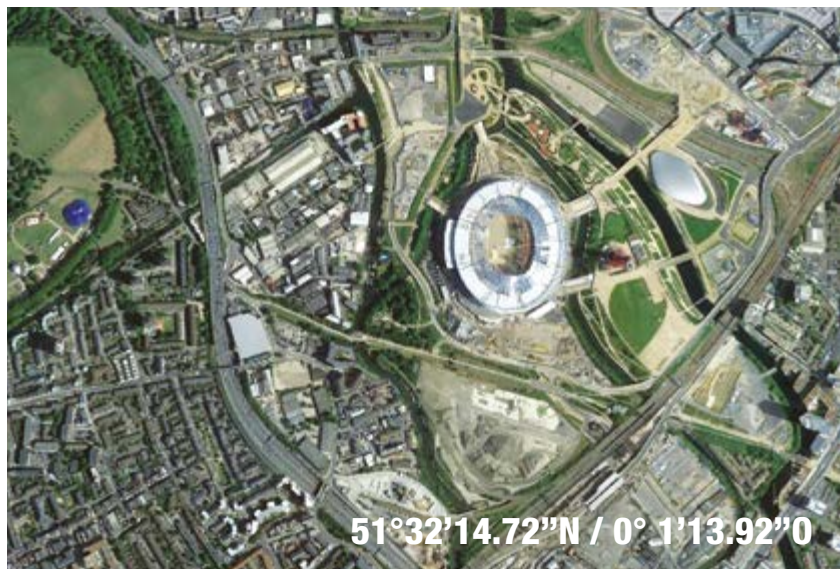
funding institution: London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)

Why this project?

It is the development of the west boundary of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, significant for the consultation process



key stages RIBA: 0-1-2-3



Site location and context

The canal forms the western edge of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the eastern edge of Hackney Wick Fish Island that includes two conservation areas.

In 2012 the Local Planning Authority was granting planning permission through the Legacy Communities Scheme (LCS) covering the final phase of the Olympic Legacy development.

This stage of the planning process had taken the Olympic Park from its 'Games arrangement' through 'transformation' and into its legacy development stage with the provision of housing, jobs, and social infrastructure.

With an anticipated development period of 18 years from 2013 to 2031, the LCS planning permission establishes the principle of the legacy development and grants outline planning permission for development.

The Canal Park is a parkland element on the western edge of the Olympic Park. The peculiarity of this boundary is that sits above a double Thames Water 42" water main. The consequence is a no-build zone over the mains and many related design constraints that limit the depth of construction and specification of vegetation that can be placed over and adjacent.

Canal Park is a new development situated in an important stretch of canal side landscape that is strongly related to existing and proposed neighbourhoods. The Canal Park Design Guide was intended to guide the delivery of the parkland through incrementally as development platforms were built out.

Historic context

The Canal Park forms 1.2km of the national network of waterways, created by the Lee Navigation Canal it is located along the western edge of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Its history is strongly linked to this function and all the historic canal features are related to this use.

The canal was a major intervention in shaping the landscape and was built in





1769 under an Act of Parliament. During the 19th and 20th centuries there were substantial improvements. In 1962 the canal system was nationalised. In 2012 these new national assets were transferred to the new charity; the Canal and River Trust (CRT).

In recent years new policies have emerged to enhance and protect these areas. The All London Green Grid (ALGG) provides a strategic framework within the London planning policy for creating, improving, managing and maintaining high-quality green and blue infrastructure, and the Canal Park is located within Framework Area 1 of the All London Green Grid.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The landscape is not designated but runs alongside two conservation areas: Hackney Wick and Fish Island and further proposed White Post Lane Conservation Area with buildings of Victorian industrial heritage interest.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

The Canal Park forms part of the Green Infrastructure for the LCS. This project is in the overall project for delivering a good design after the Olympic Games. “The investment from the 2012 Games has enabled a new district to emerge from the shackles of industrial infrastructure and contamination, with the promise of regeneration for an entire city district. High quality design has an important role to play in ensuring that this investment leads to the creation of places that are loved and used by people, a place where people will choose to come back to again and again”¹.

The canal is part of the national network of the waterways and the All London Green Grid.

Historical value

This was a critical waterway in the history of London’s navigable waterways dating back to the Vikings. London’s canals are the memory of past industrial use, now significant as recreational assets.

Aesthetic value

The canal is located in one of the three parkland areas of the Olympic Park (North Park and South Park being the other two) and it is part of a national system of waterways, of significant heritage and cultural value.

The canal, the vegetation, the topography, the bridges contribute to a picturesque landscape reminiscent of a past industrial era.

Communal value

The use of the design codes in the LCS, which set out the key design principles, is a meaningful tool to support the aspirations of the actual and future communities. A complex and iterative process of engagement stimulated the community to take part in the design decisions on how the Canal Park could evolve.

¹ J&L Gibbons (2013), *Canal Park 42” Canal Park Design Guide*, (p. 15)



design process and key stages

The Canal Park was in the end delivered in two phases, the first covered the northern and central sections, the second the southern section. This subdivision was maintained in the whole design process and each part was delegated to different team architects.

The overarching landscape concept was the idea of the picturesque landscape associated with ecological patchiness of the city .

Action research through engagement informed the whole design development from the grass roots up, in an iterative process whereby the opportunities emerged from participation with the local community.

Audits of access, ecology, soils, structures and heritage informed the design approach, so too the engagement process, carried out one to one or in small groups walking or cycling the towpath. This has been and remains an important process of building a network of interested parties. This engagement process informed the Guide and encouraged participation at many levels.

From the analysis and the discussions with the local community emerged a number of underlying design priorities that have driven the design.

Firstly, the history of the place, underpinning the emerging design.

Secondly, the inheritance of the Olympic games which transformed an industrial site.

Thirdly, the need to create a sustainable landscape with biodiversity and social well-being at its heart.

Design objectives:

The policy aims were:

- Increase access to open space
- Conserve heritage landscapes and the natural environment and increase access to nature
- Adapt the city to the impacts of climate change
- Make sustainable travel connections and promote cycling and walking
- Encourage healthy living
- Promote sustainable food growing
- Enhance visitor destinations and boost visitor economy
- Promote green skills and sustainable approaches to design, management and maintenance

The challenge was to integrate a structure of governance and management to enable land owners and interested local interest groups to reach consensus, get involved and take forward projects within the overall LLDC structure.

Current stage: 7 / In Use /RIBA Plan of Work



Sitewide Illustrative Masterplan (Rev 4.1), March 2012
Drawing ref. LCS-DWS-ILL-MAS-XXX-GLB-002

Canal Park

interview tale
Johanna Gibbons



14 December 2016

Why did you choose the title Canal Park 42”?

It is because there are two 42” water mains which supply potable water to the whole of Canary Wharf. 42” is literally the dimension of the pipes, which have a related exclusion zone above and around them. You can see these limitations as dimension on some of our cross-section drawings.

That’s why we called it ‘the power of 42”, because actually the development platforms were set back as a result.

If those water pipes hadn’t been there, development would have covered the whole area. So, we love them for that, they secretly have created the opportunity for a parkland!

As a result, there’s a whole load of complex constraints related to vegetation. And so, that’s where we started to develop this idea of grading vegetation away from the main in this easement area, a zone of influence which is influenced what’s above, what’s below that. It was one big process of negotiation with various stakeholders.



How was this project commissioned? How did the design process start?

I think in terms of design process it was quite interesting.

To be appointed you had to be on the framework and there was a design competition to get on the framework. You had to produce one A1 board, on a theme which was ‘Links beyond bridges’. We had to write a statement of design intent and provide a lot of information on our practice with evidence. Showing the A1 board...

You can see it just so happened that we were already thinking about quite a lot of things that relate to the Canal Park project in this submission, which is an illustration of one particular canal-side scenario, but relevant in that it was to do with that idea of integrating greater biodiversity and a shared vision of a water related community culture.

You have the people who live on dry land, the people who live on boats, and

The two 42 inch water mains in the southern part of Canal Park(2016)

I mean, I will never do it again.

It was an interesting experiment and we all agreed that, but in the end, we were left to drive the process as lead consultant, get the permissions and so on, to our cost.

Why did you analyse Regent’s Canal for a ‘precedent study’ in this early stage of the process?

We took the Regent’s Canal because that’s the linking canal, and I was discussing the project with the Friends of Regent’s Canal at that time.

I was going to their meetings to pick up the key issues they were coping with, like fighting inappropriate development. I became embedded with the Friends, who met periodically at the Canal Museum. I became familiar with the different boating communities, commercial and private. I became aware of issues such as the conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists. I used membership of this group as a fast track way to understanding what those issues were and how we could anticipate them in our project.

The ‘precedent study’ analysed the dimensional cross-section of the Regent’s Canal system. To understand the layering of materials. The texture and specification of the towpath. We wanted to see if we could recycle materials which are characteristic of the towpath, that helped to delineate space and shared use. We measured the towpath and it was a really interesting study, that produced valuable research document that could underpin our design concepts.

Not a long time ago the canals were quiet places, if you walk along the towpath now, it is heaving.

We did this because we were appointed just as the Olympic games started, and so we couldn’t get on the site at all. Once the Olympics were over, then we started to engage with the community.



You were commissioned for the Guidelines and Phase 1. What did this entail?

Our brief had two aspects to it: one was to provide the Design Guidelines up to Planning stage, and the other was to take forward a Phase 1 (stage 3 RIBA Plan of Work 2013) to detailed design.

In actual fact this turned into a big project with a challenging budget that meant a protected value engineering process, which was a massive piece of work where we collaborated closely with the soil scientist and engineer on our team. Then the LLDC decided to take it to tender with scheme design

drawings, which is what's happening more and more, rather than detailed design. I guess to save the cost of the designer.

The way we prefer it is to design a project through to the detail design, then on to production information, then tender it. When it's tendered early, there's not enough detail there to ensure quality. Also, we may not be taken on to make sure the project is delivered in the way envisaged.

How did the idea to recreate a picturesque landscape develop?

There was a service road that circumnavigated the Olympics and there was a disconnect of levels between canal-side and the Olympic parkland landscape, so that anyone using the canal was quite separate from the wider parkland.

What we wanted to do was to create a picturesque landscape that could enable that landscape transition in levels. In the picturesque landscape, there is a notion of industry being very much part of the scene, and a wildness to nature with dramatic topographical features. We created an escarpment to link levels and provide interesting, dramatic places where you could sit and look out over a lovely west-facing aspect with large species trees to define the space.

The project in the end was delivered by LDA, and it is so hard for us, as despite all our work, we know that this vision has not been achieved. If you look hard there are signs of the original concept.

One critical aspect of our design or instance was to negotiate positions for large black poplars reminiscent of the character of the original Lee Valley landscape, where these trees are being lost. I love these poplars because they are really huge and slightly unruly, and that's why people don't plant them because they're scared of their size, so that element of the landscape is being lost.

If you look at Constable's paintings of Essex, there are these huge beautiful trees in them.

We worked with a specialist, a local expert, in the propagation and

Landscape drawing



identification of specific Black Poplar clones. He took me to a stand of poplars in Barnes, in West London on the river, all unique clones. He got the permission to take cuttings from those trees to bring to our project to ensure diversity of clones were maintained, and we planned a community planting project. Poplar are easy to plant in ground from strikes (cuttings). But it is very funny how people do not want to engage with large trees. Because they think they're going to be a maintenance problem. And they think they're going to damage things. The trees are one of the biggest aspects of this part of London in terms of its representation. Now many our large species and deciduous trees are under attack from disease.

You know, the oaks are, the poplar are ... I mean, it's a really serious thing. We have to take that seriously and look forward, plan for climate change and ensure that we plant large trees for the next generations.

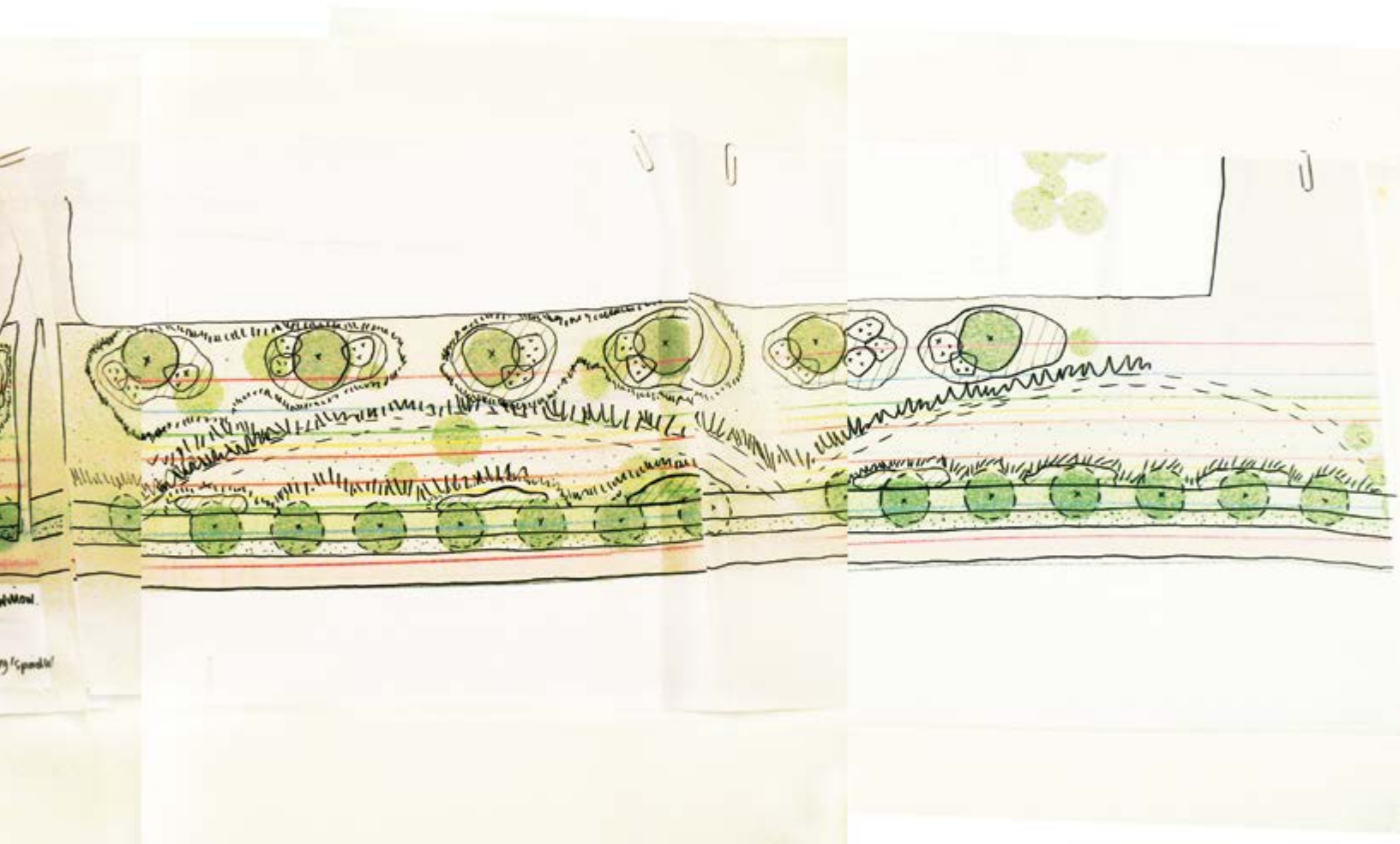
This is the element of action research that was lost from the project went new landscape architects to the project over. They didn't even bother to meet us to understand the small nuanced work we had achieved with the local community, which was lost as a result, which were important to ensure that the project grew out of the place, felt authentic and like it was part of the area.

I'm disappointed that we were not able to achieve these small but important aspects of the project.

I sometimes I get completely exasperated, and I feel bad because the promises I feel we made to the community were broken.

Another aspect was negotiating for pollarded willows to line the canal. To do this, I wrote a whole paper based on Forestry Commission research on willows from the nature of their root systems to the lignin content of their leaves to show how we could integrate these trees into the scheme in relation to the canal. It was a massive achievement to get approval from Thames Water and the CRT. Those are planted, and they look great.

In a sense, that's the thing that I like about our job so much, that there are



many things that people never realise, underlying its meaning, secret to the casual observer.

These willows perform an important marker, every 10 meters, so there are 20 of them, creating a kind of gentle separation between the towpath and the wider parkland. But also, to provide a place to sit with some shade. Willows are a signal for water. They are very much associated in Britain with water side landscapes. The coppicing creates either brushwood for fires or material for willow weaving. The trees have got purpose, to enhance the sense of place, the identity of the parkland, and there's a strong relationship between man and nature encapsulated in the management of the tree through the process of periodic pollarding, which is very much part of the history of the valley. The negotiation with the client was not only to do with various proximities it was also to do with character, and where pollarded willows traditionally were found. Actually, the Lea in some places turns into a river and in other places is canalised. If you look at it, it's very amazing, a sort of delta of different streams... The Lee Navigation, was built to short cut the river meandering.

The river Lea is incredibly important. It was one of the few rivers which went right up into the heart of Hertfordshire.

That's what I love about this project. That relationship between the natural and the man-made and the managed. Creating bird nesting and roosting opportunities in the soffit of the bridges, ensuring the lighting levels are low in these locations, yet ensuring there is enough light for enjoyment of the towpath after dark, as there is a large community on the water in London now.

This is a fringe area in-between the new Olympic Park and the Hackney Wick neighbourhood. So, on one side there is the Olympics condition and on the other side the existing community. How did you engage the local community?

There is a document on engagement we instigated for our Dalston project, and I'm very proud of that. So we are experienced in community engagement.

The community here was angry because they had suffered this blue Olympic site hoarding for a decade or so while the Olympics was under construction. And they were given lots of promises, that the Olympics would bring opportunity in terms of business.

But no one really gained from the games because everyone arrived into the east side of the park on the train and then could not exit on the west side. You were kept in the park, enclosed. No way to link beyond the fence.

So, they had to suffer that for over 10 years or so. We often find ourselves in a position where we are dealing with past planning situations that have not been well communicated, because we can negotiate well.

I never look at community engagement as something which waters down a scheme. I always like finding a middle ground, finding that place where everyone feels like there's something positive.

It is not a compromise in terms of it being less, it is a compromise that improves the result.

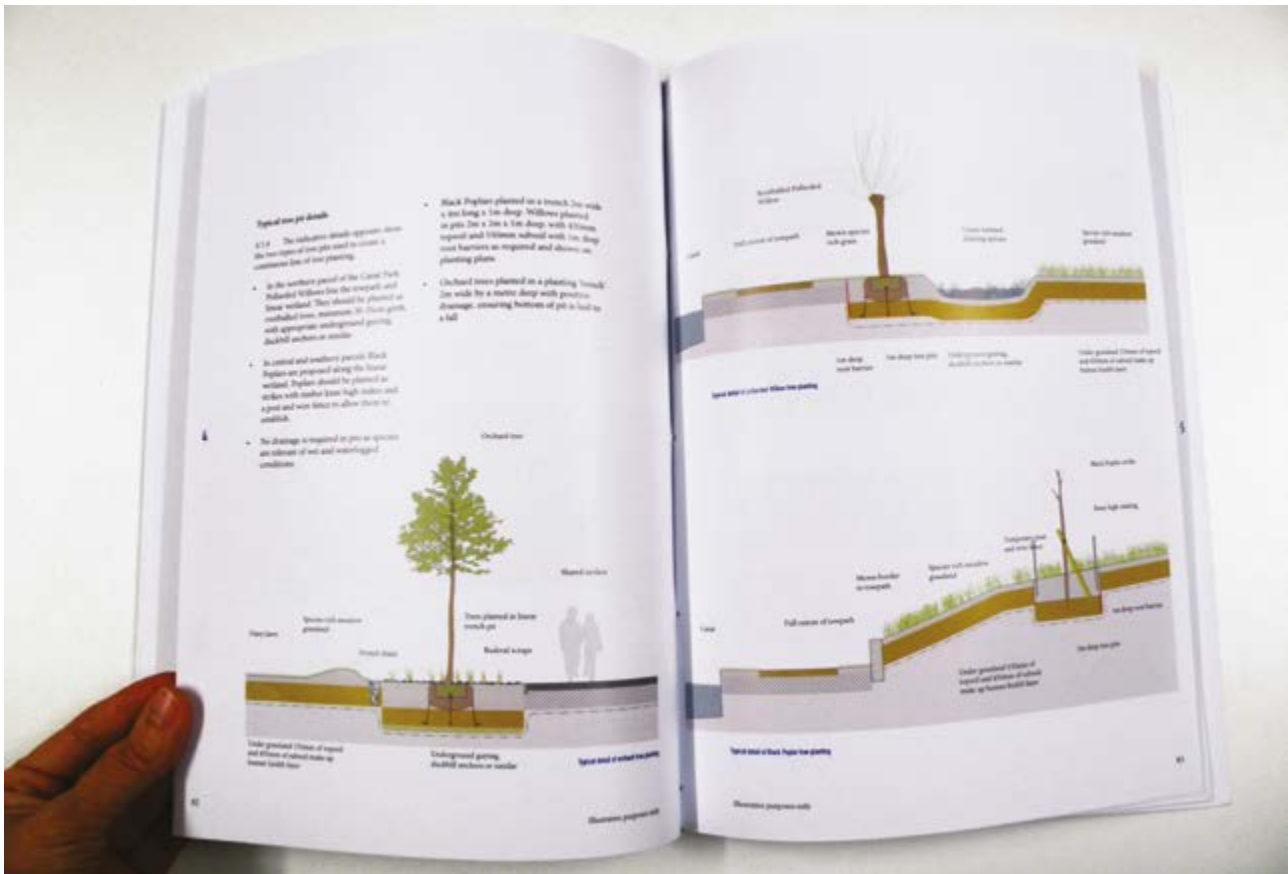
And often the process is about sharing knowledge, and a lot of passions that make the work much more relevant to the place and to the people.

There were a lot of people here who were really angry.

There were few people who have been quite clever, and negotiated a really good deal out of the Olympics, who got a whole new building, like the smoked salmon business on the canal, and another in a little cottage here right on the lock gates, a really lovely spot here where the Lee Navigation breaks away from the Lea. The rest, everyone else, all the artists felt that the ODA were really disingenuous.

Our brief was very much to engage with that community.

We want to be in tune with the local community. I did a massive amount



of engagement many different groups and interested parties, individuals and businesses.

We hired a boat, we invited them all on the boat, and 60 came. We cruised up and down the canal. We looked at the canal side from the boat. I asked a dozen or so people to stand up at the front of the boat, artists, residents, social enterprises and talk about what their vision was.

I wanted to experience together the site for the parkland from the water, because it's a very different perspective. And that influenced the way we thought about it. These were very important connections that we created. Several told us not to do too much. There was a lovely guy who worked for the Wildlife Trust who had negotiated with the Canal and River Trust to help look after the towpath.

Another who wanted to start a little cafe in a canal side out building. We thought that was a great idea because you get lots of cyclists. Cycleway 1 runs along the canal, there are lots of cyclists, great just to be able to stop and have a coffee on the lock side. He also had this ambition to engage young people in fishing as he had done so as a child. He remembered fishing here. He spent his childhood here.

I interviewed lots of people who had spent their childhood in this part London. Which back then was completely wild, quite dangerous and exciting for kids.

And I wanted to capture some of that back, in Canal Park.

I never interviewed in an office. We walked and while walking, we talked. For example, with the Olympic Youth Panel. This is a specific group of young people age 14-21 appointed to advise the Olympic committee at LLDC we said we're going to go on a field trip. And we did a walk along the canal highlighting the beautiful meadow areas, and we had a really good walk. We walked all the way up here to a community centre picking herbs. The two guardians who were looking after the Panel were rather bemused when said: Look, all this is for free! Take this home for your mums and dads to cook with! ».

And I gave a prize to the best wildflowers posy. Everybody responded. In the community hall we laid the flowers out, we asked the group to help us

hang the exhibition of drawings we'd brought with us, in doing became involved in the content of the drawings and how to tell the story of the design evolution. Liza Fior and I spent an afternoon talking to them and having been to site they were then more able to feed back. It was a really good day and all of them loved it.



What were the main ideas negotiated with LLDC?

All we wanted to do was to negotiate the ability to create half a dozen swims (swims are a little deck that stick out into the water, that you can sit on and fish). It costs nothing, absolutely nothing. But we didn't succeed, as there was a perception I think that too much was being given away to the community, that we were focusing too much on certain individuals. What a pity, as these individuals were only wanting to engage a wider network.

I felt I was on a mission related to various aspects of the project in particular: I wanted to get the swims installed; I wanted to plant the black poplars of unique clones; I want to ensure gooseberries were planted because gooseberry picking had been cited as part of the childhood memories of several members of the community who had grown up in the area, and I was enchanted by that image. Plus, gooseberries are self-sufficient, they are prickly bushes, and no one's going to walk through them because it's agony, and you've got all this fruit! We contacted a Scottish plant nursery because they grow very good soft fruit, and specified that nursery for the supply. Sad to think that I don't think this was followed through.

I think what has been achieved at the Olympic Park is magnificent, but it's a very clean approach, and we wanted Canal Park to feel authentic, with the right grain. So the other battles were the bench specification.

It was a really simple thing. Hackney Wick Fish Island have a standard bench, part of the Hackney street furniture palette. At Canal park you could have either folded down the Olympic Park to the canal edge or you could have leapfrogged the canal saying: « this is Hackney Wick neighbourhood, it is yours! Welcome! » There are always a few small signs of the character of a place, subtle but important, and one of those is street furniture. We thought it was symbolic that the Hackney bench rather than the Olympic

park bench was specified along the canal. And we were prepared fight for it... I'm not joking! Our specific perspective on the issue was to do with demonstrating our commitment to what was then the disenfranchised community of Hackney Wick.

Selina Mason, the head of transformation, whom I have an enormous respect for because she actually delivered the Olympics...and she's an amazing woman... but on this issue, we went head to head.

One time I remember well because my studio was at my house at that time, and we were coming up against the final drop-dead deadline to get the guidelines completed for a planning submission. Planning on this park had one clear purpose, which was to enable the delivery of the Canal Park with a specific amount of play provision and biodiversity, that's what we needed achieve.

So... yes... the Hackney bench, which is not a particularly nice design right, I don't particularly like them, but they're okay, this bench became an issue between Selina and I.

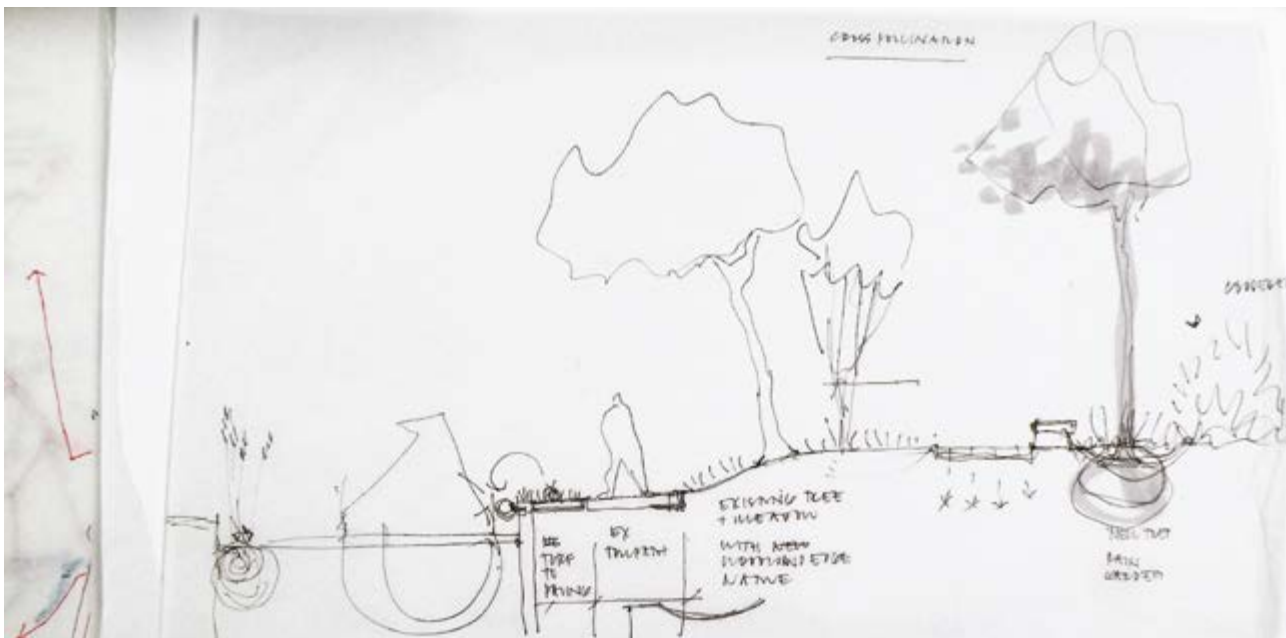
I mean there are few times of my life I've been completely lost for words. And this was one of them. Having argued for the bench from as many angles as I could I realised I wasn't getting anywhere, and I knew that the document needed a hard edit which was fine, because we needed to finish the project.

So I invited Selina and Phil Askew to the house for a late meeting, one summer evening. I thought I'll buy a bottle of good wine, and we can try to make the best of it. I made a mayonnaise and we sat down a four hour meeting. As it was summertime, it was still light at nine o'clock ... when we came to the bench issue Selina said she was not happy with it. We are going to have the Olympic benches.

Exasperated I said: «look, I really don't know what else to say. So, shall you and I wrestle in the mud? I don't know how else to resolve this! I must say Phil looked pretty horrified. »

In the end Selina delegated the decision to Phil, who was pressured by various planning colleagues to retain the Olympic bench. I was pretty upset. But another big idea, which again I don't know whether it happened or is yet to happen, was that in the Energy Centre, as a section 106 or planning condition, should have community use at ground level, opening onto the canal through a break in the wall to encourage the CRT to create a place where whoever managed the moorings could be based, within a small room with information on the moorings, the Olympic Park and the canal network, but also as a meeting place for the Friends of the Canal to discuss issues like the increased security issues on the canal.

Cross section sketch



We thought, if that could be negotiated, the Friends could have a little space there. That would be fantastic. And then the CRT could ensure they collect their mooring rentals and a little community hub could be established. I don't know whether that happened, but we really pressed hard for that.

What was the main aim of the project in terms of ecology and biodiversity?

The basic concept was celebrating the canal heritage but also the community. There are kind of layers of history and use of the site.

What we realised was where the Hartford Union Canal comes in, there's this really interesting junction of the two canals, and so we identified that as a spot to create a zone for commercial and community activities, because the view is fantastic, you look straight down the canal to the 'Gherkin' in the City of London, which is right on axis. It's an amazing view corridor there. In the other direction you look straight down to Canary Wharf. So, there are some really lovely views. You're looking at the stadium and the site is between two woodlands. We wanted to draw the ecology together between those two woodlands, to get that notion of biodiversity and play being linked. The idea was that there would be these layers, so that these ecological fragments, this mosaic of habitats would evolve in an opportunistic way.

Obviously, navigation was retained and the waterborne community was incredibly important, both in terms of the culture and in creating natural surveillance of the towpath. Canal towpath activities make the towpath safe. You can walk along there after dark because people live in the boats.

So, was it a project of connections: connections in terms of accessibility, of new and old communities and in terms of biodiversity?

This was probably our most important drawing. I discovered through our ecologist the target species, and so we decided to imagine making specific habitats and homes for the urban wildlife, like the Brown Banded Carder Bee.

The whole idea was a kind of ecological patchiness where you have the towpath, you have the waterway, the towpaths which is for walking and for bikes. And then you've got other routes where you can meander. Areas to discover, play or to sit off the towpath, a soft edge rather than the hard edge that would lock into the Olympic Park.

That idea of linear wetlands was incredibly important and sustainability was a fundamental driver. We wanted to develop language of slipways and a really honest canal side interpretation to reflect consultation feedback with the CRT and the Friends of Regent's Canal. The idea is that we would have these solid well-constructed slipways, that if necessary you could run a boat down to the canal-side not just for recreation, but as a working piece of the canal infrastructure. Those connections, the access, disabled access, those slipways were actually a way of bringing boats and people down to the canal side. We put them alongside, the old cobbled ramp and we slid a new one in. And that created fully accessible towpath for boats and people synthesised into one. So, we had a lot of discussion with all the boating community to agree where the pump outs would be, where the electricians would be, where permanent mooring and temporary mooring for visitors would be located.

I think if I hadn't joined the Friends of the Regent's Canal, I wouldn't have quite understood the various functional and cultural aspect of canal life.

In such an industrial area, what safety measures were adopted for soil handling and vegetation?

The other thing was that we didn't have a geotechnical survey. The risks on this project were significant because we didn't know the nature of the soil that had been placed in a previous phase of the Olympic transformation process and we needed to minimise risk and costs.

In terms of delivery, the whole viability of this project rested on soil management, because the cost of taking off site contaminate soil is massive. And so, we developed a comprehensive soil strategy with our soil scientist Tim O'Hare, which underpinned the design.

People don't think of soil in terms of cost, but it was for us, make or break. And we worked very closely with Tim because neither did we the volumes, we didn't have a full survey. On every project we deal with, we say: if we can



reuse the soil, you've achieved major value engineering, right there. Forget about reducing the specification of plants; that's peanuts, if you really want to save money keep the soil on site, treat the soil on site and you will save, in this case, millions of pounds.

It was the way in which we cut and profiled the soil influenced by specific information on the soil layers that in this case influenced the planting philosophy. It was a really interesting part of the project.

The Olympic Park has its notoriety above all because of the North and South park developments. Did LLDC consider the fringe areas, such as Canal Park, as important as those central ones?

There was no celebration at all or discussion in the press about the letting of this part of the project to our team, which I found really interesting. There were massive celebrations of North Park, massive celebrations of South Park, where as Canal Park was essentially a just the disposal of a planning condition. And it was really interesting because I think that in the mind of a client it was less important. And yet this was about an important existing community, the others did not as those new communities had not yet been built out.

I thought that Canal Park was incredibly important.



And in the masterplan context obviously, it was an incredible achievement forming part the 120 hectares of open space delivery in legacy mode. That was the absolute priority and obligation.

LLDC has a strong legacy vision, that is to be proud of.

Our Canal Park Design Guide was to provide for change, over time. The irony is it's all just happening in one go, as the market was that buoyant in London. But at the time, we weren't to know that would be the case. It could have taken a period of 20 years for all the detailed applications to come forward each having to demonstrate they'd taken the design guide we were producing into consideration. That was the purpose of it. The Phase 1 scope was enabling works, and part of our commission as well, which gradually grew in scope.

The guidance had to be worded in a specific way that was not too prescriptive but gave an adequate guidance. That's a great art. Guidance needed to provide enough for the planning authority, to be able to say: « I'm sorry, you have not demonstrated you have taken the guidance into account sufficiently» if necessary. To ensure the quality of the parkland was upheld.

What about the perception of this place now?

Feel that if people visit, and they feel comfortable, That's what it's about.

We are not interested in landmarks or putting our signature on a project. A landscape should emerge from the conversations with people who lived there, to make it meaningful.

The notion of linear wetlands, sounds really formal, but really all we wanted was for the lawns not to be a monoculture, that the soil would have its own

seed bank, that in time would express itself. We produced a drawing where we agree with the client the high insensitive areas of use, and the seeds mix and soil specifications were matched to those use patterns in order that those soils could be resilient enough. I found that a really interesting way to design with an existing resource.

Then we created scrapes for ruderal vegetation as there was a lot of infrastructure left over from the Olympics, and we couldn't afford to take it out. So, we thought: « okay let's embrace it, break out the kerb, break up the edge a bit, and literally scrape certain areas, excavate, and grow in those areas». By doing so we also would modify traffic circulation creating shared space for traffic and pedestrians.

Ruderal plants are resilient and self-seeded, and are represent a special urban ecology in themselves. And so again we drew on the idea of nature being opportunistic, which is a specific aesthetic, requiring specific maintenance know-how.

We promoted the idea of stewardship rather than maintenance. You have to know what you've got in order to know how to manage it. We wanted to retain an authenticity, to say: that is a meadow, you've got it already, to evoke an idea of a landscape that had gone before.

What about the other materials used?

In terms of the other materials. We took cues from the existing materiality of the canal. If you go along the towpath there's a lot of precast concrete slabs which are actually covering various services.

And it's a very distinctive feel when you cycle over them, they rock. It's a specific sound. So, our wetland bridges we thought should evoke that sound, and be specified of have precast concrete slabs, to reflect that visceral experience, and the utilitarian aesthetic.

Then there were existing cobbles, we kept all the cobbles.

Where there's granite we keep that, recycled timber, and then there's also engineering brick which is a feature of the canal, very hard wearing, So, you'd have these strips. Our design reflected this layering ... that would be the richness, of recycled materials where possible.

And then the benches, and the many specific canal features that are really important, like the mooring rings.

We saved this existing tree as a play tree, the LLDC wanted to have it removed. We said: «look it is already providing play! There's no need to spend money on new equipment, that would not be nearly as good».

So that was our attitude, resourceful.

The irony of it was that in the end the whole project was Phase 1, it was accelerated... so was the guidance needed?!

Design visualization



Are you satisfied with your work? What lessons were learnt from the Canal Park?

I feel that there should have been, weighted with equal importance, an appendix of the full engagement process.

I feel it's a pity that there wasn't a mechanism to deliver half a dozen small things that were important to the community, that people had bothered to express, gives their energy and time and ideas.

I think it would be just a matter of courtesy to document that.

Otherwise, I'm very proud of this work. I think that the research that we did, and actually the very initial idea which was something that Neil and I came up with in terms of ecological patchiness, really helped to connect this funny little string of spaces. It would be lovely to have a commission to review and reflect with the people who we worked with, but this won't happen because it's too politically charged. In terms of regeneration it is phenomenal that the Olympics were delivered in such a magnificent way, on time, with a legacy project that has been hugely successful and internationally renowned. I think London did a fantastic job. You know when you have anything that's 100 percent new, it is going to take time, isn't it? I mean that's all new. I mean that's why Canal Park was so unique because it was an existing piece of infrastructure the red line around the project was essentially meaningless.

The planning process had to deliver what London said it would deliver as part of the Olympic commitment. And I don't know how many other Olympic Parks have been on industrial wasteland but there were incredible hurdles in terms of contamination of the site. So, London started with a difficult one right there.

John Hopkins was a guy who had this vision for the landscape, the landscape as engineering, as the foundation for the games. And so, Canal Park was very much inspired by that and I think he was very clever to promote this idea because somehow people take it more seriously, because engineering



sounds like it's got substance. Engineering is a good strong term. Landscape brings the perception and engineering the function. I don't know how many thousands of people have been employed through the LLDC. But actually, you probably could take identify just a dozen people who actually made it happen, and John Hopkins was one of those. Another was Jason Prior who got the masterplan through the Parliamentary approval process. Very few projects require an Act of Parliament, there was also Allies and Morrison ...there were key people, at the Olympic Delivery Agency and LLDC like Phil Askew and Selina Mason. They made it happen.

Two hours interview...

What!

Canal Park Design Guide



interview tale
Philip Askew



13 December 2016

How and when did you start to work first with ODA and then with LLDC?

I started to work with ODA in April 2008 and then I started to work with LLDC in 2012. So at one point I had two jobs at the same time one at ODA and one at the LLDC.

Which are the main innovations that LLDC generated in terms of design process?

I think that ODA and the work we did set everything that was followed subsequently. I suppose that going right back to the beginning in my opinion is that the brief for the Olympic Park was really set out very clearly, was clear what the park should be. So the all drivers for the park was about re-engaging people in nature, beauty and landscape. And it is also about having a park which is multifunctional and human-eco-green infrastructure, one which works in a number of different ways.

So I think the brief of the work that we have done to build up today had a huge influence on what happened subsequently and is still influencing very extraordinary all sort of design that is coming for new housing or new development. In fact I think it worked from the very beginning as a park was laid out by landscape architects. Right from 2005 when the team of the Olympic Park was put in together, and even today, much of the project is laid out by landscape architects.

At the end of the games the LLDC is talking about the lessons learned from the Olympic games. Which are the most important ones for you? How does the LLDC apply these lessons now that the whole area undergoing transformation?

I suppose the huge lessons for me were all the way through the process of designing the park and getting it built. When I say process, I mean getting things right before you do it, really understanding what you are doing, really thinking about how landscape could work hard. Thinking very carefully about specifications.

We did a huge amount of work on getting the meadows to work making sure of the water issues in the park, thinking carefully about soil also for practical point of view.

And I think coming forward ensuring that the designs are more contextualized, to look at where they are. And they do a number of different things so for example constructing the waterfront we thought very carefully about how the landscape can help to connect levels and how it can be playable in a formal way, how it can create place for people lingering in summer.

And how it could provide opportunities for events, activities and also critically how it can provide biodiversity habitat.

What was the role of the landscape design in the whole process and what is the role now? I'm curious to know more about the concept of "landscape as a working tool".

I think for me and for John Hopkins very much the landscape is not decorative rather it may look nice but actually it works very hard, it is a great resource for education and play, it's part of the way to provide habitat in the city area and help the people health and well-being. We discussed much together on some of the issues of the climate change.

This is the idea of the working landscape that I think is very worthwhile because I think historically of course much of the landscape we see has been worked in a different way, typically for fruit production, farming or forestry for example.

So a very old principle shouldn't still apply in the middle of the city and landscape should work hard and what it does.

So I think in a way thinking about working landscape is perhaps taking the idea of the green infrastructure pushing into that further and I think it is an interesting issue, particularly when you justify why you do it in the first place, why you spent this money in it etc.

And I think the idea of the landscape as a tool kit is a truly strong one. And it works in many different ways and I think many of those ways are mostly invisible to people.

The community consultation or better engagement, the transfer of knowledge operated by the artists and the training of people involved in the construction are all signals of a successful process. Could you tell the story of this part of your work?

I suppose one of the first things to say is that when we set up to build the park, we thought beyond just getting the job done, so we thought about how can we make other things better. For example, how we can ensure that places are really accessible for everybody that have disabilities? And how can engage with the community over a long period of time which is very important, much more important than a single consultation process. So, we still have a team in LLDC which engages with the community and they have been involved over a decade now, so it is a very long process.

We have also a Youth Panel from the surrounding areas and they are actively involved in looking at the designs. We have panel of people who are disable and every single design is coming forward, they look at. So we take a process which is not only to make good quality public realm but it deals also with people. Certainly, during the construction of the park the Olympics set up schemes for training young people in landscape with construction skills, so I think we trained twelve people over the games and we still do that and other people who manage the park have a particular training, and in all of the construction work we require the developers and the contractors to do a minimum amount of training for people who work there.

So, this is very important because is very easy to exclude people and to gentrify and this is still a risk of course. But what we want to do is get local people involved in the process because they are very important. And this idea will influence other people and processes, it is very important to encourage partnerships with developers, workers and contractors.

This park looks great but I think, coming back this idea of working landscape, this is also important it is not just the function of the park for the landscape in terms of soil production, clean air or clean water or education, it is also the human side of things, how people are involved in it how they





How has the history of the place driven the design in terms of human activity that has shaped the river over centuries and in terms of inheritance of the Olympic Games?

It is very interesting and I think there is probably a controversy very early on because the process of making the site review for the games really involved everything. I think that what the park does so well is referred back to the underlined landscape, and the underlined landscape is driven firstly by water in the river Lea and secondly by the industry it supported in many ways. I think the intention of the park for the games allowed to really bring those things back into landscape, that where quite well hidden before. Bringing them back into landscape, water for education, for recreation, for example, has been really important and I think these are the things which make the place understandable.

On September 2016, Hargreaves Associates and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London won the Rosa Barba International Landscape Prize at the International Biennial of Landscape Architecture in Barcelona. The project was selected from a short list of ten finalists. The project was defined “massively transformative” as James Corner stressed as the most important criteria for selecting the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. How would you define in few words this project?

Yes of course it has been transformative because this part of London has changed. I think is pretty really extraordinary that the park, sitting at the centre, has been a huge influence on how people now think about the transportations.

One of the key things the park and the landscape has been created is confidence about the place, and I think it is very important because ten years ago this part of London was seen as a not very nice place, and it has changed very fast.

People that come here feel very confidence to live here, to work here and that has accelerated transformation. So I think it's being transformative in that sense. I think practically fortunately it is being transformative in the sense of how valuable this sort of landscape is in urban areas and how it can generate value, and when I say value I mean financial value and also in terms of value biodiversity in the city, and climate change in terms of dealing with water issues and flooding etc.

And I think that it helps more people have a sense of well-being. So when you look at the park, you understand how landscape has been transformative.

How do you imagine the park in 2040?

The first thing to say is that we have always seen the park as dynamic, it is not perhaps like an historic landscape, even if also the historic landscape is dynamic, and it not fixed in time so things will change, more developments will happen more people will live around the park using it and also the natural landscape will evolve over time because the climate is changing the way people use the park. So let's be very clear that the park has to be dynamic rather than static.

So for example in meadows we know that the plant population will change over time, and that's fine. There is something that probably we don't want to come but in general terms is about having a relationship with nature and working with it with a passionate approach.

So I'm not sure how it will be in 2040 but I think it uniform a critical part of London.

At the beginning of my research I've compared the design process to the recipe method. Ingredients are the design tools, the method is the design approach. But the most important thing is the chef's creativity that could be compared to the creativity of the designer.

What do you feel are the essential ingredients and the important stages in the recipe of a good landscape design?

Firstly, it is getting the brief right. I think is so important and it's often why things going wrong.

And the brief is something which sets out clearly how the design is, what you want precisely to do and the key issues for the designers. So for example here the brief was very ambitious and multifunctional and didn't say anything about how the design should happened and I think the design team responded incredibly cleverly to a lot of complex requirements. So the brief was very important at the starting point. I think two things in particular which are very artful are: procuring people, designers, contractors, and is fundamentally important, if you don't, you can be terribly wrong and I think in many cases landscape architects and clients don't necessary get involved enough in that process and I think, going forward from that, I think it is a really strong relationship in the design team in term of balances and relationships.





Things are procured in the process again it comes back to the idea of a working landscape. In a funny way it reflects how the design team work. And the other thing is collaboration, I certainly always encourage design team to collaborate, internally and with other architects. And it is important because the landscape is so complex and it concerns a lot of aspects and if people don't collaborate, it's hard to come back. And I think, me and John Hopkins as landscape architects, we were very clear on both those ideas.

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (2016)

I'm fascinating with the idea of landscape design reading, and the value that landscape provides. I'm quite obsessed with the idea that landscape can do so much for cities that are growing and provide a really important opportunity for communities to connect with the landscape, for education, play children and development.





5/549
Angel Building
London

5/549 Angel Building

data

date
2007-10

location:
London, UK

area:
2 ha

client:
Derwent London

design team:
Architect: Allford Hall Monaghan Morris
Landscape architect: J&L Gibbons
Structural Engineer: Adams Kara Taylor
Civil Engineer: Adams Kara Taylor
Services Engineer: Norman Disney Young
Lighting Consultant: GIA Equation
Planning Consultant: DP9
Cost Consultant: Davis Langdon
Project Manager: Buro 4
Arboricultural Consultants: JCA
Main Contractor: BAM
Civils Contractor: J Browne
Soft Landscape Contractors: TCM and Landform
Soil consultant: Tim O'Hare Associates

Awards:
2011 RIBA Award
2011 Shortlisted RIBA Stirling Award
2011 BCI Judges Special Award
2011 BCO National Award
2013 Forestry Commission RE: LEAF award for 'The Trees and Development Award'

Why this project?

The project is a development to regenerate an existing under-performing building, but the landscape design became one of the main challenges of the project

The interesting collaboration with the architects in bringing out innovations during the initial design stages



**key stages RIBA:
0-1-2-3-4-5**



before

Site location and context

The Angel Building is the reuse of a 1980s commercial building located on one of London’s historic focal points at the junction of City Road, St. John’s Street, Pentonville Road and Islington High Street. The Angel Building was once an unsightly and problematic building, significantly set back from the street with a poorly resolved landscape along the roadside.

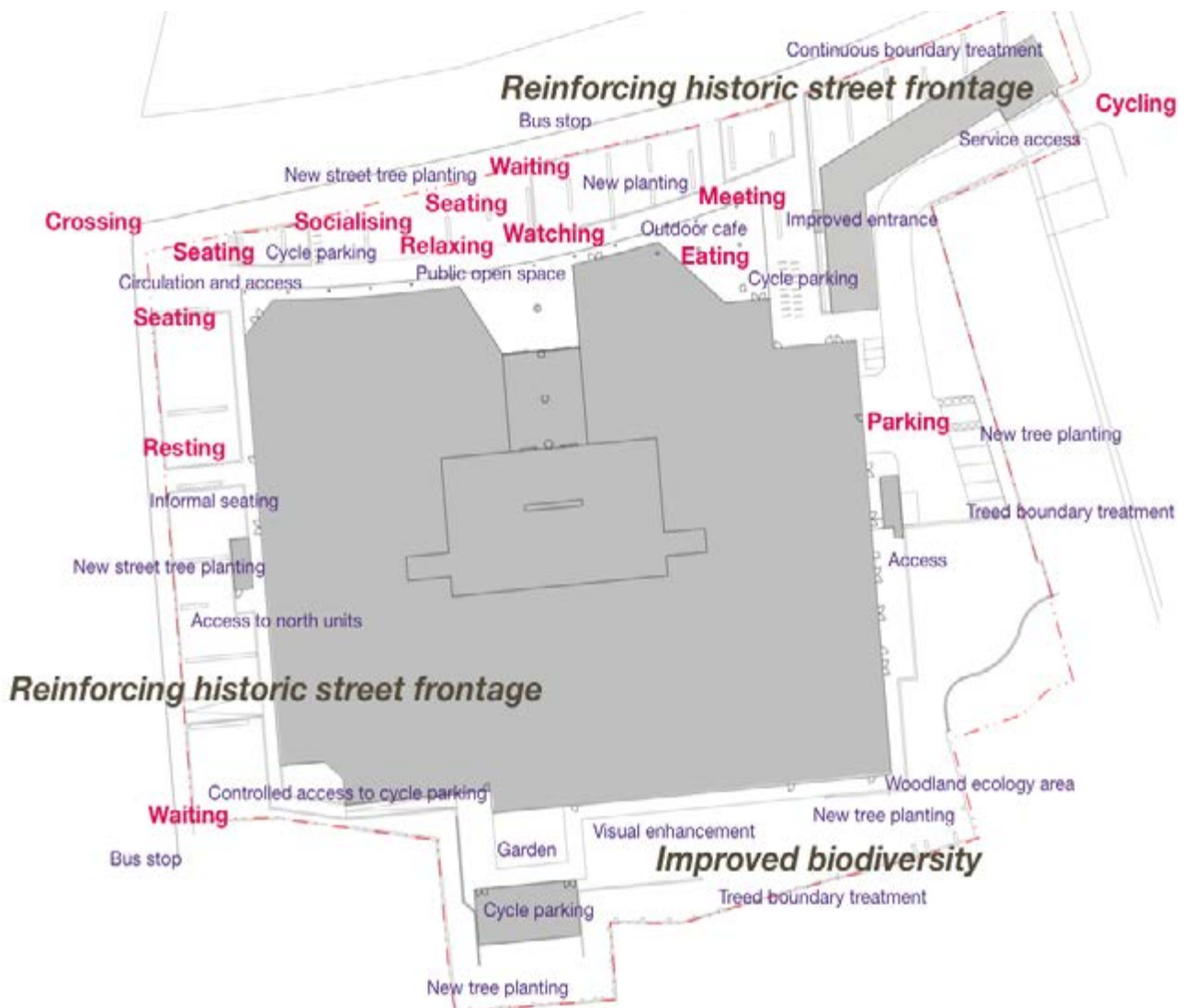
The new architecture provided an opportunity for AHMM and Derwent London to deliver a contemporary design integrated with the existing building structure and increase the quality of indoor and outdoor spaces. This project is one of many during a long collaboration between architect and client which most recently has been focused on the development of an innovative typology of office buildings, the ‘White Collar Factory’, with principal features being big spans, flexible floor plates, openable windows, large volumes, robust construction, and high quality public realm.

Historic context

The history of the Angel Building site goes back to the beginning of the 19th century at a major intersection of Pentonville Road and St John Street where cattle were brought to market at Smithfield. Georgian terraces were lost in the war, and replaced during the 1980’s with commercial office space occupied by British Telecom for several years until 2006. The departure of British Telecom highlighted many problems with the building that had an inefficient layout that had not aged well and unpopular with the local community.

Design schema

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:



The site is located in a Conservation Area and adjacent to listed buildings.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

The building is located on one of the main junction of the historic City of London providing a good opportunity to develop a high quality public realm and communal space inside.

Historical value

The idea was not to demolish the old building but to give significance to the heritage stratification within the area

Aesthetic value

The new building form and the high-tech façade integrated with the public realm enhance the aesthetic contemporary value of the project.

Communal value

The public space provides areas for meeting, relaxation and pause in a dense urban neighbourhood.

The Angel Islington
historical pictures





design process and key stages

“The project has been awarded a BREEAM ‘Excellent’ rating and includes a number of sustainable strategies including rainwater harvesting, biomass boilers, ultra efficient cladding, and low velocity water fitting amongst others”

The project focused on how to regenerate an existing under-performing building and transform it into a comprehensive, fully integrated scheme, to benefits not only the site but the area as a whole, providing both new modern office and ground level retail spaces including site wide improvements to the public realm.

The landscape consultants were recommended by the architects due to the sensitive site in the Conservation Area with protected trees. This constraint soon become an opportunity for the project, with the idea to maintain not only the building structure but also the majority of existing trees, which determined the design success.

Reinforcing the historic urban grain, creating a high quality public realm and providing enhanced biodiversity are core concepts of the landscape. The landscape integrates the development with the streetscape, in terms of form and function, with an open landscape of mature trees, hedges and ground cover that creates a transition element between building and street.

The articulation of the landscape is expressed as a geometric organisation inspired by the intersection of the historic development pattern and the structural grid of the new building, only interrupted by random groupings of existing trees planted in the 1980s.

Understory planting is clipped formally to create a luxuriant tapestry of verdant ground covers, rich in texture, that provides a moment’s refuge from the city life, and an alluring urban interpretation of the traditional art of topiary.

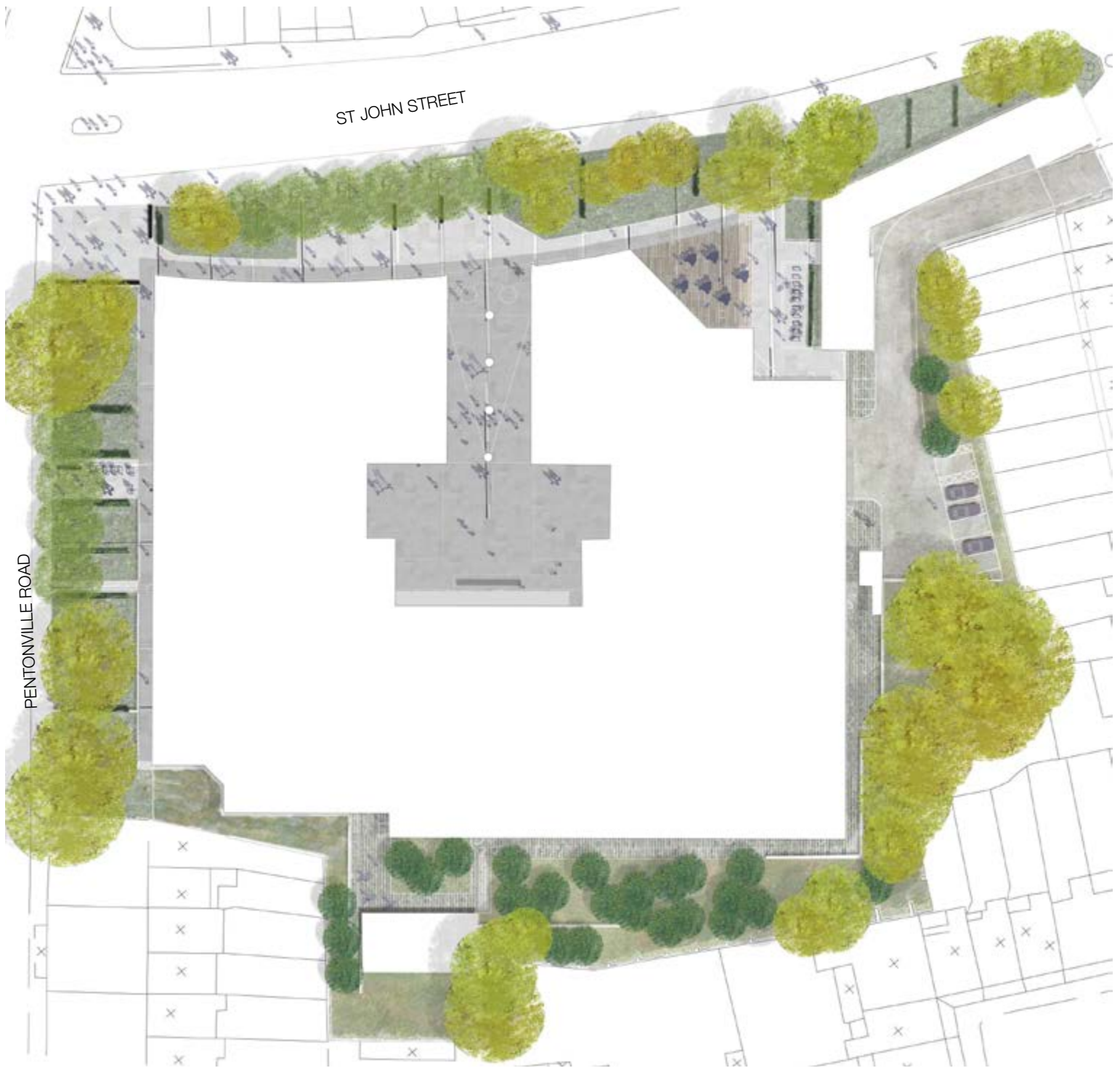
The ground plane is uncluttered and sensitive to the groups of mature Common Limes (*Tilia x Europaea*) and Caucasian Wingnuts (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*) that provide solar shading to the building; planes (*Plantanus x acerifolia*) in regular formation provides rhythm on the street, which echoes the façade articulation to create a strong connection between built form and landscape. In total 38 new trees have been planted, an increase of 48% on the total number of existing trees to address climate change, mitigating the heat island effect, through holding the ground open as soil, rather than paving to address best practice sustainable drainage.

Portuguese granite paving introduces a decorative quality that relates to the atrium paving and the structural grid of the building.

Design objectives:

- Creation of a building with a clear identity
- Regeneration of the Public Realm and integrate new green spaces with the building architecture
- Creation of comfortable office spaces
- Creation of active spaces at the street level
- Sustainable redevelopment to produce an energy efficient building
- Making the best use of existing assets, built and natural

Current stage: stage 7 / In Use / RIBA Plan of Work



general and specific key questions

How was the collaboration in the design team and the relationship with the client?

What was the decisive stage of the design process where you took the decision to maintain the existing trees? How did this solution interfere with the design development?

What were the disappointments?

Sustainability is evidently one of the main key words in the design team approach. In this project you have reached this aim transforming constraints to opportunities:

choosing to recycle the concrete structure of the unloved early 1980's commercial building

adopting the strategy to maintain the existing trees in the public realm

reinventing the new building shape designing a new and more energy-efficient glazed skin

In your view, what does sustainability mean? At what stage of the process did you recognize the importance of sustainable design thinking?

This project evolved with a deeper collaboration with the landscape architects. Could you tell me more about the architectural creative process, the interactions with the other specialist consultants, and the knowledge shared during this process?

After 6 years from the realization of Angel Building could you look back and summarize which strategies, collaborations and points in the process that made the difference, and the ones that have now lost their importance?

Could be this project be defined as a source of knowledge for the design process in terms of management, sustainability, collaborations and partnerships?

Are there other similar examples in your practice that compare with it?

REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.

Illustrations are from the same reports.

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J&L Gibbons (2008), *The Angel Building-Client presentation External works* 11_03_08

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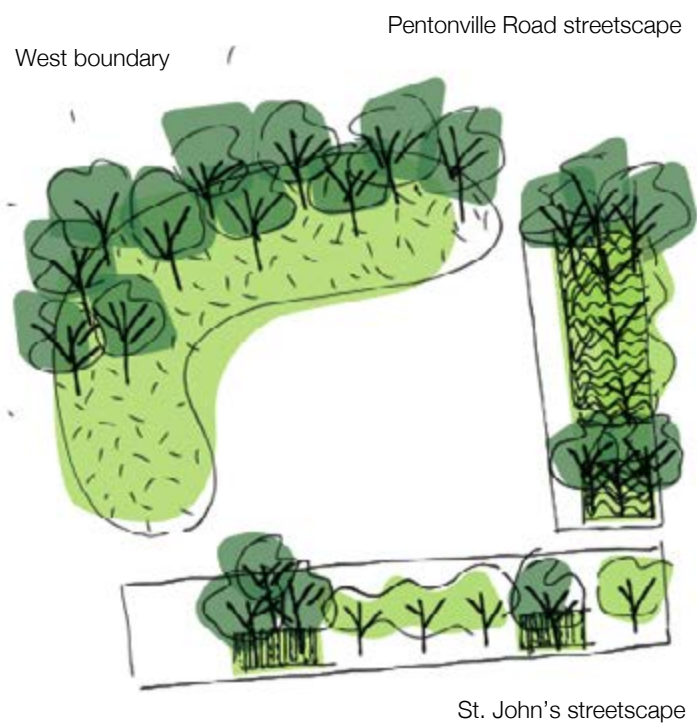
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AHMM (2010), *Angel Building*

AHMM (2010), *Angel Building Information Pack*

interview tale
Johanna Gibbons



15 November 2016

Angel Building has won awards from RIBA London, the British Council and many other honours. How did you come up with this design idea? Which were the key stages of this design process?

The stage C (stage 2 RIBA Plan of Work 2013) and stage D (stage 3 RIBA Plan of Work 2013) were the key stage of this design. That's when the main design ideas come forward.

Trees seem to be the main design element. Seven years after the realization, they are a strong feature of the scene. Trees reflect their canopies on the glass façade, that in turn mirrors the urban scene.

In fact, this was the big issue in the design, a theme of discussion not with the architects but with the client, who at the beginning didn't particularly want any trees, rather that all the trees were cleared so you could see the building.

I have never done so many presentations before, as on this project, on that issue alone. The client had never done a landscape project before, this was totally new for Derwent and the client couldn't understand how you could keep the trees and achieve the development objectives. So, it was an incredibly long and detail process. We got tremendous support by the architect who understood that we had to explain ideas carefully with the client. As part of this process we did a lot of visualizations, and I'm very proud of these as the project now looks exactly as we visualised it. It was a long journey before the client could see these trees in a positive light, because the existing trees were planted when the previous building 1980, and didn't relate to the new aspirations.

We worked closely with the local authority tree officer, landscape officer and conservation officer. We had promoted an agenda that concerned retention of the trees to ensure that officers in the local authority realized that we realized their importance. We told the client clearly: «if you do not respect these trees as existing assets, you will not get planning permission».



Angel Building (2016)
Landscape design visualization



Has this topic been relevant to the architects too?

Obviously, the architect was trying to maximize the site for the developer, because the original building was set much further back.

So, the issue was how far the facade could be brought forward.

We undertook an incredibly detailed survey with an arboriculturist of all the root zones of the existing trees, identifying where existing structures below ground were, using hand dug trenches.

By doing this we ascertained that, in fact, we could bring the building close up to the trees because below ground structures had contained the roots systems.

We then did a series of sections which showed how to remove those below ground existing structures, while protecting the roots systems through the construction process. That was a challenge, as due to the confined site we needed to demonstrate that it was possible to build the building through the tree protection zone.

We determine the methodology through below ground site investigations. We first agreed the process with the local authority and then we ensured periodic inspections by arboriculturist with the local authority officer present. We walked the site, and we checked off everything, we had monitors in the ground to test the soil compaction and moisture and we designed a special temporary construction road through the tree roots zone, that was approved by the local authority, specially engineered to take up to an 80 ton crane while being inert and porous.

To do this we specified special aggregates placed into a soil web so when it rained it wouldn't leach alkaline or acids into the root zone of the existing trees, quite a big achievement, as those trees today remain healthy.

Probably few would appreciate quite how technical an operation that was, and the client investment required.

picture is taken from AHMM,
Angel Building, Information Pack
photos by Tim Soare



The stages 1 and 2 of the RIBA plan of work seem to be the main relevant phases in the whole process because in that moment you set the design parameters. Could you tell more about these stages?

The architect insisted that the client needed a landscape architect. It was while he was working on the feasibility study that he recommended to the client that specific advice was needed, and he recommended us. So, we made a proposal to the client.

This was our first large project with this architect and client.

We visited the site and realised the importance of the existing trees, and so the first sketches were about calculating the number of trees that could be retained, and the ones that could be considered for removal as the location of the old building entrance was different from the proposed.

Then we set out how many new trees could be planted. Best practice is to ensure that we never plant less than the number removed.

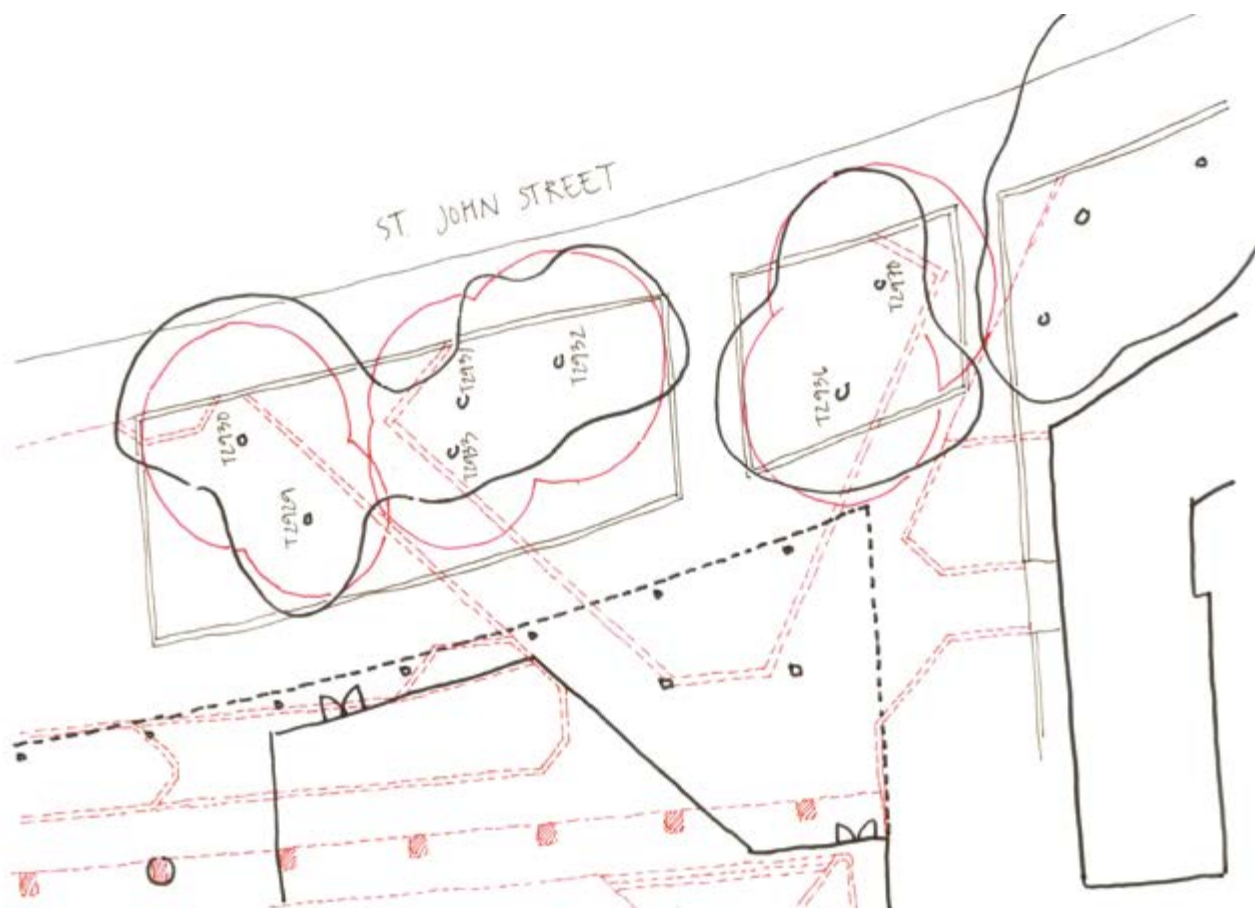
How did you succeed in persuading the client to go on with the project that retained so many trees?

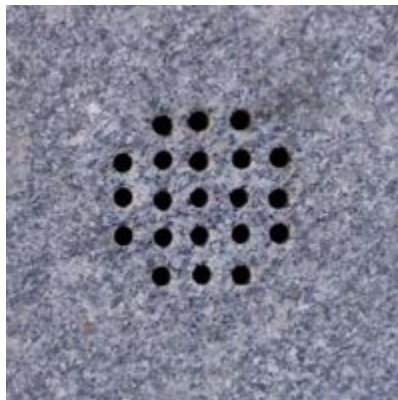
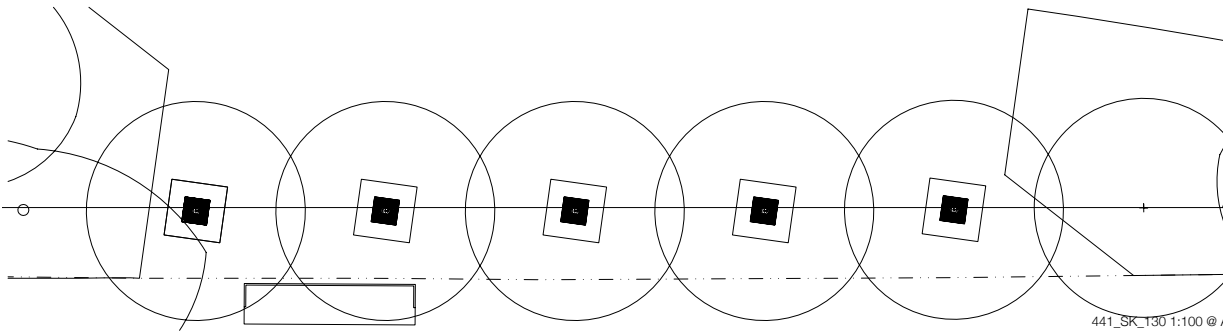
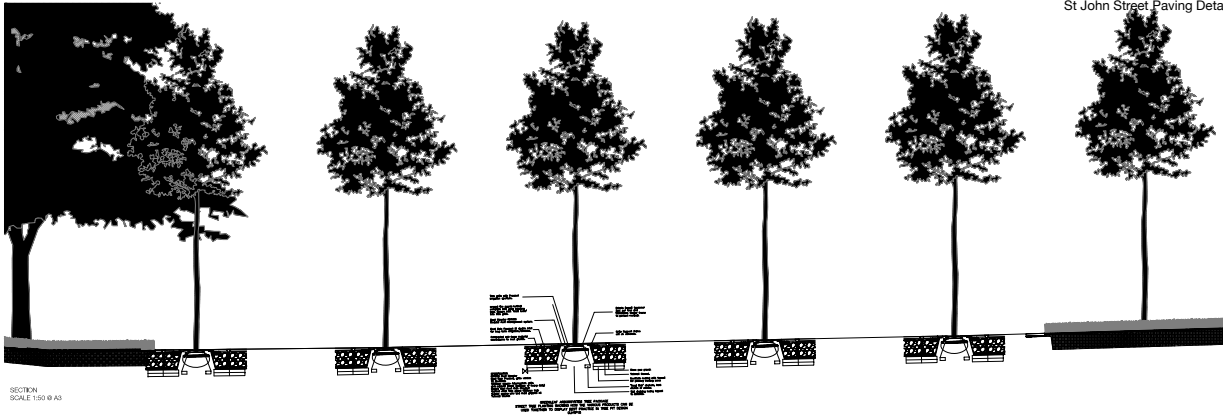
The client initially wanted only gravel and as many trees removed as possible. He was also a new client and I don't think he had collaborated with a landscape architect before, so it was a long process of discussion and persuasion. So, we got to know each other through that process.

This is a Conservation Area and the existing trees were protected, but another landscape architect might not have been so strong minded, and might not have taken the time to negotiate the retention of those trees.

Anyway, we worked closely with the conservation officer to agree a balance of how much could be developed of the site, and how many trees could be retained in order to inform the process and make sure the client could achieve planning approval.

Construction exclusion zones with existing and proposed structures





How did you select the planting? Why did you choose those specific varieties?

Our approach was a kind of layering of design, because the existing planting was not very successful and we got permission to remove certain small trees, that had been planted too close to the building.

The new building was to house three thousand people working in it, so we knew we needed to have a clear zone for that many people walking in and out of the building, while protecting significant areas of soft. I think it is quite a European looking project, you don't normally get that depth of planting in a commercial development in the inner city.

It was a big commitment for the client. We proposed a monoculture of box hedging that would tolerate the dry conditions beneath the large existing trees, planted at sixteen per square meters, and we developed a methodology to easily maintain and cut the hedge. This was part of our design thinking. I went to Germany to see Peter Flügge (International sales manager for Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium for the Lorenz von Ehren tree nursery) and we had a day together and I talked about what we had in mind.

He did a prototype planting area, and we agreed this solution could work well to give immediate impact.

It is a quite a German idea; a table top hedge with trees emerging from cleared zones.

I used photographs of the sample to show the client how it would look, and integrated this research into our visualizations, to prove I knew how it could be installed and managed, exact plant specifications to enable costs to be calculated, to demonstrate that it was feasible beneath these big existing trees.

That was a critical part of the whole process. Then an important design concept with the existing trees around the site was to keep the corner groups and infill these with the new trees. Proposed trees would be regularly spaced and they would be a single specie of plane tree, reminiscent of the rhythm of groups of large trees along Upper Street, closely planted.

I measured in particular the line of plane trees in front of St Mary's Church, they are about five-six meters apart and I used this reference as when talking about the way the Angel Building development would contribute to the wider environment, and the character of Upper Street.

We planted these trees in a trench below ground, in a high-tech tree pit with soils to ensure sufficient growing media and adequate drainage. We procured them two years in advance, with a five-meter high clear stem so that from day one, the canopies would over sail any double decker bus.

The benefits of a trench is that the tree roots enough lateral rooting zone and space to grow to maturity.

We looked at historic maps, old survey plans, and ran the hedge lines pretty much on the historic plot lines overlaid with the line of the building structure to create a rhythm that referenced new and old development patterns.

cross section
paving details



Evidently, this was not a simple soft or hard-landscape but a multidisciplinary effort. Were there any other overlaps between landscape and architecture?

Probably the paving. Inside there are very beautiful floors made with a grid of little white cubes so we ran that grid straight out into the public realm, and we set the tree locations on the grid (which is also the structural grid), then we infilled the grid with small Portuguese cobbles that have a similar texture.

What rules and protective measures did you adopt to plant trees so close to the building's facades?

There is a British standard (BS 5837:2012) called 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction' and there was also the arboricultural survey that determined the tree protection zones.

We also used our experience and best practices procedures outlined in the British standard, as every site is different.

We recommended to the client that he needed a soil scientist and arboriculturalist to do trial trenches, so we knew exactly where they protective measures were required, and to enable us to see how the below ground structures affected design.

Then we were able to propose the methodology for retention for the long-term health of those existing trees, including any periodic pruning, such as one of the Tilias, which will require pruning regularly because it is tight to the façade.

We emphasised to the client that he would need to take this carefully into consideration in the long-term management of the building, otherwise the tree would brush against the building.

That's the above-ground situation. The below-ground is more complex, here we laid the edge of the path alongside the tree protection zone as determined through hand dug inspection trench, rather than simply applying a British Standard formula. We then worked closely with the architects to agree on the position of the facade. This has resulted in the tree being unaffected, and a close relationship of that tree with the new building façade that gives a special quality to the scheme, and almost make it seem as if the building has been there longer than it actually has.

Plant selection



MATURE HIGH CLEAR STEMMED PLANES, ST MARY'S CHURCH, UPPER STREET, ISLINGTON



Is the soil survey a necessary assessment in your design approach?

What we do is we negotiate with experts, with soil's scientists with arboriculturalists, with local authorities, specialist officers, and that all influences the design.

At the Angel Building the way which the planting is arranged is directly influenced by the alignment of the tree protection zones. We didn't pave over any zone that were soft. So, the paving angles reflect where existing structures existed, then we trimmed up the geometries to make sense of it all.

Have there been specific design issues that didn't find an answer in the realized project? What did change and why?

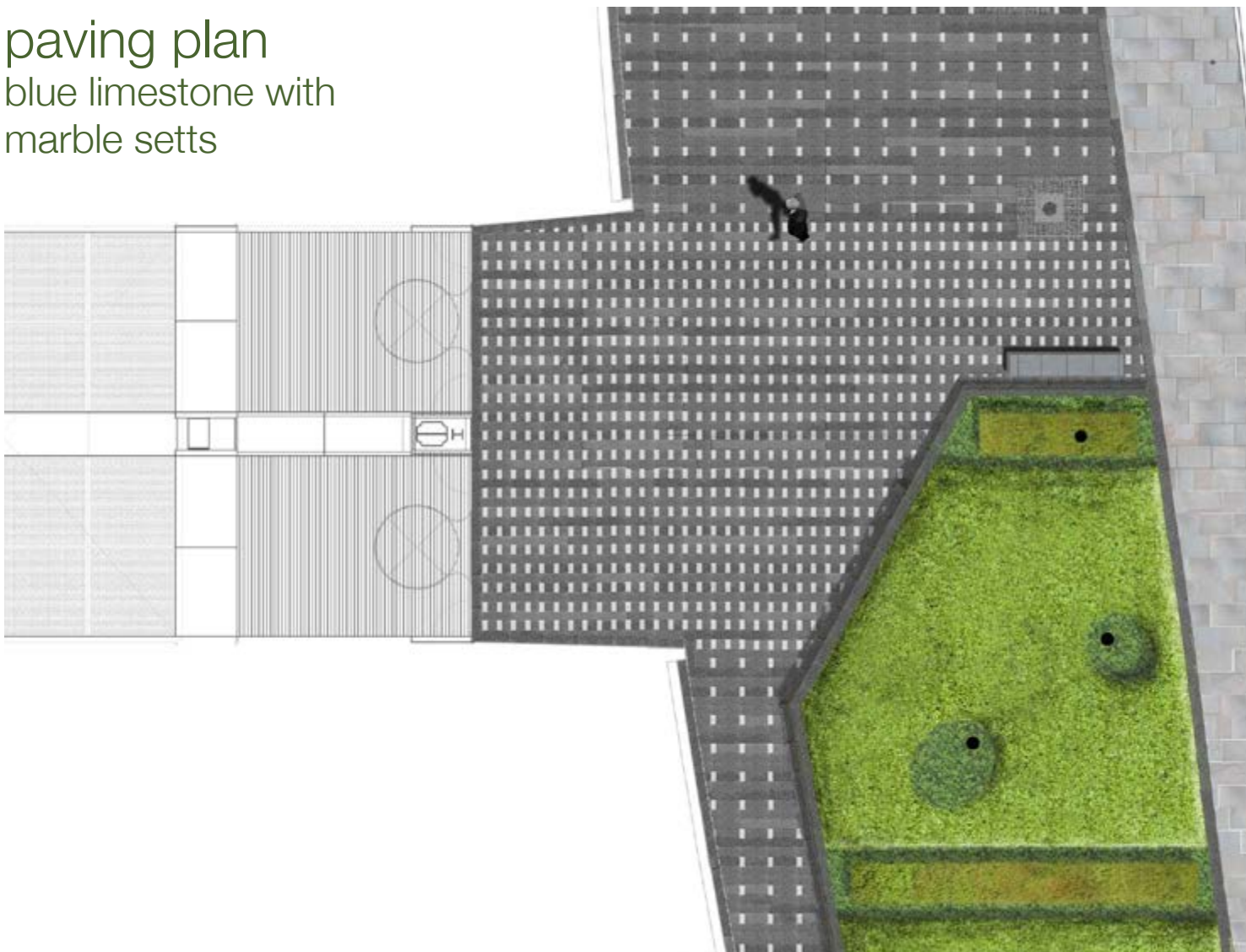
We had some issues with the soil. We wanted to have a landscape contractor undertake the groundwork and the planting, but a groundwork contractor was appointed, who are not typically interested in the careful handling of soils and growing media. We consistently talked about protecting from compaction, but unfortunately, they ignored the specification and some Taxus did not establish well.

The box (*Buxus sempervirens*) was planted along the front elevation. Moving away from the entrance we introduce Berberis, and up Pentonville Road we only specified ground covers, because we did not have the budget to plant box everywhere.

Where we found asbestos below ground, and we couldn't remove it as it was entangled with tree roots in tree protection zones, so we planted smaller box plants, collaborating closely with the soil scientist again, an important part of finding the right design solution.

In general, now it is all establishing pretty well.

paving plan
blue limestone with
marble setts



interview tale
Wade Scaramucci



1 December 2016

Sustainability seems to be one of the key words in your practice.

In this project, you have reached this aim or transforming constraints to opportunities:

- **By choosing to recycle the concrete structure of the unloved early 1980's commercial building**
- **By adopting the strategy to maintain the existing trees in the public realm**
- **By reinventing the new building shape designing a new and more energy-efficient glazed skin.**

How did the concept of sustainability evolve in your practice? What are the stages of the process in which you can recognize the importance of sustainable design thinking?

On sustainability, I think it's true that it underlines a lot of our thinking. So, it is integrated and really works.

It's a point about being very clear about making super flexible and super enjoyable buildings that people, regardless of use, enjoy and appreciate.

The way we think about sustainability is that it is more about being pragmatic.

And then the second thing is really thinking about technology and how technology really allows us to do more things efficiency, in a more sustainable way.

They're all processes that are designed to help everyone cooperate.

There are many things at the Angel Building that can be grouped under the heading of 'sustainability'.

But in a way, they were being done because they were the really smart and clever things to do.

The carbon storage strategy or the reduction of water or humidity and well-being, biophilia and all that sort of thing was part of this.

I believe it's very hard to convince the client to do something that is sustainable just because we say it is, because it is going to cost more than not doing something. So, what we were trying to do was to set up a series of very good reasons to incorporate sustainable design, but that actually have cost benefits to the client.

In other words, I wasn't just saying «let's all be green». We were saying «we should save you money and be green at the same time».

We found that there's a lot more sustainable measures and possibilities met by doing taking that approach.

In this case, how did you persuade the client to accept these sustainable measures?

At the Angel Building, the concrete frame is a great example.

We did a lot of work with the structural engineers. If we knocked the building down it could take another four months for rectifying frame and detail in particular. Time also has a financial value and everyday on site, you're not making money.

We did some work to say how much time we could save. We saved about four months on the overall construction time by reusing the frame, which was also a lot of money saved.

I mean, it's an unusual way to think about it, but it is actually a very pragmatic approach. I think we all should be thinking about things like this now.

There's a great story in keeping a concrete structure rather than not carting it away to some land fill. So, that is one example of setting the path of a cooperative journey with the client opposed to fighting the all way.

Sustainable also encompassed the idea to retain the existing trees, didn't it?

Yes, the existing trees are important too.

Artfully, Johanna Gibbons takes a lot of responsibility for that.

Before this project started, those trees were planted because Islington Council wanted to safeguard the land for road widening, which never came about, so for years these trees were growing.

Right as we started this project Johanna Gibbons and Islington Council decided to put a tree protection order on all the trees, which I think it was a great idea because we all wanted to save them. You cannot get trees that big if you buy them new.

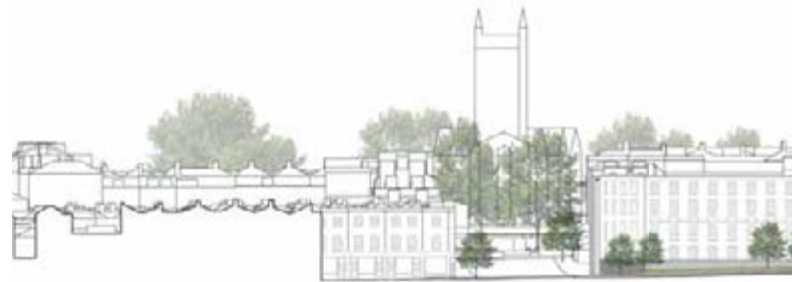
There was one or two of those trees that were in the wrong location, but in this particular case I didn't have that option. And we always supported the idea of retaining as many as possible because they're magnificent and Johanna Gibbons made an amazing job of stitching it all together.

Johanna's approach is very sensitive, it's very soft and very detail oriented, for instance in the different kinds of leaf form and foliage cover. The party that really found it challenging was the contractor because it was very difficult to work round them and protect them adequately, due to a tight site. It was a real problem and quite expensive for sure. They didn't like it. But I quite enjoyed it! There was only one tree that suffered, but it is still there and growing well now.

I think this was a difficult project, because we were doing a really rigorous exercise with geometry, while Jo was having to stitch all that kind of softness together linked with the hardscape, she did an amazing job and I think it was really successful. But not at the expense of making good urban space.

(Showing a window just in front of us) Look at that window, there's a lot of technology in that, it is an expensive window, but it really drastically changes the way you feel in space.

cross section



This project is relevant even for the high technology used in it. Could you tell more about your approach to the new science technologies in architecture?

At that time, there were a lot of things new, that are now more commonplace, but then they were maybe not radical, but certainly leading-edge technology. For example, the rainwater harvesting.

J&L Gibbons did a lot of work in terms of plant selection in this respect.

I think the real testament is you get a building that people genuinely enjoy and enjoy being in and businesses want to be located there.

And then you get all the other things, the other layers.

We always try to do the right thing not because we are forced to do it, but because it makes sense. Some of the things that J&L Gibbons did, or some things that we did concerning recycling the frame structure, were choices that I think were incredibly effective, but no one measured in terms of carbon footprint. The sustainable perspective must be more holistic.

I think it's less about sustainability as principle, and more about science technology.

According to you, which are the most important stages in the design process? Could you tell me more about the creative process behind the Angel Building design?

We start with a series of strategies. What is relevant to the way we designed it was figuring out what was important, what was going to make a series of spaces, and what was going to make this building our own.

So, in the case of Angel Building there was a number of pretty clear strategies set early on. For instance, we were going to retain the frame structure. We are going to achieve simplicity in timelessness and we weren't going to do anything fancy. In fact, we did try to express the frame of the building in the cladding saying, why not show the structure?

We're going to make one really legible entrance.

We're going to make the heart of the building so magic that you would not be quite sure whether it was a hotel lobby, an office reception, or a coffee shop. Whatever it was going to be, it would be a great space to be in.

That's what the Angel Building is about, the rest is detail.



ALLFORD
HALL
MONAGHAN
MORRIS

Angel Building

Information
Pack



Was there a fruitful collaboration among the many experts on the site? How did you share strategies across the disciplines?

How did we do it? Each project in this office, for the most part, has maybe two, three, sometimes more if we're lucky, clear strategies accepted.

As I said, sustainability is a part of that, getting the right idea in the right place, that's my partner-in-crime.

I think it's easy, as architects, always to think that this is 'our' building.

It is not our building. It's client's building, we designed it, but it wasn't just us that designed it.

There were eight structural engineers working on this, there were mechanical engineers, twelve of those working on it, landscape architects working on it, three of us working on it. So, in a way all those people are part of the trick. I think one of our missions is learning how to engage a team to get the best out of it. This is design itself, this is how you develop a collaborative approach, keeping everyone's enthusiasm, which then usually generates great ideas.

That's really tricky, the bigger the building, the more complex that is.

And so, there's a lot of energy required in working with different groups at different times.

Angel Building, I think, is a really difficult project and I really like Johanna Gibbons approach that, as I said, she is always a sophist. I think it's a really happy marriage between her kind of eye for detail, species of trees, shape of the geometry and in keeping all those things balanced.

During the whole process, did you use specific design tools that have affected the design outcome?

There was a lot of discussion, a lot of sketches, a lot of mock-ups.

Our client loves landscape but doesn't do a lot of landscape and he was having problems visualizing how it was going look, and so what Johanna did was a lot of visualizations of the spaces.

We do a lot more of that now. Now we do virtual tours, they are not perfect but it's another technique in explaining the project. I think the more tools you have to design the better.

After seven years from the realization of Angel Building, could you look back and summarize what are the strategies, the collaborations and the main stages and successful aspects that made the difference, and the ones that have now lost their importance?

I like the contrast. The inside is so different from the outside, two different hands, thinking about it in different ways, and I like that.

My favourite thing about it is that it's been around seven years. I was there yesterday just by chance and they really take care of it, including the public spaces. It's not perfect but it's really wonderful. We go back and see it and see people doing all the things that we imagined they would be doing.

Thinking about things that were most successful for me...

There are some kind of unique details where the new building touches the old building which I was really excited about.

I love the idea that you can feel the skeleton of the old building in what is actually a new building.

My biggest regret is that I wish we could have fitted out more the office spaces. We didn't actually choose the furniture.

The bigger challenge is on that corner there are some big buildings. So, stitching and building in places like that is always tricky. And I think our client didn't appreciate the trees in the beginning. They're so big you can see, look at it. But I think a lot of people like the fact that there is a kind of a sense of discovery, as you move around and you realize it's like one whole thing.

I like it.



By your design thinking, what is the role and importance of the historical stratification of the site?

So as a practice that works in London of course we're going to get more work with historic context because this is not a new city, everything has been built on a couple of times, at least. So, it's not unusual for us to work in that context. We can look at some of these projects that we've taken and adjusted buildings and there's all sorts of things we've done to them, whether we keep the frame and build a new building behind it, or we keep part of the building, build a new building on the top, or install new buildings into an old building.

It's a funny thing because I grew up in the United States in a city founded in 1970 where everything is new. Everything has been built once but a lot of things still haven't been built, there are empty spaces everywhere.

In London, the fascinating thing was that you can look at a street like Upper Street or a number of streets around London and you realize there is very happily 17th century, 18th century, 19th century, 20th century all working together.

And it's a great thing about London. Most buildings have been rebuilt or adapted at one time.

We do a lot of work with existing building and I think in a way it adds a lot of richness to the project.

The truth is that context and rules are good to have. There is a lot of work involved in designing building with a lot of constraints. Sometimes it's very hard. You start by saying I can do anything, but there are actually an endless number of things you could do.

We also work in United States where there may not be any rules. No rights or wrongs, maybe no context, in some cases makes it much more difficult to get right, rather than starting with something.

So, context and historical context are useful sometimes. And I personally have no problem with mixing buildings of different eras, in different areas. My personal approach is much aligned with how we work in London.

I think there are new buildings that are good buildings and new buildings that are poor buildings. But there are also buildings that are 50 years old that are good buildings.

That's the higher level of conservation; keeping good solutions and ideas guided by a universal sustainable approach.

mockup by AHMM,





picture is taken from AHMM,
Angel Building, Information Pack
photos by Tim Soare



6/571
Old Bearhurst
Sussex

6/571 Old Bearhurst

data

date
2014 - ongoing

location:
Sussex, UK

area:
5 ha

client:
private client

design team:
Architects: Carmody Groarke
Landscape architects: J&L Gibbons
Structural engineer: Stephen Evans

Why this project?

It is the only private project chosen and it highlights the differences and similarities between public and private client

It is a landscape project where the design thinking finds a fertile field where to apply strategies and design tools in a private environment, based on understanding the geology of the landscape



**key stages RIBA:
0-1-2-3-4-5**



The area is located amongst the agricultural landscape of East Sussex, close to Stonegate station, that offers a frequent train service direct to central London.

The site is bordered by the railway line to the South and it is mostly enclosed by woodland. The house is a converted nineteenth century farm building once used for drying hops, converted by architects Duggan Morris. The project won RIBA regional award, and was shortlisted for RIBA Manser Medal for the best house in the UK in 2012. The area is characterized by extensive oak and hornbeam woodland blocks with chestnut coppice, much of this is ancient semi-natural woodland. Many scattered small farm ponds and hammer ponds are relics of the iron industry which thrived in this area in Medieval times. The countryside is pervaded by a sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads. The Design and Access Statement for the planning application scheme noted:

“The application site consists of two distinct areas, separated by a hedgerow of trees, fencing and a large pond. The western portion of the site (garden area) comprises the residence building, terrace, grass lawns with scattered trees, a small orchard and a pond. The eastern portion of the site (meadow area) comprises a grassland meadow with several mature trees, including orchard trees, and a moderately sloping topography toward the south-east”¹.

Historic context

Until the end of the 17th century, woodland management of coppice for the timber, pottery and iron industries was of immense importance to the local economy and the evolution of the present landscape.

The character of the landscape was established in the 14th century through seasonal pannage and transhumance. This land management contributed to the articulation of a topography of connect woodland pasture. Through time, it became a place of permanent occupation. Settlements were highly dispersed with irregular sized fields. Each farm had a water supply that was

¹ Carmody Groarke, J&L Gibbons (2015), *Old Bearhurst - Artist's Studio Design and Access Statement*, p. 10





often a pond. This particular land has a history of human settlement dating back to the mid 13th century. By the mid 19th century, Old Bearhurst was a busy working farm and the main residence was in fact the ruin in the lower field, which in 1952 was damaged by fire. As a consequence, the oast building were converted to residential and the old farm house has since been transformed to a studio as part of this project.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The application site is located with the Joint Character Area High Weald Area122, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Assessing significance:

Evidential value

It is a vibrant working landscape with thriving land based activities which conserve the characteristic features and wildlife of the area. The whole countryside has an evidential value in terms of ecology, biodiversity, culture and perception.

‘The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is therefore a landscape of considerable time–depth and international significance, cultivated, occupied and equipped with route ways by the time of the Norman Conquest’².



Historical value

The setting of historic buildings the landscape features within the designated landscape are important element to conserve and enhance. The landscape structure of hedges, ‘shaws’, ponds and ‘gills’ (streams) are evident as a memory of past landuse patterns and local economies.

Aesthetic value

Topographically higher than much of the rest of the High Weald and the Low Weald to the south, there are outstanding views across the High Weald to the Downs.

Communal value

Protect and manage historic field patterns, conserve boundary features, maintain water levels in drains and ditches, enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels, address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management were all direct and indirect actions related to the garden transformation to provide long-term environmental, biodiversity and amenity benefit.

² ibid.



The landscape (2017)
Drawing - on site (2016)

design process and key stages

Having completed the redesign of the main house, the client asked for a proposal to restore the old ruin, add a guest wing and transform the landscape. From the beginning, the ruin was structurally at risk and it required immediate remedial action, being an isolated structure with wonderful views over the landscape. The context and features of the landscape inspired the design development from the start. The landscape plan emerged from the heritage roots of the landscape, taking into consideration the geological, topographic and hydrological characteristics. The proposal sought to reinstate wet woodland and coppice management to articulate and link all the parts of the landscape, originally two fields, and to restore and maintain traditional practice associated with these features. The plan highlighted the opportunity for new planting and the establishment of typical arboreal species that would have historically characteristic of the area, and for the landscape proposals to emerge from a consideration of traditional landscape management.

Design objectives:

Biodiversity: Enhancement and landscape management to take advantage of linking habitats. Conservation is achieved through the traditional management practices including coppicing and meadows. Biodiversity is enhanced through features that take advantage of the clay soils to impede drainage.

Soil: the high clay content mean that the soils are relatively impermeable and therefore to ensure establishment and mitigate for waterlogging, a soil scientist provided detailed specifications and robust and tolerant plants were specified.

Current stage: 7 / In Use / RIBA Plan of Work

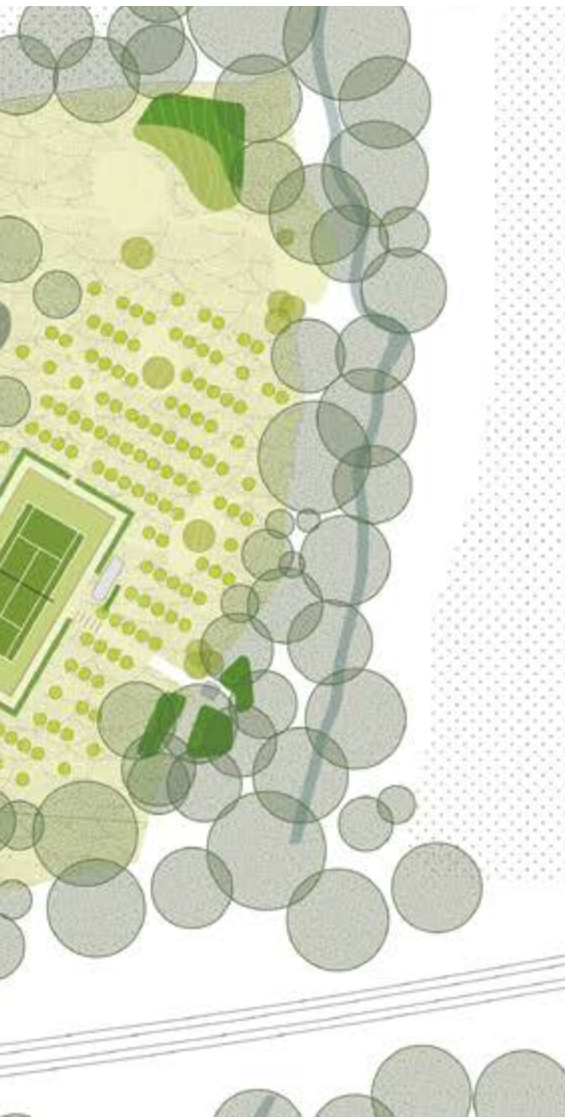
How did the ideas emerge?

How was the collaboration with the architect? How did you develop your relationship with the client?

You have said: «this is the design of a landscape and not a garden design». How did you translate this idea into in reality?

What are the differences between a private and a public client? In each case, what approach works best?

general and specific key questions





The 'Hermitage', cross section
Wadhurst platform (2016)





REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.
Illustrations are from the same reports.

Carmody Groarke, J&L Gibbons, (2015), *Old Bearhurst - Artist's Studio Design and Access Statement*
J&L Gibbons, (2015), *Old Bearhurst - Client Presentation*
J&L Gibbons, (2016), *Old Bearhurst - Client Presentation*

- The 'Hermitage', visualizations
- The 'Hermitage' (2017)



interview tale
Johanna Gibbons



7 November 2016

There wasn't a formal interview for this project. These are notes from a conversation during the journey to Stonengate for a site visit, rather than a recording. Here, in summary, there are the main issues.

new features

*two fields transformed
to one landscape with:*

- orchard
- tennis court
- studio
- guesting
- swimming pool
- meadows
- wetlands

Old Bearhurst is one of the few private projects designed by J&L Gibbons and it is the only one on site at the moment. The reason is above all, is a commercial one. However, it is interesting to find in so many solutions adopted in this private project that echo of ideas, approaches, tools and strategies widely used in the public space projects.

The client is a well-respected and highly successful developer that following the decision to move to live with his family in the countryside, bought a property in Sussex and commissioned Duggan Morris architecture practice to restore the building originally used for drying hops. The project in 2012 has received many awards for the significant architecture quality and the clever transformation of a rural building in compliance with the historical features, yet contemporary in form.

A few years later he made the decision to restore the original farm house destroyed during a fire in the 1950s. The project commission was awarded to Carmody Groarke architecture studio, and later J&L Gibbons was commissioned for the landscape design.

The design team enjoyed sharing ideas and strategies, although the architectural plans were well progressed when J & L Gibbons were first appointed.

The architects' proposal is a soft transformation of the ruins. The project fits like a new box into the old box, it uses the walls still there by transforming their function and aspect. The old farmhouse thus becomes a contemporary 'Hermitage' located in a relatively remote place, but with panoramic views of the landscape.

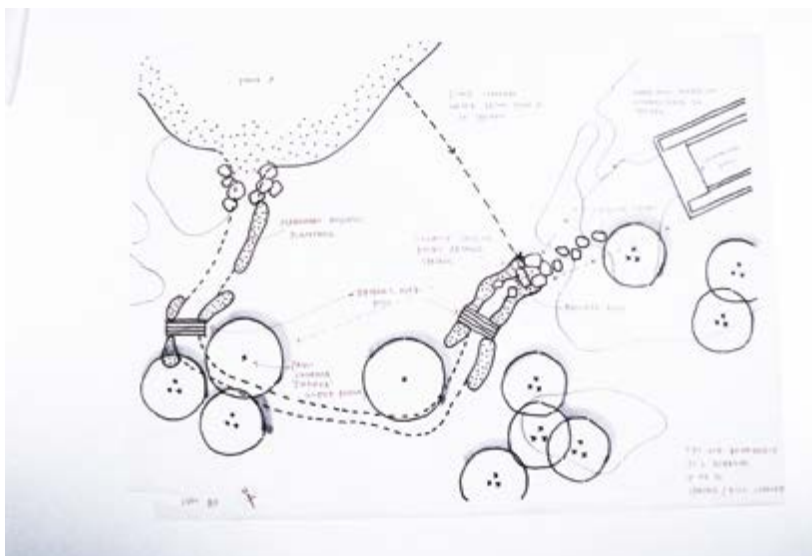
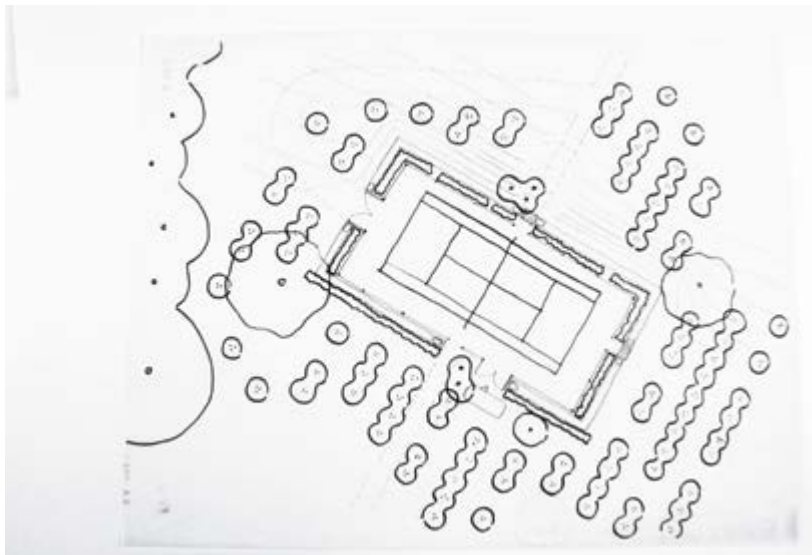
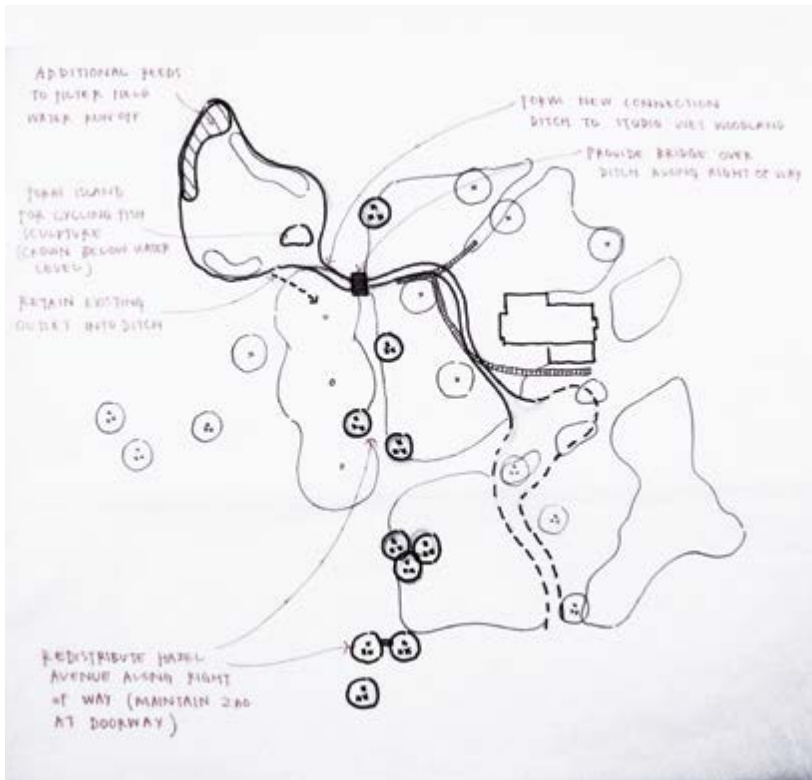
The garden project is more about landscape than garden.

The main design objectives were:

- Landscape as a management plan: for keeping a project alive in an agricultural context it is necessary to play with time and, if necessary, to anticipate time. Here the project is both a new proposal and at the same time, it aims to provide tools and strategies to preserve and enhance the topological, geological, ecological and naturalistic features within the area.
- The project is inspired by the wild gardens of William Robinson. The parallel between images taken from the book 'The Wild Garden' and the photographs taken are clear, inspired by the sensations and reflections during the very first site visit.
- In 2014, the exhibition of the German painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer, his large canvases depicting woodlands and natural forests were another inspiration, and the opportunity to create connections with the agricultural landscape in Sussex and to stimulate an idea of a very close, almost claustrophobic relationship between architecture and surrounding woodland planting.



Landscape design plan - on site (2016)



Sketches:

- water management
- tennis court
- pond and swimming pool



Gill

Woodland

Water



natural fence traditionally called 'shaws'
tennis court fence (2017)
landscape cross section

- The first surveys of the ground revealed its poor natural drainage and the nature of the clay soils, particularly with regard to the open lawn in front of the house, where the clay soils were largely impermeable. In this area, there were serious episodes of waterlogging. The soil became the central theme of the project through water management, drainage, and design solutions to collect, store and dispose of water in a way that could enhance biodiversity and offer visual delight.

- The nature of the soil was also a constraint in the choice of plants that could best tolerate these pedo-climatic conditions.

- 'Gentle things and casual structures' is one of the project objectives. The project proposes gentle actions in order to respect the landscape and its function. The structures seem to be randomly located in the landscape, in reality, they are designed with a strictly scientific method that belies a casual appearance.

Originally the woodland formed the property boundary. The initial idea of the project was to 'let in' the woods. In this way, trees work both for improving the ecological value as the 'glue' to enable the landscape to be integrated as one from several disconnected elements.

In this part of the country, the agricultural boundaries are still marked by woodland and hedgerows. These natural fences planted with oaks, beech, hornbeam, chestnut and understory shrubs are traditionally called 'shaws'. The project borrows a traditional woodland features to integrate a new tennis court, otherwise highly visible from the Hermitage, and together with substantial earthworks to allow this large and rectilinear element to sit comfortably within the natural falls in the land. The hedgerow thus will with time, hide the tennis court and the ditch marks a physical separation between the field and the lawn, recalling the traditional field boundary conditions that also provide for drainage.

Water appears and disappears in the landscape and is considered a structural feature. Water and soil play a key role in the topology of the whole area. The two existing ponds provide water reserves. To maintain the lawn surface overlooking the house, extensive land drainage was required. The drainage pipes cover the whole area and were laid to convey water into the a gravel trenches system, and from there into the small pond. Here the water is attenuated and then, through an overflow system, is conveyed to a wetland scrape, that sweeps alongside the Hermitage. Here the soil is wet only during particular periods of the year and the water, after being filtered by wetland plants, is conveyed on and into existing agricultural ditches.

The new swimming pool which is incised into a new undulating landscape to screen and create sheltered conditions for swimming. It is a long and thin elegant element, a linear wetland reminiscent of a swale, with the axis of the pool aligned with key specimen trees. It is framed by wing pools planted with aquatics, to create an illusion that the pool is 'natural'. In fact, the water for swimming is heated by a ground source heat pump, and filtered through a bio-purification system with additional sand filters. The wing pools, although seemingly part of the main pool are separate channels of cool water to enable native aquatics to establish.

Water thus becomes not only a discrete actress in the below ground condition but also a strong agent of design, and a fundamental role in the long-term management vision.





7/581
Marble Hill
Park
London

7/581 Marble Hill Park

data

date
2015 - ongoing

location:
London, UK

area:
26,7 ha

client:
English Heritage

design team:
Landscape architect, lead consultant:
J&L Gibbons
Architect: Van Heyningen & Haward
M & E Engineer: Martin Thomas Associates
Cost consultant: Frimingers

funding institution:
English Heritage
Heritage Lottery Fund

Why this project?

It is an important park for historical, environmental and recreational reasons and represents an example of social, cultural, sporting and ecological reinterpretation

It is an opportunity to follow the design process in development



**key stages RIBA:
0-1-2-3-4**



Site location and context

Marble Hill Park is located in the London Borough of Richmond on the north bank of the river Thames and for this reason is a strategic part of the Thames Landscape Strategy and it is connected to a series of green spaces along the river. The park can be seen from Richmond Hill, on the opposite bank, and it plays a strategic role in this panoramic view that is the only landscape view in England to be protected by an Act of Parliament. In the area around the park there are buildings and terraces which are listed as too. The Park represents a garden within the London's Arcadian landscape.

In 1902, Marble Hill became a public park and now it provides the largest free-to-enter public open space in the area on the north bank of the Thames, including sports pitches used by local residents' schools and sports clubs, other facilities include a café, public toilets, adventure playground and a food production garden.

It is connected to a lot of parks and open space on both sides of the river Thames.

It is the only English Heritage park to provide sports pitches and sport facilities alongside significant heritage features and sports.

Historic context

In the middle of 17th century the site was an agricultural landscape, with corn fields, fruit and kitchen gardens and meadows to the south where the land would have been subject to flooding.

In 1724 the house of Henrietta Howard (King George II mistress) was designed in a Neo-Palladian style and construction started to the designs of the architect Roger Morris. It is assumed that the concept design may have been influenced by Colen Campbell and subsequently interpreted and simplified by Roger Morris. The garden was influenced by Alexander Pope and Henrietta engaged the royal gardener Charles Bridgeman to create the implemented designs and to realize the vision.

A survey plan, dated 1752, is representative of the garden design by Bridgeman with a symmetrical layout, grassed terraces, groves of horse chestnut tree, a semi-circular carriage, greenhouse, icehouse, woodland quarters, two grottos and the alley.

In 1816 Henrietta died and several alterations were made to the house.



In 1825 the Lieutenant General Jonathan Peel bought the villa and demolished the old stable block to rebuild a new one, the White Lodge. He was the owner of several race-horses. An Italian flower garden was placed on the south side of the villa.

In 1887 Peel died and the propriety remained empty for several years.

In 1903 the London County Council acquire the property and Marble Hill was opened as a public park and the house was used as a tea room.

Several restorations works of the house and park were made during the 20th century.

In 1988 the propriety was transferred to the ownership of English Heritage.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

The public park is listed Grade II* in the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It is one of a string of gardens that collectively form London's Arcadian landscape.

The Neo-Palladian villa is Grade I.



Marble Hill Park





The park provides some of the formal landscape structure as seen from the view from Richmond Hill, which is the only landscape view in England to be protected by an Act of Parliament.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

Marble Hill house was a quintessential Neo-Palladian villa, survived in an unusually good state of preservation, with a fashionable garden whose structure remains but the detail has been lost. The evidential values are supported by well documented information of the past that provide evidence of the important design.

‘The park is of local significance for its biodiversity value and is designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation. Woodland, trees and grassland provides habitats for birds, invertebrates and bats. It preserves some evidence of historic planting, such as veteran trees, including a black walnut dating from the mid-18th-century.’¹

Historical value

Marble Hill Park has a rich cultural association with Henrietta Howard and her friends that helped to create the house and the garden. Among the others there are Henry Herbert, Alexander Pope and Horace Walpole. The park is also mentioned in many letters and poems and represented in most fashionable paintings.

Aesthetic value

‘Marble Hill is a beautiful and elegant building sitting in exceptional picturesque setting. The house is a unique suburban villa illustrating architectural ideas of the English 18th century Neo-Palladian School’².

The park has a some variation in topography down towards the River Thames. The views are framed by the design of the park, the location of the house and the presence of the river and these vistas are particular significance to the overall aesthetic value of the park.

Communal value

The park provides one of the largest public space in the area with informal recreational features and sport facilities. ‘The site is also important as an early example of a historic landscape saved from development in the early 20th century by public indignation and an intervention by the newly formed London Country Council.’³

*“Then let him come and
take a nap
In summer on my verdant
lap:
Prefer our villas, where
the Thames is,
To Kensington, or hot St.
James’;
Nor shall I dull in silence
sit;
For ‘this to me he owes
his wit;
My groves, my echoes,
and my birds,
Have taught him his
poetic words.
We gardens, and you
wildernesses,
Assist all poets in
distresses.
Him twice a week I here
expect,
To rattle Moody for
neglect;
An idle rogue, who
spends his quartridge
In tippling at the Dog
and Partridge;
And I can hardly get him
down
Three times a week to
brush my gown.”*

form the *Pastoral Dialogue between
Richmond Lodge and Marble Hill*
by Jonathan Swift

¹ J&L Gibbons (2015), Marble Hill Presentation Feasibility Document HLF Parks for People First Round Application, p.14

² Ivi, p. 18

³ Ivi, p. 19



design process and key stages

The design process is at stage 4 of the RIBA Plan of Work and has already applied for the HLF Park for People succeeding in funding. Meanwhile, the design development is going on, the archaeological assessment and other research are evolving in order to develop new restoration projects within the area.

“Marble Hill Revived” is the name chosen for the project.

It is a re-interpretation of the 1752 and later 18th century landscape in order to prevent the loss of the historical stratification and enabling everyone to experience the pleasure Henrietta and her circle found there. The restoration of the historic stables as a visitor hub will provide commercial sustainability through a café and shop.

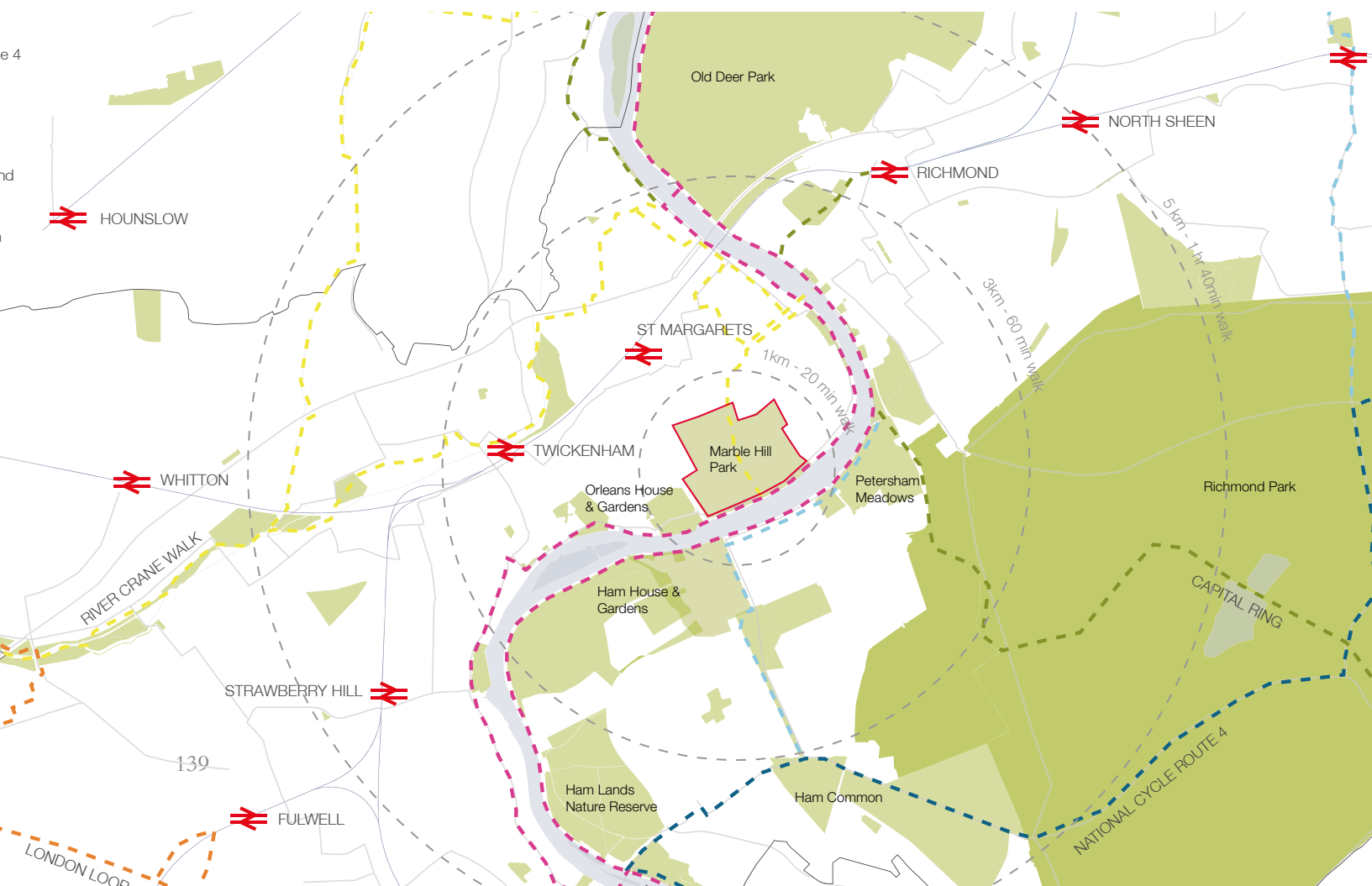
Marble Hill Park is unique English Heritage’s parks to provide pitches and sports facilities combining significant heritage.

One of the main objectives of the project is to enhance the existing sports facilities to create a park with the principles of healthy living at its core and to reveal the lost Georgian Landscape providing spaces for quieter passive recreation a relaxation.

Design objectives:

- developing the relationship between features of heritage significance and healthy living through sport and recreation
- improve the economic sustainability of the site by creating a commercial hub
- improve the playground offer
- consider climate change adaptation with new planting programmes and proactive management strategies
- enhance biodiversity across the site
- consider opportunities of sustainable urban drainage across the park
- decompact and improve grass sward across the park
- improve accessibility

Current stage: 4 / Technical Design / RIBA Plan of Work



general and specific key questions

This is a project in which the client (English Heritage) has an important and strategic role in the process. How important is their role in setting the purpose, the objectives and the design stages?

How was the professional team chosen, was there a competitive process? Which specialists did play a key role in the design process?

This park has such an important history and it is closely linked to other protected parks and views in that part of London. How did you interpret the historical stratification of the site?

Why did you choose to restore the Pleasure Ground layout created by Henrietta Howard even if it doesn't exist anymore?

How can the different park's features live together with the historic value of the site?

I'm talking about the sport facilities, the playground, the café: functions that sometimes is not so easy to introduce in historical context even if are so important for the present and the future of the parks.

The EH aim, not only in this case, is to develop such activities, but which are, if there are, the constraints to respect? What did they expect from your project and how did you develop the design respecting their aims and the community's aspirations?

The projects often change as the surveys and the assessments go on during the process. In this case the archaeologists are going on with the archaeological investigations. How did you manage your work at the same time of the archaeological survey? Which role does the archaeological asset play in the design process?

The park every year in June opens doors for the House Festival. How the project responds to this exceptional use? Which are the strategies and the design solutions to support this kind of events keeping the protection objectives?

There was a proper community consultation? How a fruitful consultation must be done?



REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.

Illustrations are from the same reports.

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J&L Gibbons (2015), *Marble Hill Representation Feasibility Document, HLF Parks for People First Round Application*

J&L Gibbons (2017), *Marble Hill Revived Design & Access Statement, HLF Park for People*

J&L Gibbons (2017), *Marble Hill Revived Management & Maintenance Plan*

Historic England (2017), *Marble Hill House Landscape Investigations*

Further information on the Planning Application can be found here:
http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/PlanData2/Planning_CASENO_NoIndex.aspx?strCASENO=17/1094/FUL&DocTypeID=7#progress

interview tale
Neil Davidson



16 November 2016

In this case the client is the English Heritage. Which are the differences, in spite of the new changes in the whole organization, between English Heritage and other local authorities?

I have described the change in structure to English Heritage before. If they don't make changes to the site such as building a the new café in the next few years, then it will have an impact on some of their other sites and strategic projects because EH won't be able to subsidise Marble Hill via one of the other more frequently visited and higher revenue generating sites. The approval process in local authorities mirrors those of English Heritage. People on the EH project board will have many projects under consideration and decisions are made within the context of the strategic countrywide portfolio. Whereas with a local authorities there will be perhaps one at the time or maybe two, as the case of Walpole Park in Ealing Council.

How was the design team chosen? Which specialists did play a key role in the design process?

There's quite an unusual process for the team selection on this project. English Heritage appointed the team members separately. We were presented with a team of team of consultants architects, the historic architects, the engineers, the cost consultants. They appointed everyone separately and we were asking to manage workstreams separately. This process does carry a risk because the team may not have experience of working together and will need to establish new working relationships. At the moment things are going quite well. We have worked with the architect before, that was helpful, and we've worked with the engineers before, we're not worked with the mechanical services engineers and we're not worked with cost consultants. It's requires additional time to build new professional relationships when the project is live and their real deadlines that need to be met. And then in terms of the specialist input, this is a good example of where English Heritage and Historic still share some resources. Historic England has a team of archaeologists who work for them and they've an agreement to allow a set number of hours a year to work for English Heritage.



**The archaeologists are now doing their assessment on the origins of the grotto.
How could the ongoing archaeological survey interfere with the design process?**

It can change dramatically because we've got a fixed budget.

However, some of the things we've been discussing as potential features hopefully the archaeological investigations will confirm the actual path alignment. So that might help us just modify our proposals.

The investigations are specifically related to the grotto, which needs significant investment to make the restoration more authentic, it's more likely the archaeology will inform the reinterpretation of the story around the grotto in anticipation of at some point some money being available to carry out capital works. To do it properly it will require significant investment.

So partly it might inform the design, partly it will be refining the information that is available to the public to learn more about what was there before.

The grotto is interesting because it's a project you might be able to fundraise for separately at a later stage even though there are proposals as part of this project to improve the setting.

This is quite an appealing thing to fundraising for, whereas to fundraising for a path is more difficult.

It was funny because we were walking around the park last week, with some people from English Heritage, we went into the maintenance yard, and were looking at a stockpile of stones. Then a historian said: « look, there is a piece of grotto here! » But they'd never seen before. They had previously found some bags of shells which were used in grottos too.

It is quite surprising when those sorts of discoveries are just made.

They think the grotto was completely covered in soil sometime during the 20th century and, what they think happened, is that following excavation an attempt was made to undertake restoration, however their research used to inform the previous restoration was not comprehensive. So now it is not authentic, original stones were not used, so, they've probably reused the stones from somewhere else.

There is a mix of the authentic structure but with a concrete lid on top . There are no shells inside.

I mean it's interesting when you look at the plan in detail and it looks like there could have been all sorts of other structures associated with it.



This park has such an important history and it is closely linked to other protected parks and views in that part of London. How did you interpret the historical stratification of the site? Why did you choose to restore the Pleasure Ground layout created by Henrietta Howard even if it doesn't exist anymore?

This park is really different from Walpole Park. The client, in this case, wants it to be as authentic in terms of the historic restoration as possible as the original design is considered to be of international significance.

Partly because they think the landscape that was here is very important in terms of the evolution of landscape design in UK, maybe one of the only types of this kind, but also because there's very little to go on superficially when you look at the park today.

And actually, apart from the avenues, it is difficult to tell that there was a designed landscape here before.

The intervention in this case needs to be something quite transformational. The proposal is a reinterpretation of the landscape and it is quite a big change because we need to do some significant management of the current woodlands. To support change at this scale it needs to be something quite special that is proposed enhancing the park experience on a number of levels. In terms of accessibility, it is also important to make it accessible to as many people as possible.

So what we're trying to do is to get the layout, the kind of general arrangement of the grounds as accurate as possible and to do it in such a way that preserves as much of the existing landscape that has evolved and is now growing in its place.

In the long term, new avenues can be completed when other older trees die. You're putting things in place now to help manage the site within the context of an overall vision.

English Heritage uses an example of this process during work they undertook at Chiswick House where the decision was to realign the path to avoid some features that were important. There was a tree or a couple of trees, so they realigned the path to avoid some trees. Then very soon after the project finished, the trees both died. So, now the path is in the wrong place and you almost wish they hadn't done the path at all. It is a balance of trying to find a way where you say: the goal here is to create a grid of tree, but we can't do all now because that means chopping down these healthy oak trees ... and so, we will put in what we can and then, over time, we can fill the spaces.

And so it may be quite challenging to start with when considering what the landscape looks like because it will be a bit of the mature landscape and a bit of reinterpretation of the historic structure.





How could you define this project?

This project is a hybrid. It is part restoration part reinterpretation.

Mark Laird, who's a historic Plant specialist who teaches at Harvard, has written a short report on the plants, that would be suitable for this park which we have summarized in the most recent report.

And he said it's very difficult to say with any certainty what plants might be appropriate here. But based on research, based on what you can see, this mix of plants with high biodiversity would be appropriate and we can look to other contemporary projects and fashions of the time to provide further detail.

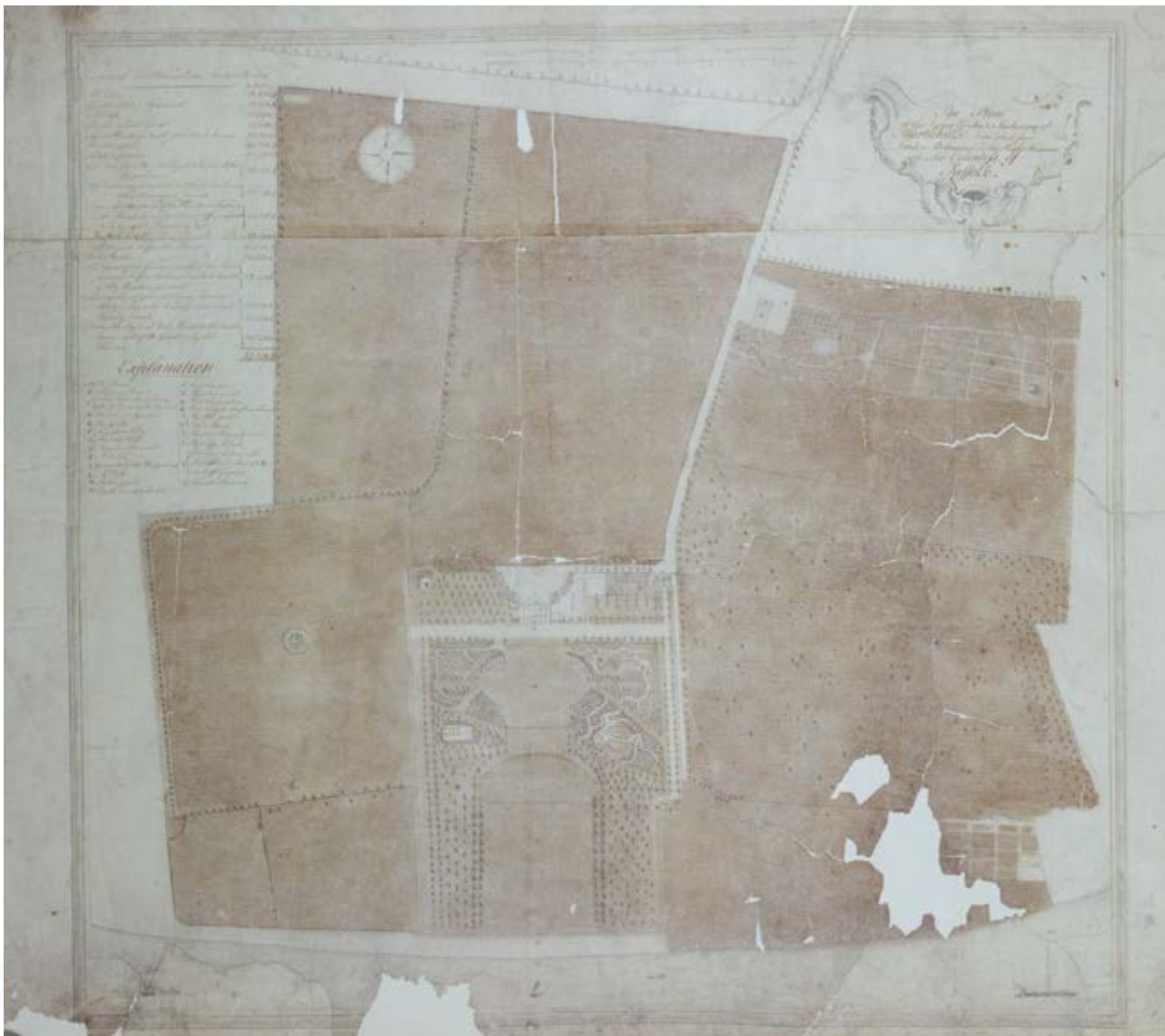
Actually, quite a lot of this plants would now be considered to be good for wildlife. In actual fact, you've got a kind of landscape reinterpretation, this is reinterpreting historical layout and enhancing biodiversity.

So, it has a cultural significance, then it can have an ecological significance as well because you're starting to diversify habitats on the site.

There is a wildness and there are a greater mix of that are good for animals and birds habitats.

It is another layer of relevance to that landscape design and to people who use the park because it becomes a more interesting to be in the pleasure grounds.

So I think there's a quite like that kind of combination of cultural and ecological reinterpretation.



What about the activities hosted in the garden? How could they live together within this historic value? Which are, if there are, the constraints to respect above all for the playgrounds and pitches?

This is the only English Heritage property that has sports facilities within a historic landscape. They don't have any similar benchmark projects. So they can't say: «well it's like that project». This is isolation is quite interesting as it poses a lot of new questions.

How do you integrate historic landscapes and sport?

There are other places, such as Crystal Palace which was also a historic landscape and sport in it. If you think about sport, less about the sport itself and more about healthy living and activity and exercise, then it very much feels very at home in a complex layered landscape setting. Particular when the landscape was originally design for pleasure and enjoyment being outside and being close to nature. You have to be careful how much emphasis you impose on a connection like this. If you look at the more recent history of Marble Hill, there have been sport uses for probably about 100 years, and there are all aerial photographs of it with pitches.

In the way that Henrietta Howard acquired land, she bought fields from other people, there is a kind of partialization of this landscape. As she's bought more lands the character has changed or evolved.

I think those facilities are not detrimental to the setting of the historic landscape reinterpretation, but they can coexist to create a landscape that is even more relevant to contemporary uses.

We are not changing the arrangement too much, we're implemented a landscape structure that can be managed more sustainably.

There is a phrase that archaeologist used quite a lot, which is 'to preserve in situ'. So, you might find something valuable in the ground, you don't do anything with it, you just record it and then you put it back or leave it where it is.

AI think the same applies to sports pitches because you could remove those really easily and you could revert to agricultural landscape if you really want to do.

But that's not a sustainable use of the park. It is quite a minimum impact intervention and the same then has to apply to any new interventions such as the new playground which needs to be a quite light touch.

We've done a fair amount of work with sports pitches at schools sites where



it's is also not just purely about the sport so it's quite interesting to see how you might combine the two.

I really like the project in Gerona where there is a running track in a woodland.

So, I think there's a lot of sports activities or informal recreation that can coexist in historic landscapes. English Heritage has written a lot about how to integrate play in a historic context.

It's not just enough to be a field, it needs to be multi-functional has to take an event like a pop concert.

Each year the park hosts a huge festival called House Festival. How does your design respond to this extraordinary event?



What we're proposing is going to make the House Festival review their use of the pleasure grounds because there are new tree avenues proposed to be planted, so the lawn will become smaller. Where we can, we try to improve the infrastructure, there are power and water supplies and things that we have to make sure still feature in the historic landscape setting or maybe a bit more camouflaged.

It is quite common, for example in Walpole Park the same issues arise. They have a festival for three months in the summer. So, how do you temporarily protect trees or the ground.

The challenge for English is that for a one day festival over a weekend, then certain parts of the park have to be closed for two weeks and this does cause disruption ruction for other park users. Some people are not happy that the park is closed because of this.

Nearly every large park has to accommodate that sort of thing.

When we were working at Crystal Palace, Jo managed to persuade the client, who was the Mayor of London at delivery team, to hire an airplane to take high-resolution photographs of the park when it was being used for a concert, Colplay were performing in the park. They flew over and took photographs of how pedestrians were using the park at this time and how cars were organised in the park. These photographs were how the uses change for one of activity compared to another.

For example the circus is quite a common thing in Highbury Fields, and usually, depending on the weather, when they leave the field has suffered damaged from heavy vehicles and increased compaction.



- KEY:
1. 2no. hard surface tennis courts - to be resurfaced
 2. 2no. cricket practice nets - nets to be replaced
 3. cricket pitch - recently received new false turf wicket
 4. Rugby pitch - to receive pitch improvement works*
 5. Rugby pitch - to receive pitch improvement works*
 6. Junior football pitch - no change
 7. Adult football pitch - to receive pitch improvement works*
 8. Adult football pitch - to receive pitch improvement works*
 9. Adult football pitch - to receive pitch improvement works*
 10. Adult football pitch - no change
 11. 5-a-side football pitch - no change
 12. Ninepin alley/petsanque pitch

- NOTE:
- * Pitch improvement works to include:
 - Selective regrading of football pitches to include stone reduction
 - Drainage to south west pitches and ongoing maintenance of connections to primary drainage
 - Overseed with shade tolerant seed mixes
 - Manage tree canopy to avoid shade issues
 - Fertilize soils
 - Intensity maintenance regime to supplement existing good practice

NOTE:
Please refer to Sports Pitch Agronomic Assessment Report, Tim O'Hare Associates Dec 2016, for pitch improvement proposals



J & L GIBBONS LLP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN		Project: MARBLE HILL PARK		Drawing title: PROPOSED SPORTS PROVISION ARRANGEMENT	
Date: 24_03_17	Scale: 1:1250 @ A1	Status: Comment	Drawing number: 581_PL_L_25		
Drawn: VB	Checked: ND	Approved: ND			



Was there a proper community consultation? How must a fruitful consultation be done?

This is different to Walpole Park, the design team have been at arms length to the consultation process, which most of the engagement being delivered by English Heritage directly. A specialist consultation team member was appointed in December or November 2016.

She has been doing an amazing job, contacting people. It's a different approach. At the moment is not really a consultation designed to encourage new users. It's more just inform people who already use it.

In the next stage, it has to start encouraging new users to become involved in discussions.

In a proper consultation, you want to be able to say that this is the design process that you must go through, and this is why decisions are made on some occasions this may be a difficult exercise as people will be resistant to any kind of change. And not just the approach which is: «I have an idea and I will make this work regardless of everything else».


But also, you have to remember to not be a designer who is asking the public: «tell me what the draw!» You need to negotiate a middle ground.

I mean you could go in very early in the process and have conversations that help define your brief like what's happening in Museum of London. There, the consultation with stakeholders and the general public is refining the brief of the project. Making Space in Dalston was a little bit like that because at the time we started the consultation we didn't even know which sites you were talking about. So, it wasn't a case of: «here is the Eastern Curve, what would you like to do?» It was more: «what is missing in the public realm in this whole area?» And then we'll find somewhere to deliver that. So is quite different. Because there's a history in UK where everyone knows consultations that are just done because somebody said you need to do a consultation. And that's never going to end up with the project is as good as it can be. Good engagement enriches the process. When it is done properly. The funny thing I've seen when I've been on design review on projects that were referencing Making Space in Dalston, but in a different part of London, and I had to say what we did in Dalston was because of Dalston. So you can't just take the same approach and take it into north west London, or you can, but you have to modify it, you have to find what's special about that part of the city. You can certainly take the principles of the consultation but you can't copy and paste the results from one part of a city to another. I try not to use the word 'consultation' actually, I prefer 'engagement' because it feels like there's a kind of neutral field of discussion. 'Consultation' sounds like you just sort of talking to someone or just listen to not a two-way dialogue.

I mean maybe 'engagement', it is not the right word either. There's a very popular term in London called 'co-design' which attempts to empower local people to be part of the design process there are some examples of this in Peckham. It does amaze me how the designers who get these jobs are able to survive because effectively you are designing with the community on a very elongated programme, it removes a lot of the structures that allow you to be an efficient designer.

In some cases there will be meetings every week for a year, every Thursday night to have a co-design discussion. There have to be giving their time it wouldn't be feasible for those resources to be reimbursed. In Co-Design the client is the community members, they are at the heart of the process and part of the experience is to learn how to be clients when the project is live, and for them to be involved in key designed decisions. Projects where co-design works is where the input of the expert members of the team is properly resourced the community develops skills as part of the process and become involved in the construction process, they build and live the project. When it transfers to the public realm it's slightly different because you don't really own the site it belongs to everyone.

So not what how do you design it, it is what are you going to tell us to make us better to build our skills.



8/586
Sidgwick Site
Cambridge

8/586 Sidgwick Site

data

date
2000 – 2005 first masterplan
2015 – masterplan review is ongoing

location:
Cambridge, UK

area:
4,5 ha

client:
University of Cambridge

design team:
Architect: Allies and Morrison
Landscape architect: J&L Gibbons
Services engineer: Buro Happold

funding institution:
University of Cambridge

Why this project?

It is a rare occasion for the same professional team to review and update a design strategy developed sixteen years ago.

The strands of design thinking have similarities with a reverse reading process applied to a single project.



key stages RIBA: 0-1



Site location and context

The University of Cambridge is one of the oldest universities in the UK and consistently ranked as one of the world's best universities.

'The mission of the University is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence'¹.

The project of 2000 was commissioned to focus on the existing and future buildings in Sidgwick Site, on their condition and space requirements. The new requirements have different purposes but the same mission: continuing to attract researches and students from all over the world.

The Site is close to the city centre and the historical colleges and schools. It is located between two primary concentric routes and occupies a whole city block and the routes through it are an important part of the city routes network for pedestrians and cyclists. The University's development at North West Cambridge is ongoing, and this significant project had led to new cycle routes that link Sidgwick Site from the west to the centre of the city.

Historic context

In 1948 the University purchased sports grounds on Sidgwick Avenue and building started in 1956. The original masterplan scheme by Casson Conder used the buildings to create spaces, aiming to achieve a high-quality environment where spaces were as important as the buildings. The main aim of that original masterplan was a "clear articulation of site and relationship of simple linear built form and courtyard space."²

The Raised Faculty Court was envisaged as the heart of the Sidgwick Site with different buildings around.

The original masterplan was realized only in the southern half of the site,

1 Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor, in Estate Strategy, 2016

2 in Sidgwick Site COMPREHENSIVE MASTERPLAN - 2016 (p.65)

Hugh Casson's bird's eye view of the masterplan proposals 1952



the northern half became the setting of four buildings designed by four different architects. The iconic architecture of the site include the History Faculty by James Stirling Architects (1964) and the Law Faculty by Foster and Associates (1991-5).

The result was the loss of low-key buildings which framed the space in favour of assertive buildings which made little effort to relate to their settings.

The 2000 masterplan proposed 'to redress this balance with new Faculty buildings defining new external spaces, and the landscape infrastructure stitching together new and existing environments into a unified whole. Clarity of entrances, routes, lighting, access and signage all work to this end.'³

The actual design continues to promote the same aims 'but also demonstrates a deep-rooted commitment to:

- sustainability
- creating a healthy environment to foster well-being
- the enrichment of the whole learning experience.'⁴

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

All the Casson Conder's masterplan is listed Grade II.

The Faculty of Economics and Politics, the Raised Faculty block, the Little Hall and attached Lecture Theatre block, the Lady Mitchell Hall, are all listed Grade II and many other buildings are also listed.

Faculty of History is listed, CHECK OTHER LISTINGS

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

The strategic and important position of Sidgwick Site in the new University's development programs.

Historical value

The importance of the original masterplan that has settled the strict relationship between buildings and landscape

Aesthetic value

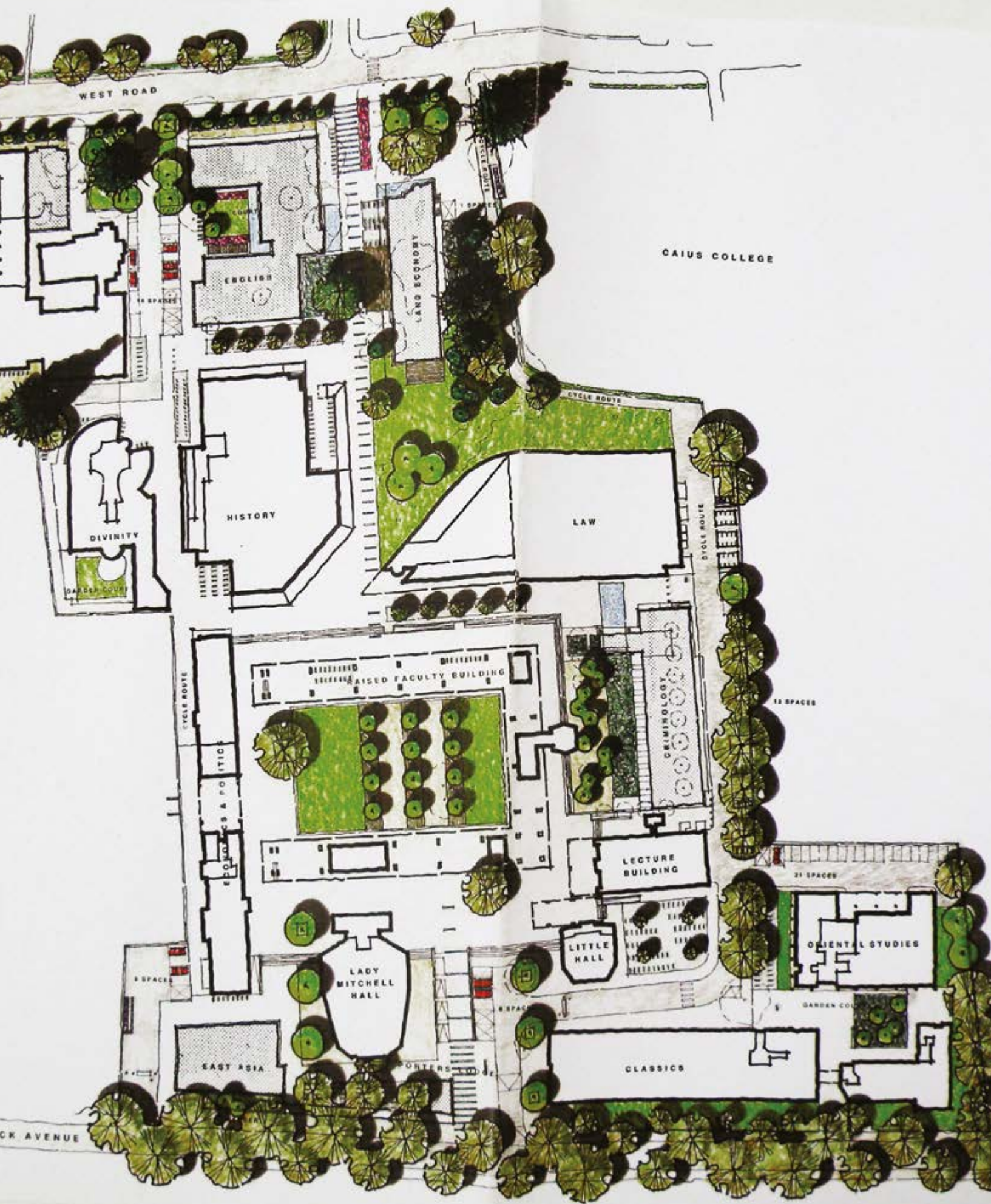
Many features and architectural styles to bring together in a masterplan with clear strategies and aims.

Communal value

It is the place where students live and they appreciate the quality of the spaces that surrounding the place where they are studying.

³ Allies and Morrison, October 2002, University of Cambridge: Sidgwick Site, Planning Application

⁴ in Sidgwick Site COMPREHENSIVE MASTERPLAN - 2016 (p.67)



WEST ROAD

CAIUS COLLEGE

ENGLISH

LANG ECONOMY

HISTORY

LAW

DIVINITY

POLITICS & ECONOMICS

RISED FACULTY BUILDING

LECTURE BUILDING

LITTLE HALL

LADY MITCHELL HALL

EAST ASIA

CLASSICS

ORIENTAL STUDIES

PARK AVENUE

CYCLE ROUTE

CYCLE ROUTE

CYCLE ROUTE

18 SPACES

21 SPACES

9 SPACES

REPAIR

GARDEN COURT

18 SPACES

CYCLE ROUTE

CYCLE ROUTE

OUTERS

design process and key stages

Speaking of the English Faculty:

“The Faculty is a modern, light building and the library is beautiful and quiet you can always find a quiet spot to get your work done.

But the best part, right at the centre of the building, is the courtyard. People come out for a smoke break, or to read, and despite it being in the middle of the Sidgwick Site, it’s really tranquil and light. There’s a patch of grass, a couple of statues and benches.

It feels like some of the older cloister-style places in the University, but here it is as though the designers have taken that idea of being outside for quiet reflection or conversation, and made it modern.”

Margot Speed,

‘Wet, grey, cold: the English Faculty courtyard is special.’
in Cambridge Alumni Magazine
Issue 77 – Lent 2016

The masterplan of 2000 identified the opportunity to enhance legibility and orientation through the articulation of the landscape.

From the beginning, this masterplan referred to the ‘infrastructure’ of the place to reflect the clear interaction between landscape and architecture. The new buildings of the Faculty of English and Criminology were delivered, by the same master planning team, with related garden courts, tree planting and tree retention.

This approach also reflects the close and fruitful collaboration of the design team, which from the beginning, shared the same ideas and similar methods, to design with sustainable solutions; to reflect the users and the natural systems inherent in the site; to include strategies for surface water management in their project; to reveal the historical layers of the site, to reinforce connection with nature, ecology and art.

This holistic approach to master-planning contributed to recognising the important role of experts in the field of ecology, movement analysis, public art management, graphic design and lighting during the first months of the design programme.

Evolving a brief was the fundamental purpose of the work, the principal actors of this achievement being both the design team and the client. A clear perspective and shared ideas made possible to achieve the main objectives of that masterplan, but sixteen years later the client felt the necessity to update that project to respond to student’s needs in the present and the future. As a result the client trusted again in the same team, and committed this new mission to them.

Sixteen years later they are reviewing all the project to verify new opportunities in order update the masterplan.

Design objectives:

The design objectives behind the 2000 masterplan were:

- an axial route on the line of the University Library Road joining West Road to Sidgwick Avenue (still not realized)
- a series of ‘stepping stone’ spaces, each different in character along this main route
- cross routes to clarify entrances to Faculty Buildings which terminate in garden courts
- hard landscape quality to improve legibility
- existing trees assessed and retained, with new soft landscape

The 2016 masterplan aspirations are:

- meet the Schools’ priorities over a 20-year time frame
- optimise the use of existing space
- identify opportunities for development
- increase the level of sharing across the site, while retaining individual identities
- enhance the public realm, movement, environment and sustainability across the site
- existing trees assessed and retained, with new soft landscape
- space optimization

Current stage: 3 / Developed Design / RIBA Plan of Work



general and specific key questions

What has changed in these last 20 years?

Could you tell more about the collaboration in the design team?

One of the masterplan analysis was the spatial analysis that underlined how people moved in the public realm. Do you think that 20 years later the result could be the same?

Which is the most useful and essential analysis provided for the project?

Was there community consultation?

Looking back, could you underline in terms of design process which are the strategies, the collaborations and the main stages that made the difference in the previous project, the ones that are so useful for the ongoing project and the ones that have lost their importance now?

What does 'infrastructure' mean for you? How was this term perceived by the client at that time and how has it influenced the whole process and affected the collaboration with architects?

What are the challenges in the negotiation between architecture and the biodiversity agenda, the below ground, sustainable urban drainage in the ongoing project?

This new masterplan is maybe an occasion to reinterpret the existing context, to review and understand better the project but also to deeper consider the importance of the process.

Could be this project defined as a source of knowledge for the design process?

REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.

Illustrations are from the same reports.

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Sidgwick Site, in 'Time & Territory', J&L Gibbons, 2007

interview tale
Johanna Gibbons



16 November 2016

This is an unusual example of continuity in the design process. In 2000 your team was commissioned to develop a new masterplan that could answer to the new campus needs. The client had trusted you and 16 years later they chose the same team to develop a new masterplan.

How did the first project start? What were the main issues at that time?

This campus was defined by a formal masterplan, the Casson Conder's masterplan of 1952, based on the campus quad.

It was structured on a modern idea, the buildings raised on piloties, not typical in Cambridge.

Because of this architecture feature, there is an important issue to do with micro-climate, caused by the wind that blows underneath the buildings.

And in the middle of the whole area there is a lawn, and the desire line is over that lawn, but in Cambridge is unusual to be allowed to walk on a lawn.

At the beginning of the design process these were main problems to resolve. It would be interesting to ask to the previous designers «would you expect the people to walk all the way around when there is such a clear axis across?»

Or maybe they didn't anticipate this axis or the subsequent buildings that were developed without addressing the Casson Conder's masterplan.

Most of the buildings are listed, so there is a great architectural history embedded in this site.

Allies and Morrison were diligent in understanding the historical context. They analysed that original masterplan, and our work flowed from that, it was a big challenge.

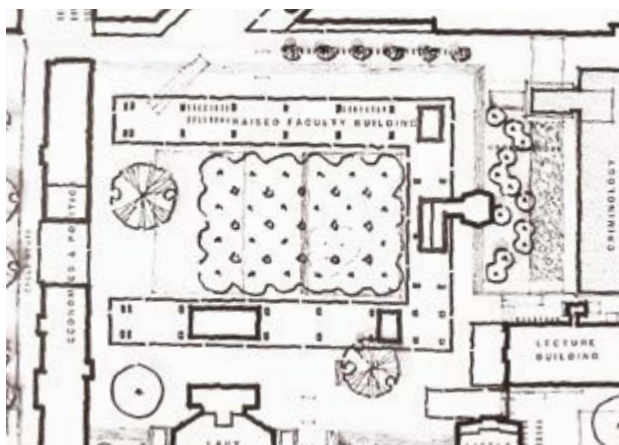
At the beginning one of the key issues was that you could not easily see where the front doors are of each building were.

Usually in the all historical college's quads there is an arch, you go through it, and that heralds the entrance, and there is an easy legibility of access and orientation from there.

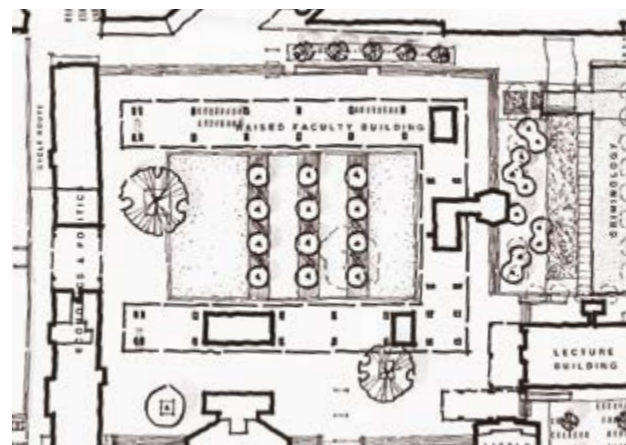
Since Casson Conder built the original buildings, the site had been subject to several 'starchitects' that were commissioned to design faculties apparently that seemed to ignore each other.

The ideas of a strong hierarchy of spaces and 'stepping stone' spaces seems to be the strongest ideas in our original masterplan response, based on spatial analysis that reflected how people moved around the public realm.

Sidgwick Site Masterplan / Landscape Plan / Stage D / 11_06_01



Sidgwick Site Masterplan / Landscape Plan / Stage E / 29_01_02



How did this study of the movement within the area help the evolution of the design idea?

The masterplan of 2000 looked at the public realm and tried to identify the key issues in terms of movement, and legibility, then to undertake an integrated review in terms of environment and how it affected design, how the front doors should be orientated, how to structure the whole masterplan to reinforce sense of place.

We commissioned Intelligent Space to study movement through the whole site, and they represented it very clearly. And it was really helpful when we wanted to substantiate our proposals with reference to existing challenges.

A lot of people appreciated it. It reinforced how the spaces and the disposition of spaces can enhance, or not, that sense of identity, safety and legibility.

The purpose was to look at the development opportunities in terms of site infrastructure. At that stage we identified two formal project solutions.

By the way, there is a recent article about a student who comments on the quality of the spaces we created, and it is interesting to see that from a student perspective, the work is appreciated.

It is an interesting thing to review one's projects periodically to understand better the lessons learned.

'Infrastructure' is one of the terms that you have chosen to define the project earlier from the beginning. How was this idea developed and how has it changed over the years?

We wanted to use the term 'infrastructure' and 'public realm' in order to talk about opportunities for enhancing the site alongside development, as a part of an integrated discussion.

So, in terms of 'infrastructure' we did many studies to understand how the access to the Faculties work, and how they could change and be modified. It's a really interesting thing, because the main north-south access goes all the way up to the main university library. The most important movement is north-south because of the growth of Cambridge to the north west. We did many options of how access across the main courtyard could be integrated, working closely with the architects.

At the Ciminology site we introduced gravel, but we see now that as there

Article in CAM Cambridge Alumni Magazine / Issue 77 / Lent 2016



isn't experience in maintaining gravel as there is in maintaining a lawn, it has suffered, even though in the management and maintenance plan we indicated now look after it, but they haven't followed our advice. However, the trees have established well.

Cambridge has a really strong culture of lawns, obtaining beautiful straight mowing lines, it is a really big status symbol ... a very British fashion! That's why we planted the roof over the sunken lecture space as play on the Cambridge lawn with blue Festuca grasses, as a monoculture, like a lawn. However, over the years the University has eroded this idea because they wanted it to look more like a garden, adding other plants, and now that simple concept has been lost.

So now this is an opportunity to adapt the design and to possibly remove some of the gravel, make a woodland garden that also addresses better the University's biodiversity targets.

In terms of sustainable urban drainage, there were sketches that show solutions, but at that time the college hadn't a strong biodiversity or climate change agenda.

In the previous project we had studied exposure and the problem of the shading of much of these areas.

There are sketches that show this, some sections underline the importance of porosity of the ground ... here you can read 'spongey-landscape'.

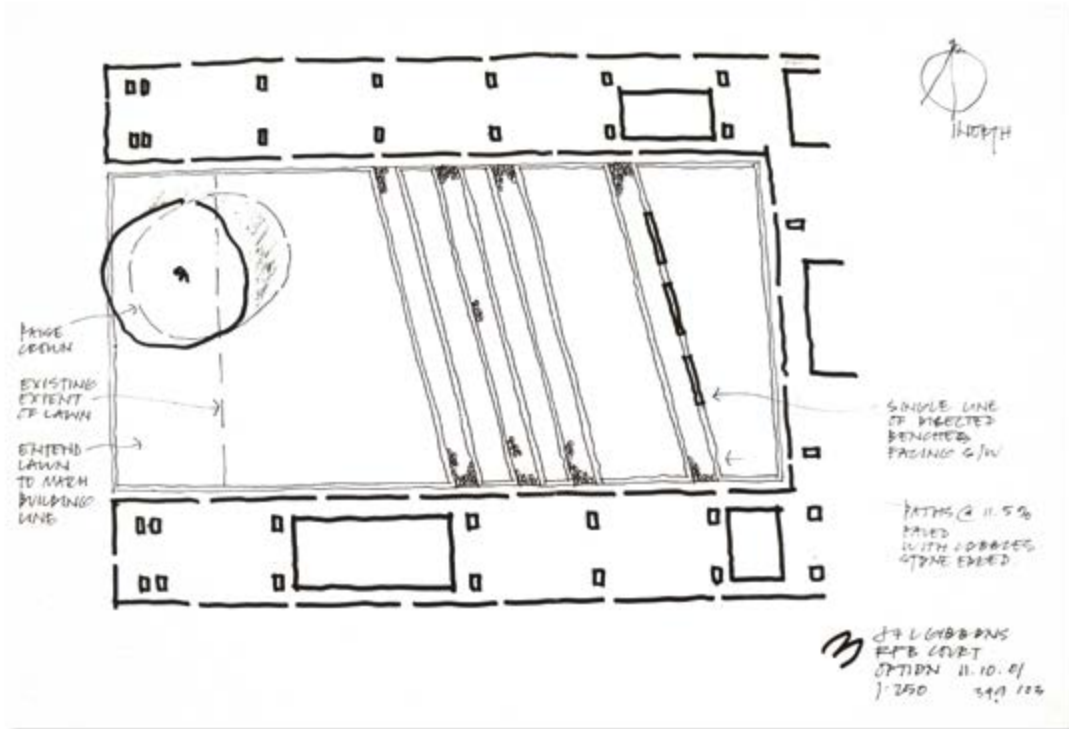
The sections were on the right lines. They show the growth of the tree canopies and how rainwater could infiltrate, how this could be integrated with the architecture. This is about how landscape could modify the microclimate.

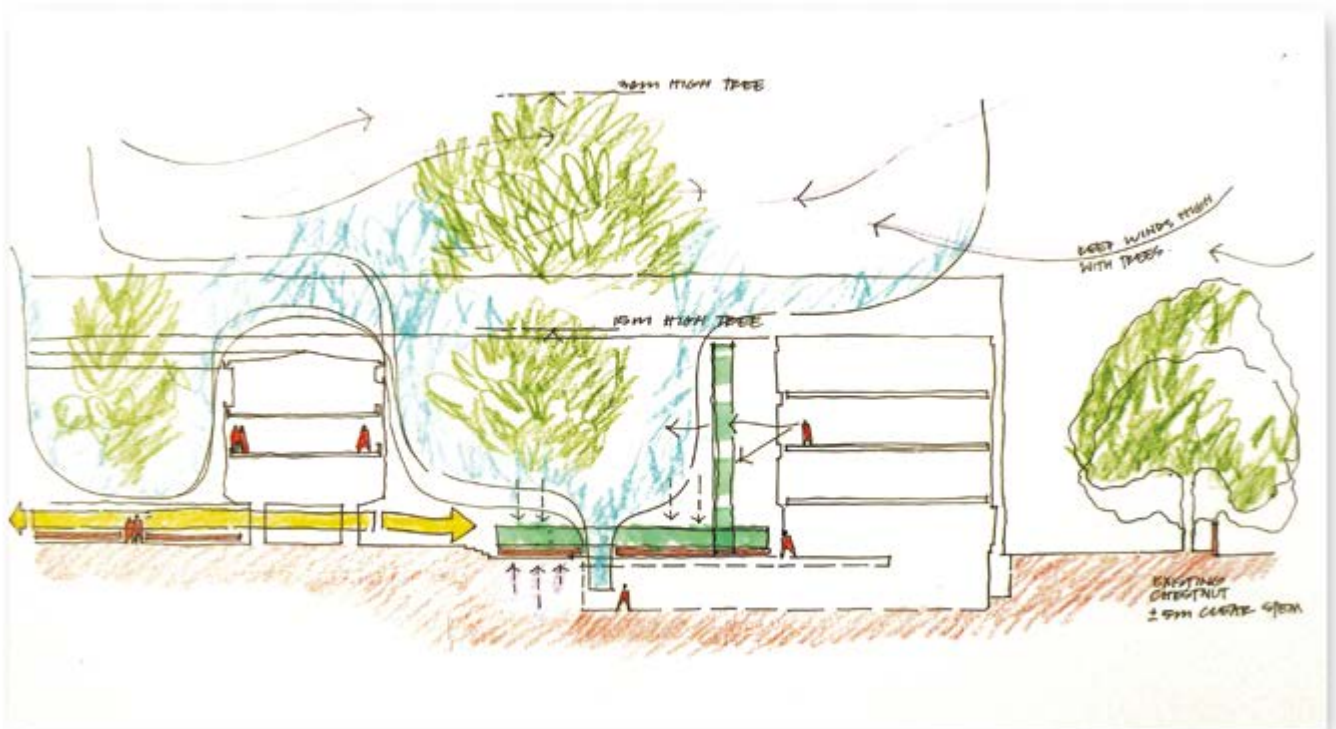
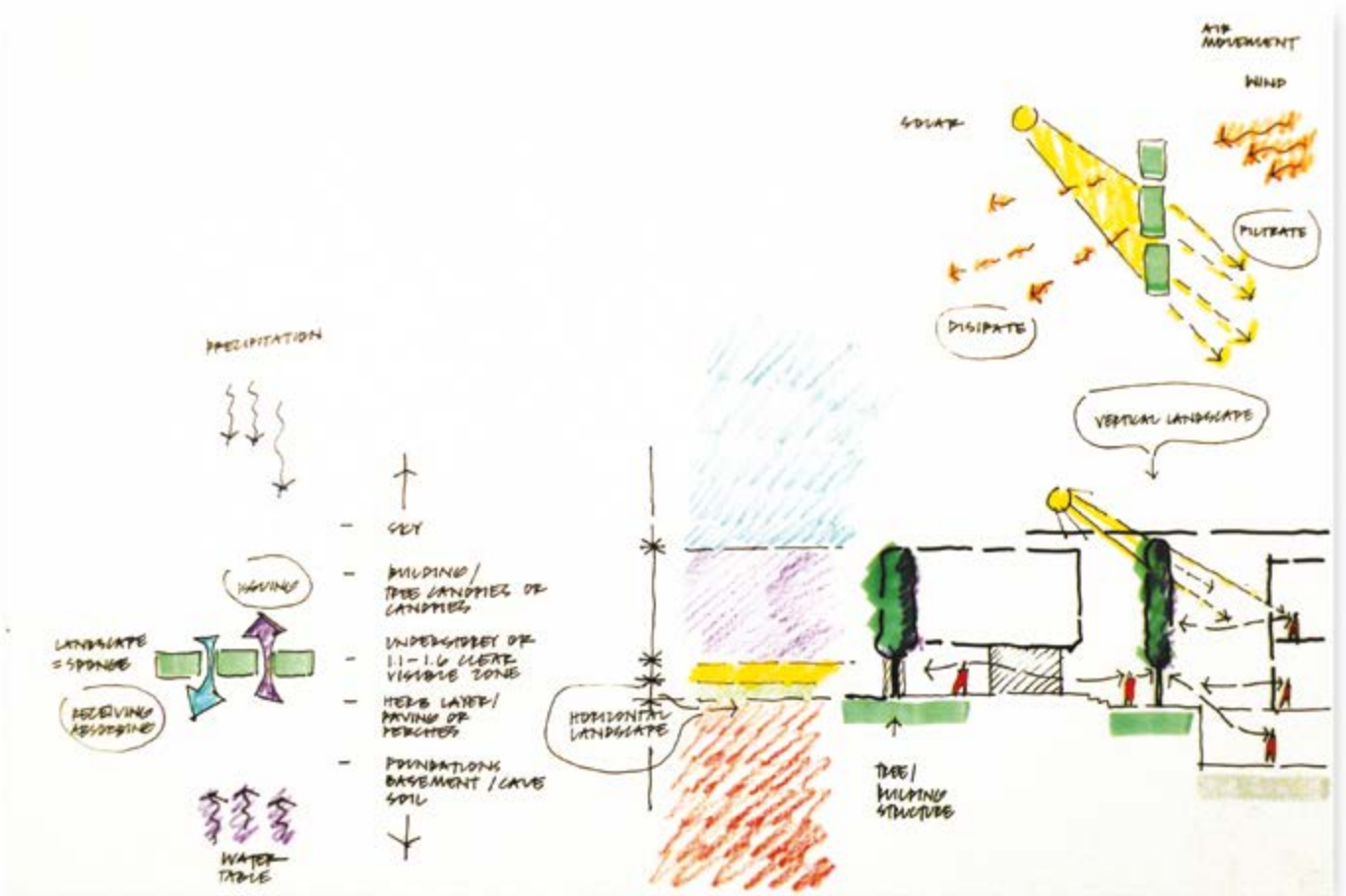
The planting is actually part of the underlying environmental considerations. What is interesting looking at these sketches is that we already anticipated the agendas that are so important today, but then they had little purchase as the University's agenda did not have the same foresight.

Now that the climate is changing, this is driving a different form of development.

Actually, it is quite nice to look back at these sketches that talk about porosity...it's quite satisfying.

Sketches _ 'Fen solution' 11_10_2001





Sketches _ 'Landscape Sponge' and exposition problem

The client came back to your team to develop the new plan. This is an exercise to go back in time and analyse what really worked in the previous project and what didn't. In what was is your approach today different?

It is unusual that the client comes back to the architect and the architects come to us. The whole team is the same and so there is continuity of knowledge in the site.

In terms of looking back and what we would have done differently, I'm not sure I would have much differently. It was a strategy well studied and developed. Probably the one area that if I had the opportunity to revisit, I would have related to spending more time with the on-site management team, to ensure they felt confident in adopting the landscape created, and that to ensure they had brought into long-term vision for those spaces.

What we can do now is, I believe, very useful for the University. Allies and Morrison have meticulously looked at all the facilities on the site and said «you have the opportunity to do much better sharing». There is a lot of space that can work harder and be used in different ways. Each Faculty has an its own library and lecture halls and lecture rooms. If they had a system where you could book and you could see what is empty and what is free, what is the room's size and the facilities, maybe the whole campus could work more efficiently. Allies and Morrison have done an amazing piece of work looking at all of that in order to help inform what is needed now, and enhance efficient use of existing space.

Looking back, the one option we proposed but which didn't progress, because it was too radical, was to make a fen in the Raised Faculty courtyard. This was inspired by the natural landscape of Cambridgeshire that is flat and wet. I think it could have looked amazing, but at the time, and even now, it is still too radical, even though actually, this idea is now more relevant than ever with regard to sustainable urban drainage and the biodiversity agendas. In the current masterplan review we have emphasised how biodiversity is directly linked to health well-being. Now that there is a growing sustainable agenda, the University needs to meet targets. The idea of developing a woodland planting theme at Criminology is also an interesting idea, very simple, which could be done through a gentle transition, gradually diversifying the planting, allowing for self-seeding, minimal digging or excavation or any other invasive work, developing an understory to the birch trees we planted that have established so well.

So, in a certain sense the first project was ahead of its time. What other issues and other potential could be developed in the ongoing project?

Looking back, I'm pleased we were serious about how the infrastructure of the site could be integrated across architecture, landscape and engineering and now I feel even more passionate than I did then. We are more knowledgeable about the reality of trees and constructions and more confident in bringing up key issues related to highway matters and developing the below-ground strategy even if this is not usually something that people get very excited about. We are interested to find ways of emphasising certain aspects of our work more effectively, to demonstrate how they fit the University's estate strategy. There is a sense of working very close together as a design team, not 'the buildings first and after the landscape'. Everyone sees the project in a holistic way. Therefore, it is interesting that the client asked to separate landscape and architectural aspects of the work, when we were keen to reinforce the integrated nature of our thinking. I think that the reason likely to be more to do with project procurement and different funding mechanism often linked to benefactors, as was the case with delivering Criminology and English faculties, than a lack of interest in the fundamental design approach.

Was there a consultation process?

In the consultation stage we were just advisors to the architects. There wasn't any public consultation because at this stage it is more about the University Estate. So, the consultation was related to University committees and the procedures and documents were ratified by those committees.

Did they accept your new design review proposal?

It is very good that our last report has been ratified because something will more likely come out of it. In many cases even where maintenance is being carried out, there is the opportunity to take the opportunity to upgrade infrastructure rather than simply put back what is there.

Could you explain the main strategy of the new masterplan?

Sustainability and a healthy environment are key issues. The masterplan is a multi-layered response to realizing and delivering the public realm objectives and consequential benefits including existing trees, planting large species trees, protecting existing assets, de-paving to increase infiltration, soften the site, enhance contact with nature, increasing biodiversity through design and management, planning for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), planning for new green infrastructure, instigating a site-wide integrated below ground infrastructure protocol and curating a sculpture park strategy.

This is a holistic approach.

There is a lot of negotiation to define building development strictly related to below-ground conditions and all the infrastructure beneath the ground. It concerns the importance of understanding the arboriculture context that contributes so much to the character of the site.

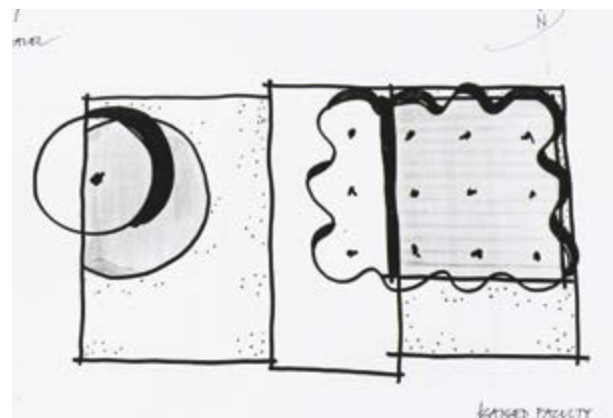
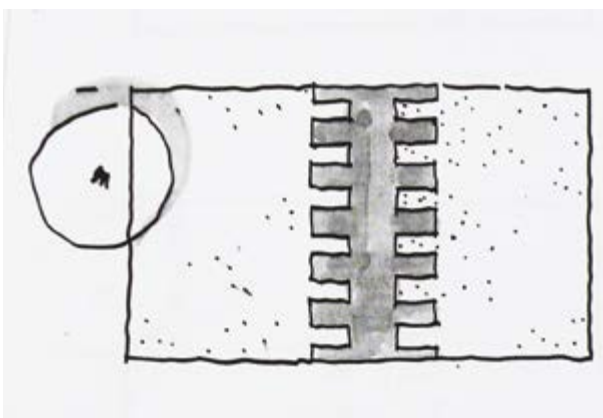
This is a conservation area and all the trees are protected, but trees are not a static asset, they are in a constant state of growth and decline, and it is about proposing new tree planting for the long-term.

I'm proud of the work that we have done with the architect to save this holm oak for instance that is very close to one of the Faculty of English and required special protection during construction, it is thriving and in a good condition.

Biodiversity is deeply related to SuDS and to the potential to de-pave areas. The SuDS strategy was developed with engineers, so that wherever a trench is required due care is taken of below-ground conditions and constraints, all reported through an Integrated Below Ground Infrastructure Protocol.

As development will be incremental, there will be a number of opportunities in the future that could trigger what the University term 'consequential improvement' in the public realm. These opportunities need to be

Sketches, the quad



maximised, as there is little resource for completely upgrading wholesale the public realm.

The University has some interesting sculptures and we believe there is a great opportunity to better curate these assets through and developing a sculpture strategy. Why not align that with a narrative of sustainability?

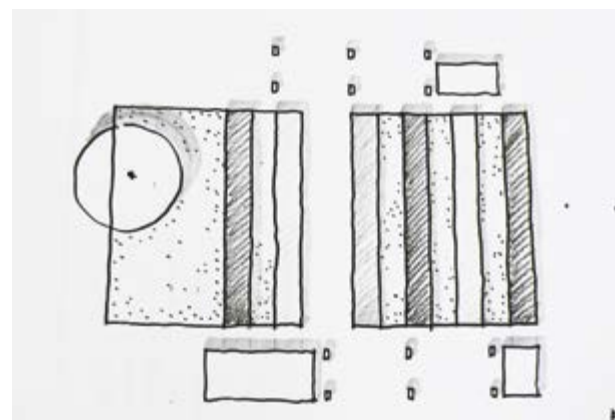
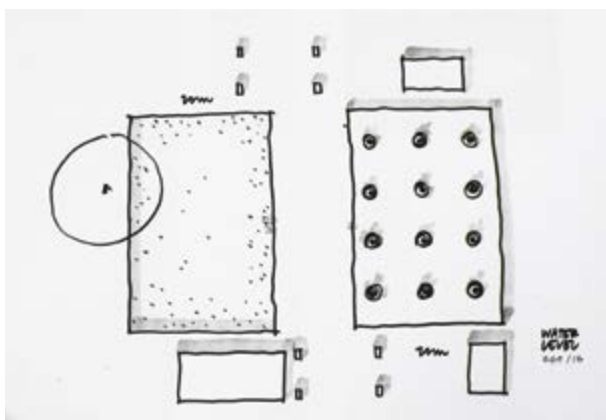
The University wants to promote a sustainability strategy as a key driver of change, so we have proposed the engagement of artists to express this ambition through the curation of the campus as a whole.

How could this be a successful project? What are the most interesting issues that have arisen through the design process?

One of the most interesting aspects of this project is how the University came back to us to review the masterplan. It is an important opportunity for us.

Here for the first time on this site, the landscape has a holistic strategy in which the infrastructure plays a very important role in leading a long-term strategy directly linked to the sense of place and quality of the public realm.

Sidgwick Site, in 'Time & Territory', J&L Gibbons, 2007



interview tale
Bob Allies



30 November 2016

After 16 years from the previous masterplan for Sidgwick Site your approach to the design has probably evolved and perhaps now you are looking at the same problems with new eyes. It is not so common to go be able to look back at the process to consider the successes and short coming of your own design. In this case the client has trusted you again, engaging your team for the second time.

Looking back, could you highlight in terms of design process which strategies, collaborations and key stages made the difference in the original project, also the ones that have proved useful for the ongoing project and the ones that have now lost their importance?

I think that the Sidgwick Site is unusual because it is now almost 15 years ago when we began and the first masterplan. And now we are looking at it for a second time.

We realized that we had to consider the whole context, the whole site, at the same time and how the buildings might be located.

I'm now happy about the way we were looking at where to build new buildings, where the right place was, which is more to do with the buildings' capacity, how much innovation can be built and also how to make the site work better.

Now it works better in many ways. One way especially is how we defined the external spaces, and in terms of orientation, making it easier to understand where you are within the site and where the building's entrances are, how they are linked in terms of public space.

The work that we are doing now is in a sense the same thing again. Having built some buildings on the site, the University would like to know where to build and again. It is very difficult to do that without reconsidering a vision for the whole site, looking at the site as a masterplan, offering a complete vision of the improvements and developments.

At St John's College we have done the same. In that case, they wanted to change the orientation of the college, and we started to think, how to do that, and how the landscape could work.

I think in a way this is something quite logical. In a way, you look back at our masterplan and you look to everything we drew, look at the idea we had of how the site could evolve, and you can find that where we actually built buildings, we were also able to produce new landscapes.

We had money to spend on the buildings and yet we achieved everything. Actually it is quite hard to bring forward all the landscape aspiration, because of lack of funding. Lots of institutions don't have the budget. They don't think about the danger to achieving the landscape if they think of it as separate from the buildings. We always have to support this argument, that the landscape is fundamental to the building setting and function.

The previous project used the term 'infrastructure'. What does 'infrastructure' mean to you? How was this term perceived by the client at that time and how has it influenced the whole process?

We tend to think about masterplans in similar way to how we think about cities, in the sense of urban planning. We are interested in the hierarchical structure of the places, how people understand where they are. We therefore thought the idea of infrastructure was a very important concept.

This new masterplan is maybe an occasion to review and understand better the project but also to deeper consider the importance of the process. Could this project be defined as a source of knowledge for the design process in terms of history, sustainability, collaborations and partnerships? Are there other similar examples in your practice?

I think it is quite difficult with sites like Sidgwick where it is not being completely re-thought, where there is something there already.

One example of this challenge is the main central space of the Raised Faculty quad. We felt that it could be very helpful to create a route across it to reinforce the main movement south-north where all the building entrances were visible and the orientation made easier. Normally we try to understand the history of the site and we do a lot of historical research to understand how something has evolved or how people before might have imagined the site (Casson Conder in this case). What was the concept, how was it imagined.

So even if we want to change it there is this sympathetic way to talk about it. In every masterplan you imagine a sort of typology for the buildings and these typologies are changing over the time. The Foster's building and the Stirling building had different typologies to what Casson Conder would have imagined. Ironically, we are building today in a way more similar to Casson Conder as we build buildings that have natural ventilation. On the contrary Foster was assuming air condition system for his building. But these are some of the complexities of the nature of masterplanning. Our idea is to try to be sympathetic to Casson Conder but, equally to be critical. For example, we designed two buildings; Institute of Criminology and the English Faculty, designed at the same time in a similar architecture so they have certain similarity. One thing we tried to do was to make Criminology of a kind of weight materiality related to the Faculty Building and to the Foster building and so made Criminology in white concrete. The English Faculty is made of terracotta and aluminium which are quite brutal materials but they have a relationship to the Stirling's faculty and to the Faculty of Divinity which is white with a lot of aluminium features. In this way, there was definitely a kind of sense of continuity in the site.

One of the problems of this project is that the architecture is so diverse in design language. Most architects are driven by the idea that they want

Sidgwick Site Masterplan



their buildings to look different to the other buildings and, in this case, the various projects haven't reinforced any idea of a sense of identity, as other university campuses through a sense of unity.

One of the landscape and the infrastructure objective is to put them together. There is another project that we have done in Oxford; St Peter's College. There is no old college, the project put together a lot of buildings that weren't together originally and therefore it needs a strong identity. When we started to work there we looked at how the landscape might pull together the existing buildings, rather than build any building. We worked only with landscape and at the end the college decided to change the landscape and develop a new landscape to pull the various buildings together. We therefore only designed the courtyard and the main entrance of the church, we changed the levels and designed the edges of the new lawn, a concrete building that a lot of people hated, was cleaned up, and now it is beautiful again.

How did you start your practice and what were the ideas behind your design thinking that are strong also now?

We began our practice winning a competition to design a square in Edinburgh, and so we started with landscape, even if it was only a paved space. We are always interested in the landscape and quite often in our project we curate the hard landscape and collaborate with landscape architects for the soft landscape design.

The landscape is a sort of experience for us.

I had a year in Rome at the beginning of our practice and I was so interesting in the structure of the city and the public spaces.

Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome is one of the most beautiful public spaces by Michelangelo, when I was in Rome I realized that much of the fabric and the buildings was already there, and he only re-faced the buildings. There is a strong idea in this square that you could design something new maintaining characters from the past, that there is more meaning if the new project is related to the past and looks forward. In all of our projects we try to apply this sort of transformation from the past, through the present, to the future.

Piazza del Campidoglio,
in Allies and Morrison (2014),
The fabric of place



Piazza del Campidoglio, drawing, Jean-Denis Bourcier (1554-1565).

OBSERVATION Building on the past:
the evolution of the Campidoglio



Piazza del Campidoglio, drawing, Guiseppe Vasi (1787-1791).

Michelangelo's Campidoglio is a unique architectural achievement. Three buildings frame a carefully delineated urban space at whose centre stands the bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. It is a space that for Rome has huge historical and political significance. It is the 'omphalos' of the city.

But what is really compelling about the Campidoglio is the comparison between the form of the completed building and the pre-existing condition of the site.

As in the drawing on the left, existing earth carved out urban Michelangelo's project was under construction—the building that forms the backdrop of the Campidoglio was built around a medieval core. What Michelangelo did was to

provide the entire structure with a contemporary facade, adding a new staircase and fountain at its base. The building to the right he also adapted and re-faced, retaining the form, but not the architecture, of the substituted form. He then added a further, symmetrical building in the equivalent position on the other side of the space. Finally, he adjusted the position of Marcus Aurelius allowing him to assume a primary role in the geometric and spatial organization of the site, on axis with the grand flight of stairs that connects the site back to the city.

Michelangelo built from history, and metaphorically, on the history and topography of the city. The result was an urban setting that must, at the time, have seemed at once entirely new, and entirely the same.

9/592 Whitechapel Public Realm

data

date	2015
location:	London, UK
area:	120 ha
client:	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
design team:	muf architecture/art J&L Gibbons Civic Engineers Robert Bevan Daisy Froud objectif Artelia

Why this project?

It is a project in one of the central borough in London affected by recent developments and a new significant masterplan and new infrastructure

It highlights constraints and opportunities that the future developments will generate affecting the whole neighbourhoods

One of the main issues at this stage is the necessity to have proper public engagement, the absence of it can negatively affect the success of the whole strategy



**key stages RIBA:
0-1-2**



“Whitechapel has historically been the heart of the local community – a key hamlet of the East End which has created for the changing migrant population for generations.”

Luftur Rahman
Mayor London Borough of Tower Hamlets
in Whitechapel
Vision Masterplan SPD

Whitechapel is famous for its market, history and its diversity and culture. It is an area of high density, deficient in accessible open space and destined to welcome a large number of new inhabitants with the new Crossrail station opening in 2018. In the past it was one of the hamlets that developed around the City of London. It is home to some of the most deprived communities in UK and at the same time it is on the edge of the City of London and Canary Wharf, and for that reason it is attracting new populations who are choosing to live there. As a result, the balance of demands between different groups of communities needs to be addressed.

Recent developments have highlighted that existing applications for development have fallen short in terms of the guidance in open space provision, protection and improvement of public realm, at the same time, large scale proposals haven’t adequately taken into consideration the needs of the community.

In terms of green infrastructure, the Tower Hamlets Green Grid provides the framework and more detailed application of policies identified in the All London Green Grid. This is special planning guidance embedded in the London Plan, defined as ‘a network of inter-linked and multifunctional open spaces, rivers and other corridors and linked in between that maximises opportunities for improving the quality of life’.

Historic context

In the past the area was defined by the London Hospital and its surrounding hamlet. The construction the hospital has shaped the neighbourhood and the economy around it. ‘Initially in the 1790s and 1820s the area was laid out as a grid of streets. The hospital expanded in the subsequent centuries with new buildings, build around gardens. Metaphorically, the clear physical boundary which existed around the hospital is now replaced by today’s holistic approach to health and well-being in the community as a way of being intimately linked to its immediate environment.’¹

These spaces today share a number of challenges such as incomplete land acquisition, anomalous boundaries, house backing rather than fronting onto parks. The baseline work started putting many of these spaces on the map, to identify need, space and lack of space, opportunity and loss.



¹ Muf architecture/art, (2016), *Whitechapel Comprehensive Public Realm Plan (CPRP) Final Report*



Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

Some buildings are listed such as the Hospital Northern Façade. The Grade I listed Trinity Green almshouses, the Grade II listed main building of the Albion Brewery and the grade II* listed church of St Augustine with St Philip Church that also houses the hospital’s museum. There are pockets of listed terraced houses, most notably along New Road and along the streets to its west as well as Mount Terrace, on Whitechapel Market itself, and a group fronting Newark Street and Turner Street.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

The area has an evidential significance linked to its recent and past history as well its proximity to the City of London. The area forms part of the green infrastructure of the Tower Hamlets Green Grid and the All London Green Grid.

Historical value

Some of the spaces are historic and remain as evidence of how the area was originally laid out. The presence of the old hospital building is a symbol of transformation, being vacant and having been replaced by a new hospital adjacent, with the intent of conversion into a new town hall and civic hub.

Aesthetic value

Many of the public spaces don’t offer value as they are poor quality and not contributing to the green infrastructure network. The public realm, in general, shows signs of stress and potential for improvement in the future.

Communal value

This is a areas identified for intensification in terms of population growth and demographic shift. ‘When the place that you know is rapidly changing around you, the public realm can be one aspect of daily life that remains reassuring, in which you can continue to recognize yourself and your community, and that offers pleasant space away home and work in which you can be and breathe’² Furthermore, there are many schools within the area that could provide opportunities to create ‘spatial overlaps between formal and informal learning.’³

- Historical pictures
- Crossrail Route Map





★ 'Tower Hamlets in Bloom' winner

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| music | garden | kick about | childcare facility |
| playground | padding pool | cycle path | youth/children's centre |
| city farm | pond | swimming | tennis |
| running | basketball | markets | library |
| hockey | pub/restaurant | Large sp. parkland trees | london overground |
| lawn bowls | bench/seating | nature reserve | netball |
| outdoor gym | cafe | football | public convenience |
| cricket | leisure facility | events | bmx park |

- study area boundary
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid
- Proposed Green Grid
- Railway
- district park
- parkland
- school/community/leisure
- estate outdoor space
- civic space
- urban agriculture
- private open space
- meanwhile use

Existing open space provision and facilities

design process and key stages

“Tower Hamlets has long been subject to external regeneration organisations whose strategic intentions didn’t always align with what local people wanted. We were very aware that Crossrail would be a catalyst. As a council, we felt that it was important to have a framework for capturing the value of new investment for local people.”

Robina Khan, former Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

In December 2015, the consultant team joined the client during an event held to support local businesses on Whitechapel Road. An occasion to meet residents and market workers and to have the opportunity to talk and better understand their fears and aspirations. What clearly emerged was the importance of the market, the poor quality of the public realm particularly around the new hospital, and the community’s desire to get involved and contribute to the decision making process. Two consultation stages were led: the first one in 2013, before the Whitechapel Vision plans in 2014, and the second in 2016.

Following those events, all the observations regarding existed public space and the new developments in the area were mapped and analysed to form the baseline to the Comprehensive Public Realm Plan (CPRP).

One of the main themes that emerged from that analysis was the microclimate. In particular the projected shading problems that would be caused by the proposed high-rise development. Within the study area, open space is largely made up of estates, schools and some small public squares. Another key issue is the projected increased pedestrian movement within the area that will with the opening of Crossrail in 2018. The public realm strategy focused on supporting pedestrian activity with more safe access, crosswalks and routes. The High Street forms the main spine through the network of roads with commercial, social and cultural implications.

The CPRP envisages the process of planning in the neighbourhood in a similar way to administering acupuncture, whereby the best spots enhance the provision of public space within the area are identified and attended to in a specific and focused way.

The CPRP aims to further develop its objectives in order to capture opportunity and stem the loss of amenity in the area and to propose a coherent plan with a long-term view. It offers helpful guidance in the principles for future developments and how the direct negative impact of new developments can be mitigated. In that way, the community can benefit from future investments and improvements to enhance community cohesion.

The baseline reports overlays heritage assets, open space, green infrastructure, shadow projections, community assets, principles of road engineering, movement and existing planning guidance in order to understand what is there in terms of public realm, and to project the cumulative impact of development proposals in the area.

Through a thorough understanding of the baseline situation, the team developed a number of key principles and objectives, that were underpinned with community engagement.

Design objectives:

Synergise ground level uses: Rich ground plane – outside and inside
Support well-being through open spaces: Hospitable corridors and spaces
Preserve through positive interventions and temporary uses: safeguard your assets

Multiply ground floor space with public realm: Intensify with pleasure
Design public realm for its specific use: The public realm is where you walk
Recognise and celebrate heritage: Look back to look forward
Strategically target public realm investment to maximise added value: There is value in uneven investments

Greenfingers: Connecting people in Whitechapel through nature
Enhance Whitechapel for all: Connecting people in Whitechapel through open spaces.
Support active spaces

Current stage: 2 / Concept Design / Riba Plan of Work

Existing open space provision and facilities

general and specific key questions

A key part of the masterplan is the role of community. How did you engage with community there?

You are specialists in public realm architecture and art and your practice has established a reputation for pioneering and innovative projects that address the social, spatial and economic infrastructures of the public realm. I know how this project evolved from the point of view of the landscape architects. Could you tell me more about your creative process, the interactions with the other specialists and the knowledge shared during this process? How your skills have made the difference in this project? What do you feel are the most important stages and collaborations to have developed in this project?

Public Realm, Green Infrastructure, Movement, Heritage and Community are the most important themes of this masterplan process. Could you explain how you used these considerations to make proposals for transformation within the context of significant social and environmental complexity?

How your masterplan responds to the arrival of Crossrail in the near future? What will change in the area?

Could be this project defined as a source of knowledge for the design process in terms of masterplan, sustainability, collaborations and consultation? Are there other similar examples in your practice to compare with it? Is Making Space in Dalston a similar experiment on a smaller scale?

Whitechapel Art Gallery



REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.
Illustrations are from the same reports.

Muf architecture/art, (2016), *Whitechapel Comprehensive Public Realm Plan (CPRP) Final Report*
Tower Hamlets Green Grid (2010)

<http://www.crossrail.co.uk/>

Existing Open Spaces Survey



- 1 Jewish Cemetery
- 2 St Bartholomews Gardens
- 3 Globe Town Market Square and the Globe City Square
- 4 Whitechapel Road
- 5 Ford Square
- 6 Sidney Street Gardens
- 7 Jubilee Street Gardens
- 8 Phillpot Street
- 9 Vallance Gardens
- 10 Cavell Street Gardens
- 11 Durward Street
- 12 Hospital Northern Façade
- 13 Mount Terrace Car Park
- 14 Future Hospital Square
- 15 Climate, Atmosphere and the Royal London Hospital
- 16 Collingwood Estate
- 17 Cleveland Estate
- 18 Trinity Arms Houses and Mile End Waste
- 19 Sidney Street Estate
- 20 Chicksand Estate
- 21 Christchurch Estate
- 22 Swanlea School Grounds
- 23 Osmani Primary School
- 24 Madani Girls School
- 25 Scott Street Open Space
- 26 Railway Sidings Wallace Road
- 27 Nomadic Community Garden
- 28 St Anne's Primary School
- 29 Allen Gardens
- 30 Spitalfields City Farm
- 31 Thomas Buxton Primary
- 32 Kobi Nazrul Primary
- 33 Weaver Fields
- 34 John Smith Children's Centre

Existing open space survey

interview tale
Johanna Gibbons



18 November 2016

How was the team structure organized?

Basically, we were responsible for green infrastructure, Civic Engineers were responsible for movement, muf were responsible for the overall public realm as lead consultant. And then we came together to draw out the proposals.

This is another important collaboration with muf architecture/art in London. Could it be compared to Making Space in Dalston.

Do you think that this case is a similar experiment in a bigger scale? Has it the same potential to have similar success?

To be honest, I don't think so. As Making Space in Dalston required Liza Fior and I to work very closely together to overcome various hurdles and to drive it forward. On Whitechapel Liza and I delegated the work, and that made it different, it couldn't therefore produce the same.

Making Space in Dalston nearly broke the practice because so much time was spent on it, with so little fee. Making Space in Dalston was an enormous amount of time as lead consultant and we couldn't dedicate the same time now.

On Whitechapel Public Realm our remit only concerned green infrastructure. We couldn't invest the same amount of time, and there are strands of work that are outstanding, in my personal view, which I would have liked to have followed up on.

So, if I'm being honest, I'm a bit disappointed. We did a good job and we did it with increased knowledge and experience, but I couldn't give it the same attention as I did on Making Space in Dalston. So that's in the back of my mind. And with this project it is very complex. Whitechapel is undergoing extraordinary change due to the opening up of a new Crossrail station.

It will change be beyond belief, in the same way that the London Overground changed Dalston. But Crossrail will be even more dramatic, and the amount and the intensity of development proposed is extraordinary.

Eastern Curve, Dalston



What was the starting point of the design process and the first strategy adopted?

We started talking about the impact of over-shadowing of the high-rise buildings proposed. No one at the Council had put together the cumulative impact of all the proposals that were in for planning consideration. So muf put these projections together in one 3D model.

The idea of a 3D model came from an article that Liza and I saw about the residents in NY City being so concerned about high rise and the amount of over-shadowing of Central Park. They projected the shadow pattern to illustrate how much more the park would be in shadow, that was the starting point, to see how much of the existing community would be directly affected.

And we found it was an enormous amount, not only of buildings, but of the public realm as well. Through this exercise we could then see that certain moves made by the various developers involved were wrong, because they located the open space on the shady side of the development, not on the sunny side.

They also presumed that somehow, they could move or remove certain longstanding key community facilities, such as the Mission, who've been supporting homeless people in the area for over a hundred years, until muf suggested politely that the work undertaken at the mission was incredibly important to the history of the place, and displacement would likely cause multiple repercussions. It is the rate of change that is the issue here, and developers not being interested in taking responsibility for the long-term implications of their actions.

Our strategy really was to talk about walking, walkable neighbourhoods, streets you can enjoy walking in, streets of interest, the streets you walk along to school every day. Streets as places for people who live and work there, rather than just conduits for movement.

We also considered how to make the most of the amazing proposal of the Council to bring the Town Hall into the old hospital building.

It's a lovely building, it's been left empty, and it sits right opposite the new Crossrail station, which is part of the existing underground station.

It has great potential to reinforce the Green Grid of Tower Hamlet with

Whitechapel area shadow study, in Comprehensive Public Realm Plan (CPRP)



various key green connections which could be enhanced around and through this new cultural hub. There is a phenomenal opportunity here which is a separate project with other landscape architects involved in it. I feel we have done what we've been asked to do, but the project is endless and needs much more, more continuity.

So, if you compare Whitechapel CPRP with Making Space in Dalston, which I personally brokered with Liza, the difference is that we couldn't go beyond the brief, and that's what in reality these kinds of projects need, and that's what we usually find ourselves doing. There's various members of the community who really want us involved in the ongoing work, but the fees to cover our time is not there. So that to me is the main difference between the two projects. Whitechapel is such an important project, and the proposals and the way we expressed the opportunity for green infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) intervention was appropriate and well considered.

We've thought a lot about SuDS that a lot because there's quite localised flooding, and also there's a lot of what we call 'nebulous' space, spaces of a monoculture of grass, nothing for kids to play on or in, no beauty... where the potential for SuDS components to be integrated provides great potential for enhanced amenity and biodiversity.

We were keen to cross-fertilise with Stephen O'Malley's work (Civic Engineers) who took an overview of the Whitechapel High Street, which is a major opportunity, but very challenging, with one of the biggest street markets in London, that is very well-known, lots of people come from all over the country to shop there, but there's very little public facilities for the market holders, in terms of storage and toilets. Also, the cycle Super Highway goes through there, where Transport for London felled a number of existing mature trees to make way for the cycle path, which seems mad, as they could not apparently find any space in which to plant replacements. This is indicative of the speed of change, with not enough time to find solutions.

There's a planning term we use in London which is 'to catch and steer'. And that's what we needed to do in order to help muf 'catch and steer' large scale complex projects, and to help give advice to the local authorities, so that

Central Park, NY, area shadow study



September 21st Shadows Across Central Park **Prior** to Development



September 21st Shadows Across Central Park **After** Development



Whitechapel masterplan, open spaces, in Comprehensive Public Realm Plan (CPRP)



they could respond to the planning applications coming in appropriately. I think the pace of those applications and the tremendous pressure from the developers to get those permissions through, as we move into uncertain times, poses a significant pressure on the local authority officers.

Which are the critical points come out of the Baseline?

I think there's some very interesting discussion that emerges from the Baseline.

The whole issue of health and well-being, for instance. Here you've got a major hospital, that has the only homeopathic department anywhere in London, and yet the environment around the hospital is dire.

We supported the notion of prevention. In other words, enhancing the environment to enhance well-being thereby reducing the likelihood of people living in that area having to go to the hospital. We promoted support for those communities through creating environments that fostered health and well-being. We came up with the idea of working with these two amazing city farms. They are extraordinary, they do such valuable work with the community, lovely things like bringing a group together to tell stories to while they stroke rabbits, an activity they called 'furry tales' (a play on fairy tales). We just thought it would be brilliant to build links between the hospital, their health in the community outreach strategy and health workers together with the farms. To suggest a collaboration on various projects. That takes an enormous amount of work to make that happen, it needs someone on it, to make it work, making meetings, joining people together, fostering that relationship continuously. The local authorities have no time, the hospital is strapped for resources, the city farms are keen but require people to enable that activity. Given a different situation we would have made this collaboration work.

So, my overriding feeling is, you can tell, that there is a good deal of further potential to meet our own expectations of what was needed. And I guess that's just not very satisfying.

Could you please tell more about the collaboration with muf during the whole design process?

I think in terms of the process, the way Liza and I work is we meet up once every week or two weeks for a very early meeting over coffee. It's an intense working session. We align our thoughts and actions on a project swiftly and creatively within an hour. We talk fluidly together, we're honest with each other. We see things in different ways, we work in different ways, but we appreciate the fundamentals in a similar way.

We approach a challenge from different perspectives, and that's perhaps, what's interesting, so we have a special relationship. However, on Whitechapel project we were both very pressurised on other projects and couldn't dedicate the time in the same way.

What about the current design stages and the collaboration with the local authority?

The local authority scrutinized the work we undertook very closely. They have taken the recommendations on board. They are using it already.

They are extraordinary in many ways. For instance, they are one of the only local authorities I know of that have an officer for walking, who's dedicated to the walking environment. There was plenty of opportunity to cultivate various ideas with him, in terms of networking these walking routes, making sure that there's traffic calming, ensuring that SuDS was integrated, I mean, significant potential. There's a lot of potential particularly in enhancing the housing estates, where we have considered the external areas as part of the public realm, because it is where people walk through, whether they live there or not, to avoid the busy roads. Those estates form part of the way in which you mind map the whole area.

What is the main reaction of the community to the rapid evolution of the neighbourhood?

For the population, there'll be a big change.

I can't remember how many living units are proposed, but the new community of people living there in the end will be substantial. There will be an enormous influx of people buying in the area, who are not of the area. That's why we asked, will there be enough outside space for young people to play, to relax and hang around in?

It will put enormous pressure on the public realm. And this was the starting point of our strategy.

A section 106 is a planning commitment, an agreement between a developer and the local authority. The local authority can suggest what that commitment should be, which then turns into a legal obligation. They need to be on top of this, they need to have a list of projects that benefit the wider community ready to schedule. That was part of the reason for the work we carried out, to provide that schedule of potential projects which would be funded through the planning process.

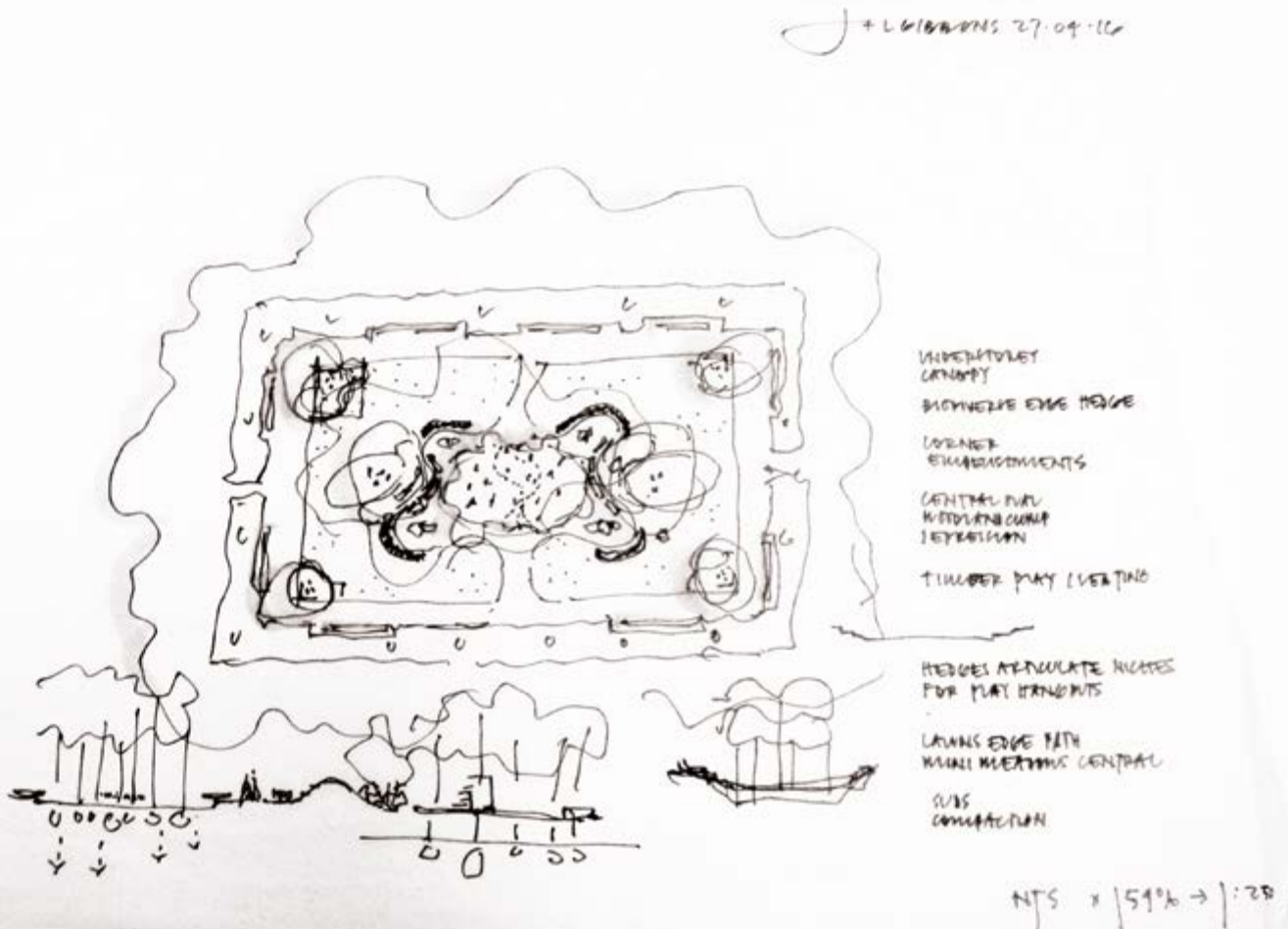
What are the key strategies in your proposal and how do you image the masterplan evolution?

You need to improve these areas you need to safeguard these areas, you need to upgrade these areas, you need to close these areas off to traffic, you know that was exactly what was needed. Our project was just a starter of a bigger process.

It now needs a program of development with those projects. No doubt the local authority will at some point procure those projects, from the section 106 monies, because the local authority doesn't have any resources themselves to spend on the public realm. They should be collecting money from all the developers as they give approval.

The section 106 agreement on each one of these developments will have a costed list of items that the developer will pay for. The local authority takes that and it's for them to dispose of that money for community benefit. And it will be that money which pays for consultants to progress the whole

Ford Square sketch



project. Most of our work in the public realm is from money generated from 'planning gain'. It's an important and complex procedure, and that's why I think it's interesting.

Whitechapel is an historical layered part of London. What was your specific approach on the historical stratification here?

We are very interested in the historic environment and Rob Evans produced a brilliant historic appraisal report. He's a very good journalist.

The whole notion of hospital corridors being something that's an uplifting experience rather than a terrible experience. Taking that idea outside, saying: «these corridors, these conduits for movement, they need to be beautiful, they need to be functional, they need to be robust, they need to be meaningful in terms of the community and they need to deliver in terms of health and well-being ».

There's some very old and significant public realm 'assets' like Ford Square, which is one of the oldest squares in London along with Sidney Square.

The local community wanted us to help them develop ideas for the rejuvenation of these squares, but it's a bit tricky because as we're not the lead consultants I'm always mindful of what might be perceived as side-lining the lead consultant and ensuring that we maintain the balance of our creative collaboration with muf in a respectful way.

However, I did do a little sketch, to help the residents to start thinking about what might be possible, looking at the existing and overlaying the historic layout. It is in a terrible state at the moment, and it is an amazing enclosure made by many large mature plane trees. I sketched an idea which reinterpreted historic elements with a circular walk around the edge, places to sit and feel separate to the traffic around, while reinforcing the corners with multi-stemmed trees...really simple. The residents really liked the initial thoughts, but I suspect they haven't the funding to commission a consultant.

What is the potential of the project now?

The potential of Ford Square and Sydney Square would be to:

- 1- formalise a 'Friends of' group
- 2- talk to the local school that use the square as for sport and spill out, as they do not have enough outdoor sport provision

A 'Friends of' group is a really effective way setting up a community project that works across cultural divides, and essential to ensure buy-in by all the community, otherwise any restoration is likely to be trashed.

This allows for negotiating through difficult issues where there is little consensus, that's the role we normally take, in facilitating those conversations, if we had time and the scope. It is a very important piece of London's history, these squares, so it would be a shame if they were not given the attention they deserve, but ownership by all members of the community is essential, especially when there are competing aspirations, some which are just not compatible in use. The Lottery Fund, who are asking for local communities to come forward with their own projects, might be a good source of funding for this work. The project is straight forward enough, we could draw it up tomorrow, and get it in the ground in six months. But that's not the point, the project is actually about people, and it is bringing people together around that project, as a catalyst for social cohesion, and that I know would take time. All the individual projects that muf and ourselves drew out in the area need a high level of attention, the squares that I have showed you are only one example.

Whitechapel is a fascinating project that actually requires a huge amount of ongoing engagement beyond the brief we have, to build trust, as we did in Dalston. We know what is needed, we know what it takes.

interview tale

Aranzazu Fernandez Rangel



2 December 2016

The interview with Aranza wasn't recorded. Here, in synthesis, are the main issues that arose during the conversation.

This masterplan was led with the aim to provide a design and planning tool for the present and future developments in an urban area of high sensitivity in terms of historical, cultural and social values.

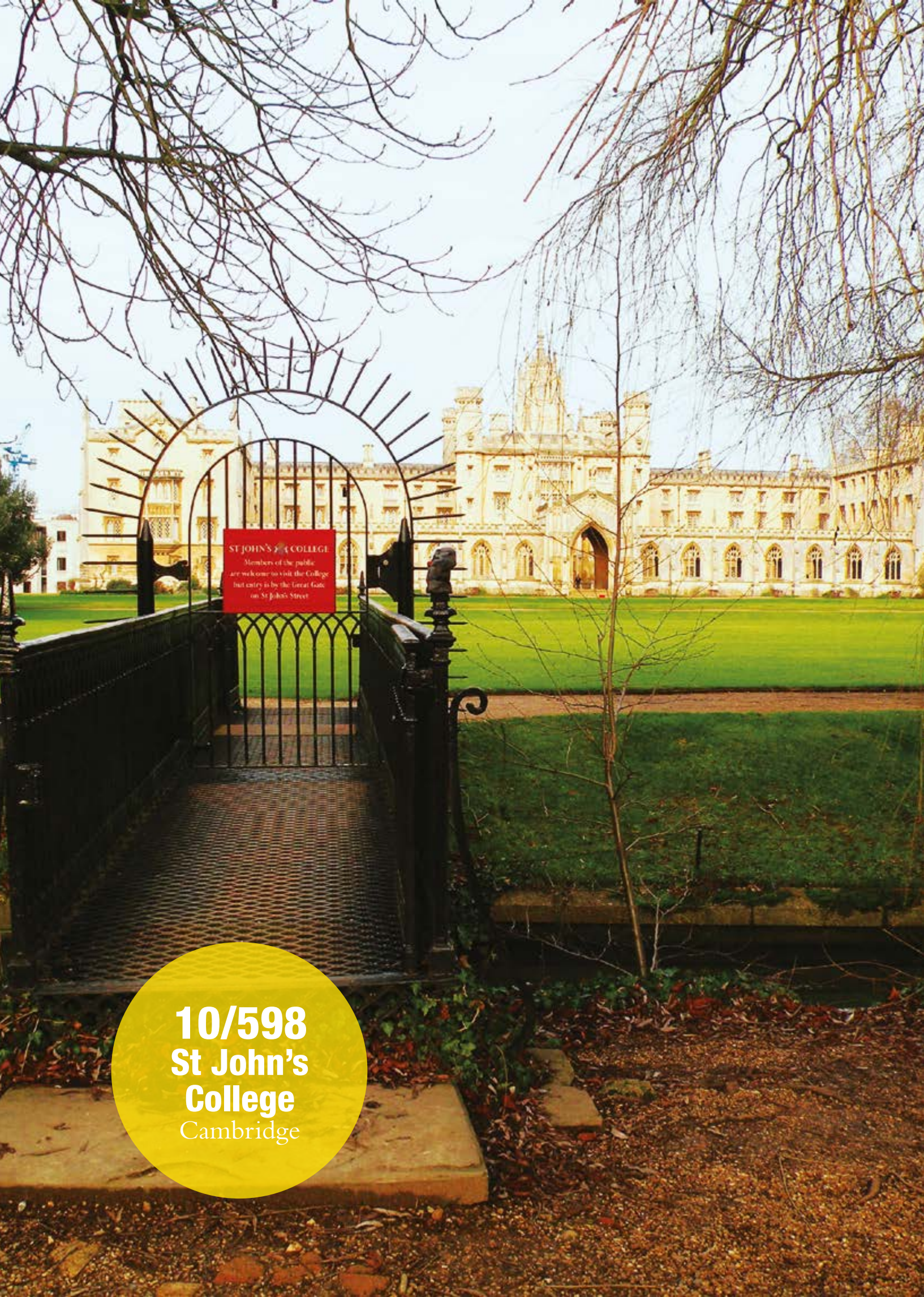
The social issue was highlighted several times by Aranza during the conversation. One of the most worrying things is the general apathy of the community living there, a kind of uncritical acceptance of the fast growth of the neighbourhood and the developments already planned.

The local authority need to maximize the investments being made by the developers through planning gains.

Therefore, from the beginning, the proposals faced many obstacles, most of all during the consultation phases. The consultation method recommended to engage community included raising awareness by contacting a wide range of community groups, making them aware of the project and opportunities to participate, talking to people on the phone and email, mini-interviews with interested parties and community stakeholders, targeted face-to-face interviews or conversations and 'walk in workshops' during design development stage.

These actions always have to be activated from the beginning, as was learned from other projects such as Making Space in Dalston. In that case, the community was involved in initial brief. Nothing was allowed to stop that process. Probably, in that case, the success of the project was both the quality of the public space and the way in which the people contributed to the design, realize action and ongoing governance.

In the case of Whitechapel, informal conversations with gardeners who are taking care of the school gardens or other public green spaces and with the workers of the farms, highlighted how important is to preserve the quality of these spaces by promoting them as a network, a complex and sustainable system. Another big issue that the borough had to take on board was consideration of increased over shadowing by new development that will compromise the microclimate and therefore the quality of the public realm. These are the issues with Whitechapel and the worry is that without proper ongoing engagement, a big opportunity for the whole area and the community will be lost.



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
Members of the public
are welcome to visit the College
but entry is by the Great Gate
on St John's Street

10/598
St John's
College
Cambridge

10/598 St John's College

data

date	2015 - ongoing
location:	Cambridge, UK
area:	25 ha
client:	St John's College, University of Cambridge
design team:	Architect, lead consultant: Allies and Morrison Landscape architect: J&L Gibbons
funding institution:	St John's College, University of Cambridge

Why this project?

It is a project that originally recognized architecture as the key issue of the College's development. In-depth research and analysis have brought to light that Capability Brown has also worked on the landscape project. As a result, the landscape has become a core element of the whole masterplan.



**key stages RIBA:
0-1**



St John's College is placed in a strategic position in Cambridge, between the historic core and the University's planned expansion in West and North-West Cambridge.

'St John's College is a vibrant, diverse and international community where students, academics and staff live, work, learn and socialise together, encouraging a free exchange of ideas. Life revolves around the residential experience - Hall, the Library, the Chapel, sports, societies and, most importantly, living together, which is central to the College's function.'¹

The College is generally very well served by multiple entrances on its western, northern and eastern edges, some in regular use while others are not in use at all offering opportunities for enhancing access to the College in the future.

The sequence of historic spatial typologies also defines the nature of the routes across the site, whether through the courts or cloisters.

Historic context

For both the buildings and landscape, there has been a process of key moments of change within which the current evolution of the site can be considered.

In 1722 it is believed Lancelot Brown put forward a proposal for the establishment of the Wilderness as a type of parkland space for the College. In 1949-51 Thomas Wilfred Sharp and Sylvia Crowe proposed a planting strategy for the site.

Thomas Sharp was a well-known landscape architect and urban planner and author of several formative books on town planning.

Sylvia Crowe was one of the pre-eminent and pioneering early to mid-twentieth century British landscape designers. Her work ranged from small scale gardens to the big scale of regional landscapes. Her work in St John's College involved the specification and supervision of the contract planting of the borders in the grounds and the scheme for the Fellows' Garden.

Listed buildings and protected open spaces:

¹ Allies and Morrison J&L Gibbons (2016), *St John's College, Volume 1, Masterplan Strategy*, p.21



The Main College Site is located in the Cambridge Central Conservation Area, while the Playing Fields straddle both the Central and the West Conservation Areas.

Most of the College buildings are protected through statutory listing: I, II, II*, grade and there are locally listed buildings too. The whole site is designated as protected open space in the Local Plan and the Main College Site is also Grade II* listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Assessing significance:

Evidential value

The landscape of St John's College is of international significance with landscapes designed by Thomas Sharp & Sylvia Crowe (the Avenue and Scholars' Garden) and also by Lancelot Capability Brown (the Wilderness). There are over 300 mature trees on the Main College Site with a wide variety of species present, several veteran trees and significant specimen trees are worth noting including the Broad Walk and the yew planted in 1843 and named after Charles Babington.

Historical value

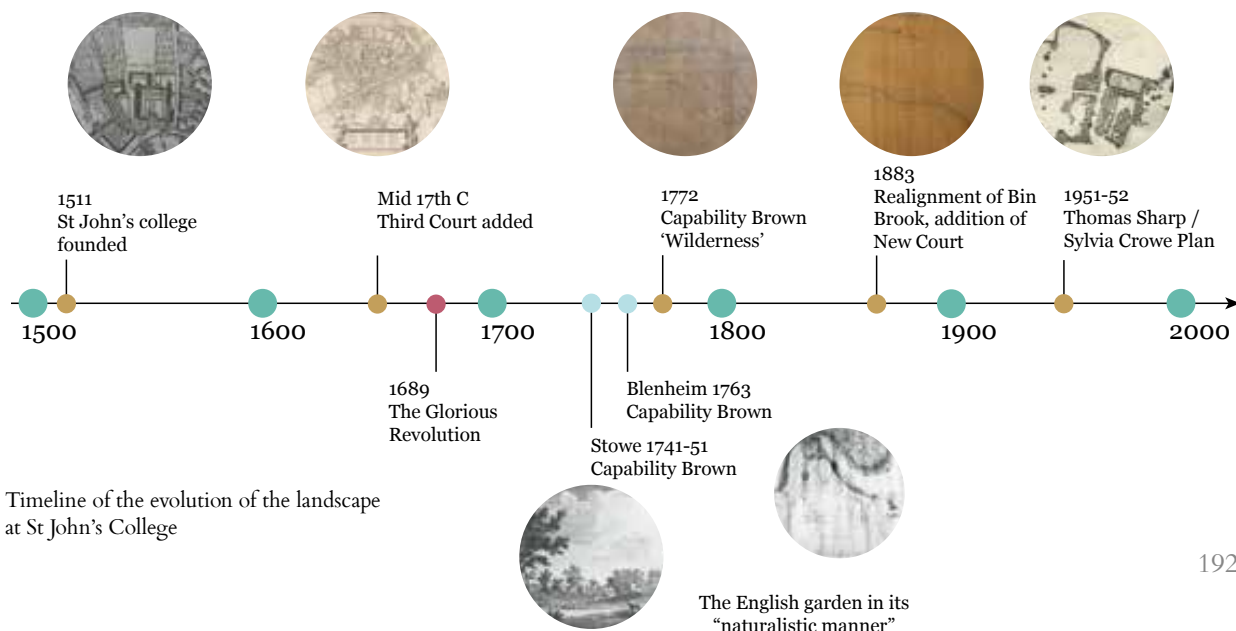
There are five significant periods of landscape alterations that have taken place in the development of the St John's College Estate. From each period, extant landscape features can still be observed: inception of the College from 1511, the addition of 3rd Court in the Mid to late 17th century, the several notable Landscape Architects including Charles Bridgeman and Lancelot Capability Brown in Mid to late 18th century, the realignment of the Bin Brook and the creation of New Court in the 19th century, and in the 1951 the designs for the Scholars' Garden and significant replanting of the grounds including the Playing Fields by Thomas Sharp and Sylvia Crowe.

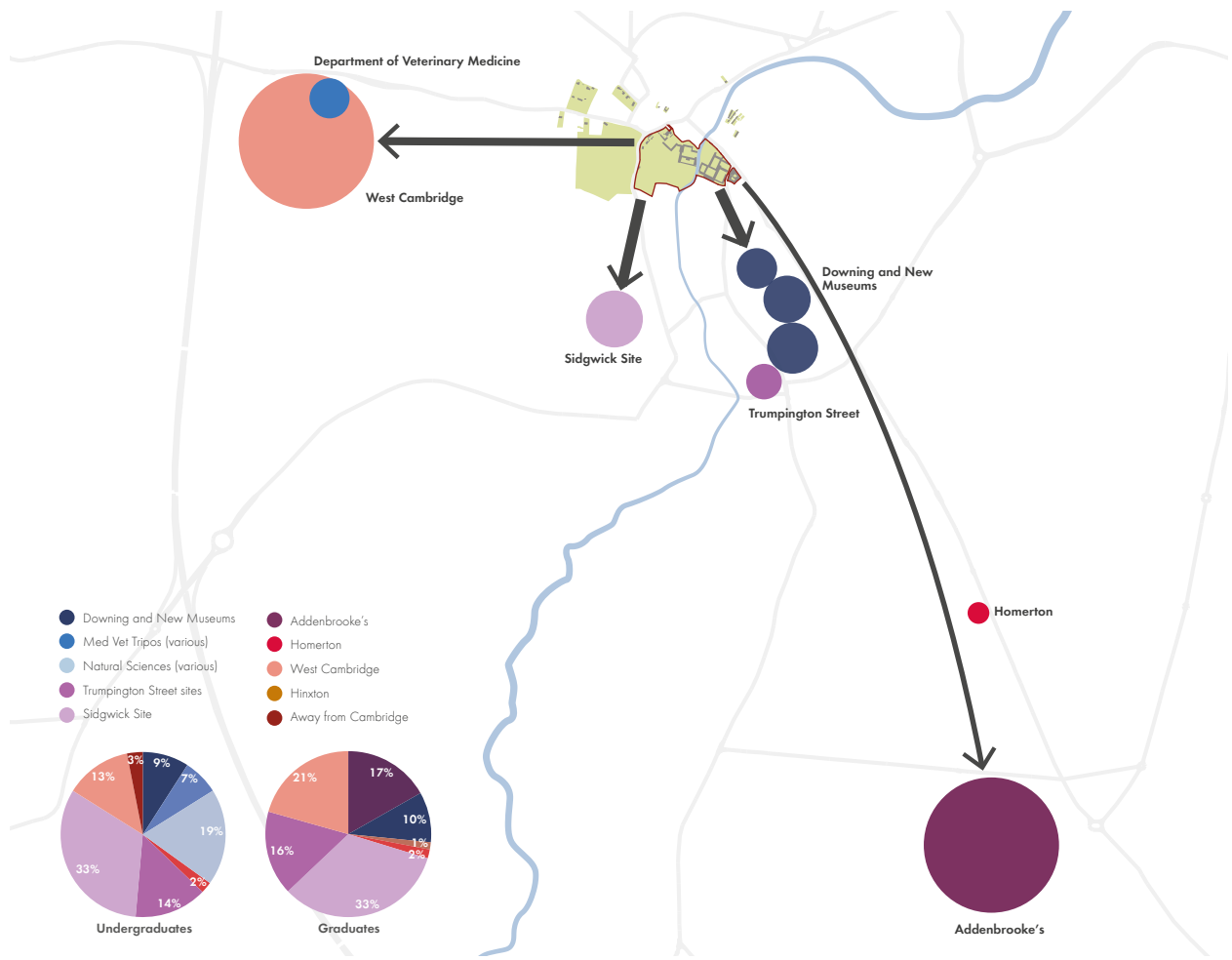
Aesthetic value

Historically the St John's College Estate evolved holistically with buildings and landscapes considered as one. The relationship between landscape and the architecture are significant both in smaller scale of inside outside spaces and larger scale of the Estate.

Communal value

The whole St John's College has an international and vibrant student community and the academic environment is organised to provide for the health and well-being for students that are living, studying and working there.





design process and key stages

“A masterplan should describe a process not a product. And while it should accommodate the realities of the present, it must acknowledge the uncertainties of the future.”

Allies and Morrison
J&L Gibbons (2016),
St John's College, Volume 1,
Masterplan Strategy

The design proposal is at the first stages of the RIBA Plan of Work, the design team is now developing the design concept (stage 2).

‘The strategic masterplan has been undertaken to shape and guide decision making regarding the College Estate over the next 20 years. The masterplan is not a blueprint for the development of the College, but is to be seen more as a framework for the management of change.’

The main purpose of the masterplan is to make strategic decisions about its Estate over a 20-year period within a 100 year context, to allow an ambitious vision that also reflects the long history of the College and the expectation that it will survive for a further 500 years. For doing this they are developing the masterplan considering the past, the short and the long term.

Design objectives:

- Strengthening the College community
- Providing an inspirational setting
- Improving the integration of graduates into College
- Attracting the best academics
- Enhancing operational effectiveness

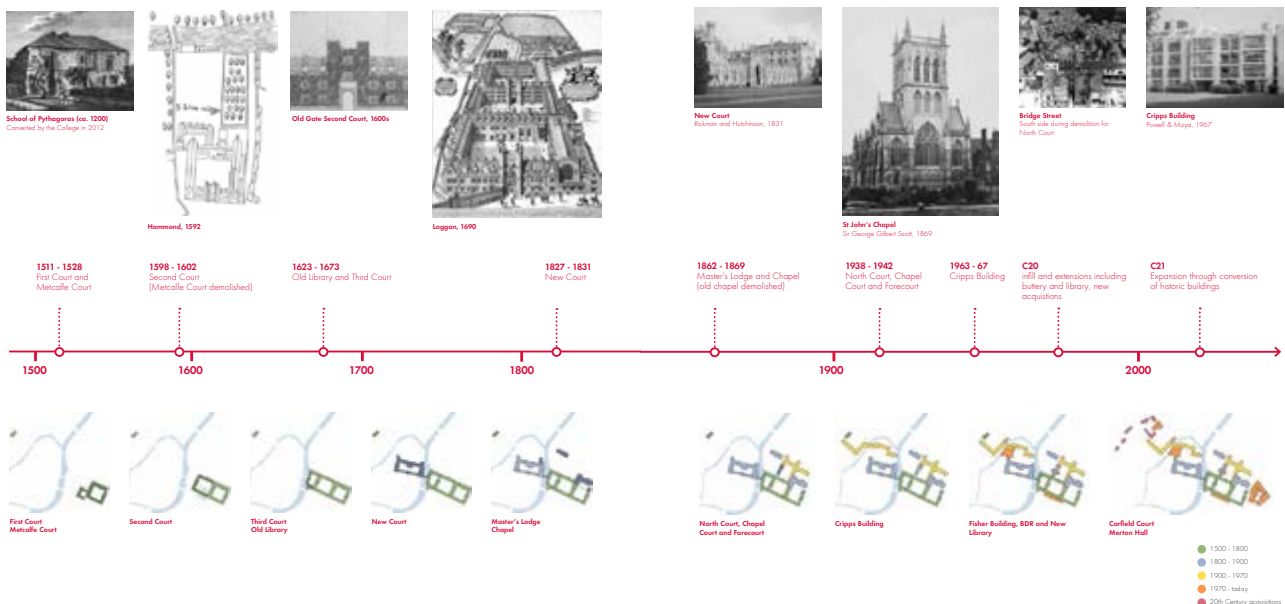
Key potential landscape projects:

- BDR Patio improvements
- Chapel Court and Forecourt improvements
- Master's Garden
- Bridge connection from Cripps to the Master's Garden
- Cripps and Fisher biodiversity projects
- Bin Brook enhancements
- Paddock views and tree planting
- Landscape, public realm and new build
- Wilderness enhancement
- Scholars' Garden enhancement
- Enhance the landscape character of The Spinney
- Sustainable propagation, green waste and gardening
- Engagement and habitat creation projects
- Playing Fields connections, enclosure, car park integration and Queen's Road tranquillity projects

Proportion of students travelling to different University sites in Cambridge
St John's College (2017)
St John's College timeline

Current stage: 3 / Developed Design / Riba Plan of Work

timeline



general and specific key questions

How was the professional team chosen? Was a competitive process there? Did the professional team have the appropriate range and level of skills for the demands of the project? There were specialists that have played a key role in the design process or did you feel short of some expert figure?

How did you manage the many level of history recognizable in the area? Is it possible with the landscape design to allow the preservation of the historic environment? How is possible to develop a memorial strategy in a such multicultural context?

Did you consider the collaboration and participation of people, fellows, students and university's staff in this stage of the design process? If yes, how they collaborated to develop the landscape design?

The main purpose of the project is to make strategic decisions about the Estate over a 20-year period, how does the landscape project respond to this request?

What is the role played by the landscape in this intent? How can the masterplan remain relevant in the long-term even if there are changes? Are you planning strategies to make it possible?

Jo wrote: "Nearly 40 years ago, as a teenager, I sat in a meadow with Dame Sylvia Crowe, and we talked about how landscape architecture was surely the most honourable profession.

She focused my ambitions not only in terms of career but also as a professional woman.

Her drive was understated but enormously respected. I followed her instruction of where to study, and was infected by her love and enthusiasm for her work which influenced city planning as much as forestry practice." How does it feel to reinterpret one of her works?



REFERENCES

All the texts are summaries extract from the design reports examined and available at J&L Gibbons Private Archive in London.
Illustrations are from the same reports.

Allies and Morrison, J&L Gibbons (2016), *St John's College, Volume 1, Masterplan Strategy*

Allies and Morrison, J&L Gibbons (2016), *St John's College, Volume 2, Projects*

St John's College landscape design plan
Cambridge (2017)



interview tale
Johanna Gibbons & Neil Davidson



16 November 2016

How was the professional team chosen? Was a competitive process there? Did the professional team had the appropriate range and level of skills for the demands of the project? There were specialists that have played a key role in the design process or did you feel short of some expert figure?

J: For this project, the architect was the lead consultant, recommended three landscape consultants to the client who the architect thought were appropriate. We were one of those three and we were asked to prepare a proposal and to attend an interview, the panel for the interview included the architects and staff from the College.

N: The interview involved us discussing our design approach, how we would work with the client and our experience of projects that were relevant.

J: I think another important aspect that we talked about was our approach to consultation and engagement with all parts of the college.
We emphasized the importance of securing buy-in from all parts of the college community.

N: To start with we prepared a fee proposal. And in terms of feedback, we're told that our fee was quite high. The budget was quite limited, but we didn't know what the budget was to start with. We had to respond to the brief and make a proposal.

And when we did the first proposal I included some specialists input too. We were asked to remove these consultants because it was making the fee too high.

One of the reasons was this was the first time the college had engaged a landscape architect in 60 years and the extent of our potential input was not properly appreciated.

We had to work gently to encourage: « this was the right way to go».

We removed the historic landscape specialist, we removed the ecologist, we removed soil scientist and we removed the landscape manager from the proposal. Later we were able to add back the ecologist.

In terms of the historic landscape research, we just absorbed that within our own resources.

J: We did an enormous amount of research. We spent an incredible amount of time on the research, because we felt that was an important aspect of the work and that we would, need it support proposals from transformative change in the College landscape. The client appreciated what we were doing. He could see that we were investing in the project. It was the right thing to do.

N: The other thing we also suggested at the beginning was that they would need commission a tree survey and an ecological survey. At the start and they weren't prepared to commission.

But later we were able to persuade the client to commission this work to support the emerging masterplan proposals we were also able to conduct a preliminary walk around with an ecologist to assess the potential of the site.

J: I Picking up on that, is was a process of gently introducing the client to the scope of the work that a Landscape Architect we can offer, often it is not very generally well known.

We have to be careful to use a form of language to explain to the client why we needed something to support what we were advising them to commission. The work progressed in a positive way, following the process of building trust with the client.

N: The architect started working on this project in June 2015 and then we were appointed in December 2015.

An important part of their work initially was to do prepare an as built survey of all the buildings.

Amazingly the college didn't have detailed drawing of all the buildings together on one masterplan. details of the landscape needed to follow.

So, this is the challenge you must spend money at the outset of a project to obtain accurate baseline information..

J: That allows you to have a basic starting point..

There's a very distinctive structure hierarchy in these colleges. They are all very learned, very experienced with their own fields of expertise and if we are not coming from a place of knowledge, really serious knowledge, then you know the first presentation would not be accepted.

In order that we could build trust with the group of fellows, we thought it was important to invest research time.

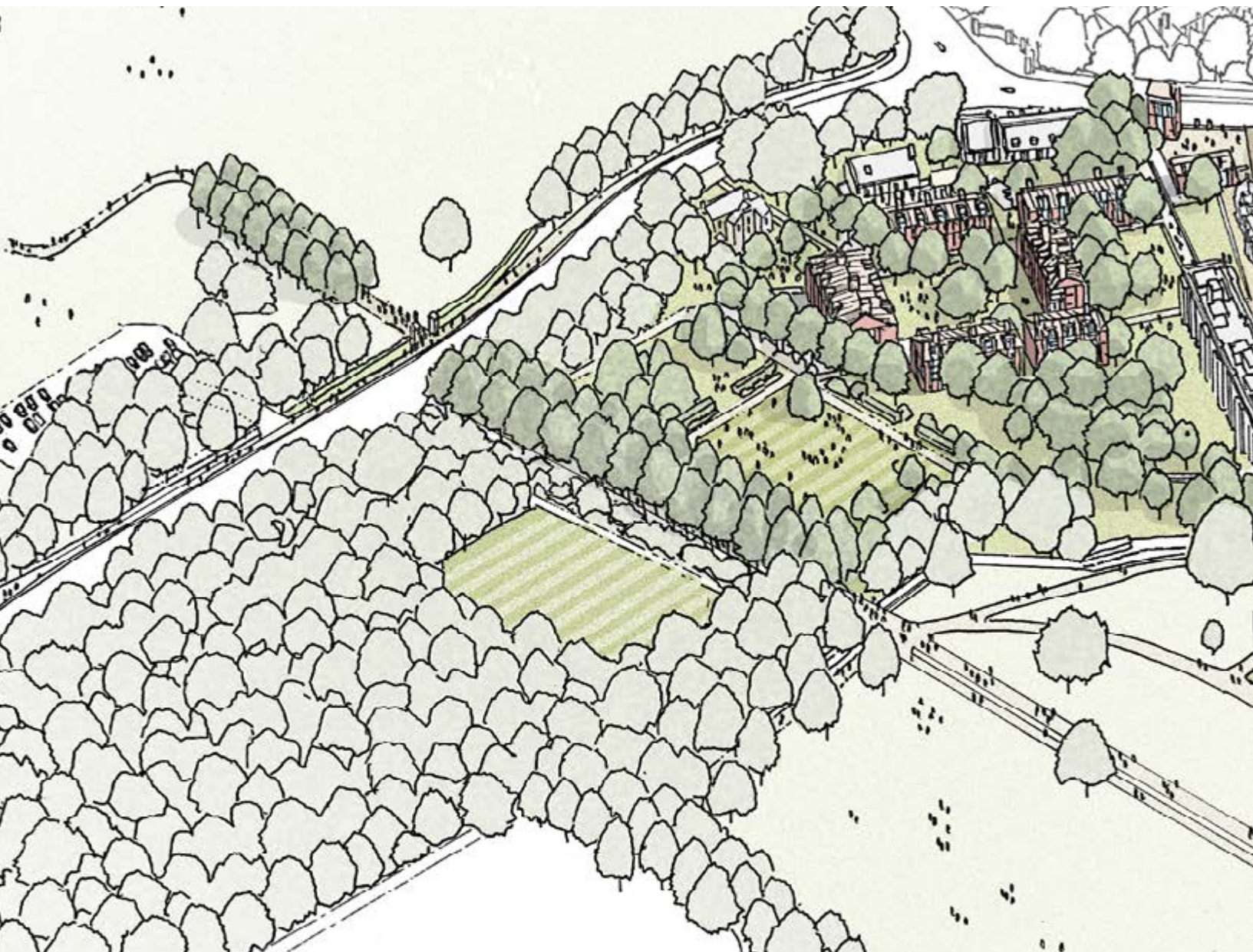
N: Another key point in the context of the other project that you are looking at, at the beginning the architect said to us: «don't worry we'll do all the drawings to save you time».

And we said: « we need to prepare our landscape drawings as the emphasis on landscape needs to be carefully considered».

And in the end, that's what happened.

The landscape drawings were deliberately different from the architect's drawings because the emphasis was on something other than the buildings.

St John's College Masterplan



J: There is always a balance in terms of the emphasis of proposals when preparing a masterplan, master planning architects will want to emphasise the potential of the built form and the landscape architect will want to emphasise the importance of the landscape . Finding this balance during presentations was something that happened organically allowed the client to make his own judgment.

N: What was very interesting in this project is, over the course of six months, the format for presentations started as architect presents then landscape architect presents; at the end of the design process, it was vice-versa, the client wanted that the landscape to set the scene. They acknowledge that one of the most important parts of this project was the landscape.

J: but if we'd said: «we think the landscape is the most important thing on this project», we probably would have failed.

N: Sometimes the challenges of presenting during packed agendas help focus your mind, on occasion was informed « Neil you have 10 minutes! » I would try to present the landscape strategy in 10 minutes so it made me be concise and to the point. Everyone wants to hear the key messages. So, it was quite an interesting process for us.

J: Through our work that highlights how special the assets were in the landscape and that by default articulating what was possible in terms of points of the development to the architect.



N: I think it's really important to say, at point that this project initiated from a need to find opportunities for new development, the college has to do something.

It can't survive and grow if it doesn't build more buildings.

The questions is where is the most appropriate site to do this? Where's the best place to build those buildings? We need to understand the landscape and the importance of that landscape.

That was the discussion we brought to the table.

J: They took our advice. There were some elements that they positively wanted to develop. We were quietly forthright in our research to demonstrate that those were very significant elements of the landscape.

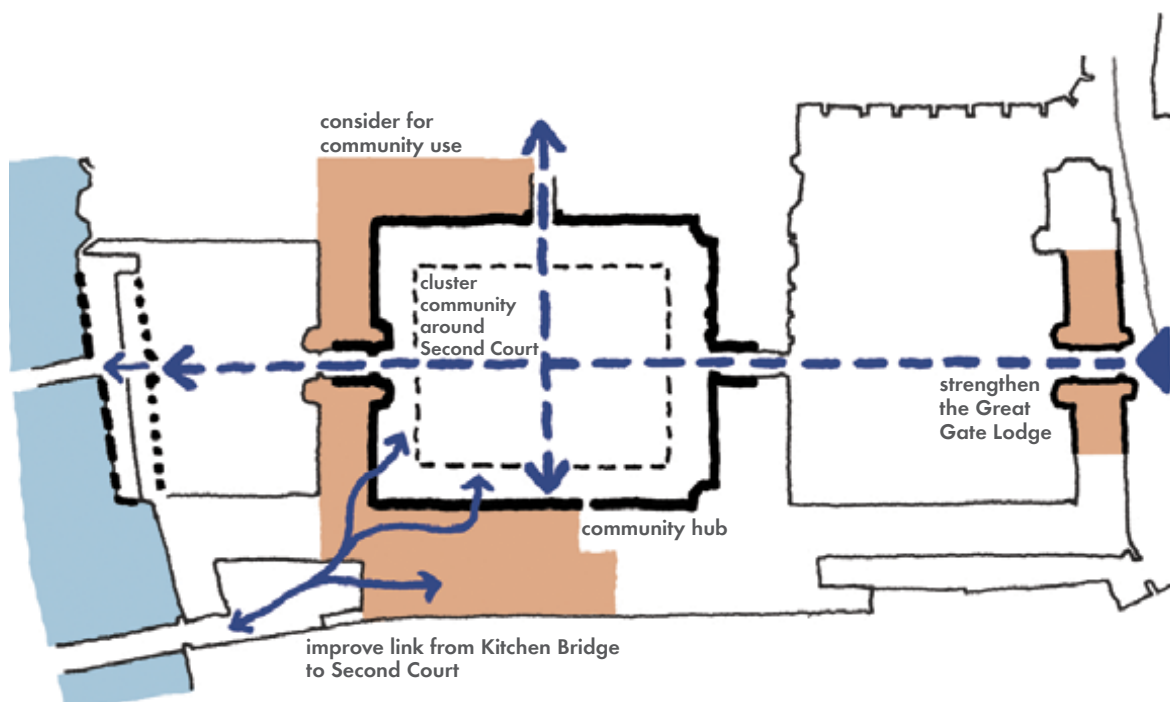
So, in a sense we were helping to set the context for a new piece architectural and landscape architectural work in a sequence of historical interventions.

N: Then effectively what we end up advising is not: «this is the area where you can build», but we advise «it is the area where you can't build». And then the next decisions come later.

J: The regard to landscape significance we're very familiar with the way in which parks and landscapes are registered by Historic England. And in a sense because of the dynamic nature of landscape and although the fact that the planting design by Sylvia Crowe is not there now this is somewhat irrelevant to the documented significance of the landscape as the evidence can be observed in the detail plans sourced in the archive of the College.

The fact that some gardeners put in other plants and altered the structure, is less relevant to the acknowledged significance of what was there before. We found the drawings that could be used to reinterpret what was there before.. In this context there are other contemporary issues that need to be addressed to do with maintenance and management. The important part of this process was to have the knowledge to appreciate the value and the significance of that piece of landscape.

St John's College key routes





St John's College (2017)

N: We were in quite an unusual situation from the research where I presented our position to the client team and one of the very influential members of the client team, the president of the fellows, is architectural historian and he read the paper that he had been provided with a counter proposal that stated that the landscape was not authored by Capability Brown.

And I said, «which paper is?» It was actually a paper written by some researchers from the University of East Anglia and on behalf of Historic England.

So that says it's not Capability Brown, that's quite an important document. It was an assessment of all Capability Brown projects.

So, we talked to the original authors and asked: «Are you sure you mean that?» And they replied, «no we don't mean, this is citation error». The fact this was published provide some gravitas to the position. So, we were able to go back to the client and say we've spoken to the authors and they have acknowledged that's an error and they were so our original research to prove that this was such an important landscape was still correct.

J: What's fascinating with these amazingly significant people who are involved in this landscape all within a quite small geographical area.

Capability Brown, was literally in a carriage whizzing around the country with guys taking out lakes and planting woodlands. He didn't often draw, he gave instructions on site. As such schematic plans and development of detailed designs often don't really exist, so it has to be extrapolated from other bits of evidence.

That's the really interesting thing. There is one document which talks about the payment from the College to him. The evidence is that the fee was quite substantial for what appears to be simple advice. In comparative terms he was incredibly wealthy because he had so many projects at the same time.

N: He had two or three foremen who he trusted and they implemented proposals under his instruction or in his style.

We can't say the Wilderness was by Capability Brown categorically but the evidence suggests that he certainly had a role in the creation of that landscape in some way.

J: What was interesting about that process is that we did a significant amount of research.. It is terribly important in a place like Cambridge because you have to look back in order to inform the way you move forward. It helps secure planning permissions if the historic origins are thoroughly understood and it also informs in the identity of the project.

How did you manage the many level of history recognizable in the area? Is it possible with the landscape design to allow the preservation of the historic environment? How is possible to develop a memorial strategy in a such multicultural context?

J: You know the memorial strategy also needs to acknowledge social cultural recognition of individuals. The advice was that there needs to be a strategy in place when there is a request for one rather than reacting to a request by request basis.

This is the same with lots of park projects like Walpole Park, people wishing that memory to live on in the landscape and to be noticed.

And it's a sensitive subject so if there isn't a series of rules that can be referred to it's difficult for the college to be able to respond with respect for the benefactor and the landscape.

N: The default position in this country is to have 'something' to memorialised: a bench, a tree. But benches become broken, trees die. For example, in Walpole Park nearly every single tree had a memorial plate.

We actually needed to remove some trees for the park project and where possible we tried to contact the families to say: «we are moving a memorial

tree because we'd like to rededicate somewhere else».

I think that is the ideal scenario, if it can be organized, is that you actually allow people to contribute to some way of managing that landscape effectively. So, you become associated with the whole landscape and that landscape doesn't change fundamentally and your contribution, the money paid for the bench or the tree, goes into a fund that helps keep that landscape looking beautiful and it's not about a thing..

When you ask about landscape layers, the layers of different types of history, it's interesting that the Heritage Lottery talk about this topic a lot, they are very keen for people to be engaged with multiple layers of Heritage in their projects.

For example at Marble Hill there are some darker stories some of which were related to slavery. There is a whole period in World War One and Two where it was used for allotments to grow fruit.

So, who's to say which one of those periods are the most important?

They are important for different reasons.

Somewhere along the line you can determine what is the most significant period and in the case of St. John's there are quite a few significant periods. So, it's complex. Arguably you could say the formation of these courts are incredibly important because they're some of the first models of the court in a college setting. I think the first one in Britain was in Oxford. There's this relationship of space and accommodation, and the landscape. Positively charging the void with the buildings. Then it becomes different because it's progressively becoming more about managed but at the edges a wildness is encouraged further away from the building.

J: But in a way, it is kind of like a history book.

You need to find a way to explain it to people. You move through the history rather than just look superficially. It is a progression.

N: And that's why we created a timeline in the report to explain that all the moments are important.

N: A quick point I want to make about the layers as well. Sometimes those landscape layers can be a new design.

But then, there are sometimes also just moments and that doesn't necessarily need to be physically recreated or restored or reinterpreted, they just can be recorded and this landscape is an example.

Cross section, plants



William Wordsworth was a student in St. John's College and he had a poem that he wrote about ash trees. And there is a description in the poem that gives you enough information to work out where they are in college and they're located just at this intersection here, so you can relate a piece of very important literature, not necessarily one of his most famous works.

And then there's also another tree, the yew tree. It was planted by Doctor Babington who was a contemporary of Charles Darwin. And he was head of botany at Cambridge. So that tree tell a story as well.

J: And that was a really good example of the benefit of doing research.

This tree has actually grown laterally and rooted in the lower branches and it's turned into this enormous piece of biomass. Absolutely incredible! So, it's got an enormous amount of presence in itself which to the untrained eye seems like it's something that's gone out of control.

Did you consider the collaboration and participation of people, fellows, students and university's staff in this stage of the design process? If yes, how did they collaborate to develop the landscape design?

J: All gardeners are individuals who have less or more knowledge about the landscape and we have had very interesting conversation with the Head Gardener who's really excited about the project. The college has been delighted that we're engaging the guys on the ground in the conversation. It's a big leap in terms of hierarchy within these traditional colleges a big leap to bring people on the same level and in the same room to discuss.

And that's also what we find exciting because those people who are working on the ground, know a lot and they're not normally part of this kind of strategic master plan.

So, it's been quite a positive thing for us to have the gardener attend these meetings. That's our strategy within all the project. To propose alternative models to traditional hierarchies to get a better understanding of the level of expertise that everyone has to offer.

The HLF appreciate that. I think what to us seemed natural and courteous, was quite an unusual approach and it was something I think that maybe help the by in for this project. It seemed from the feedback that our approach to inclusive conversations with everyone involved in the college was something that the College found very attractive.



The main purpose of the project is to make strategic decisions about the Estate over a 20-year period, how does the landscape project respond to this request? What is the role played by the landscape in this mission? How does this masterplan remain relevant in the long term even if there will be relevant changes? Are you planning special ways to make it possible?

J: You know we often talk about the life of a tree as a period of time which should be considered because that's the maturation of that tree it might be a hundred or five hundred or so. So, in architecture, it may be quite a long term but for landscape, it's just establishing.

N: In terms of this project that period provides time to fundraise. Time to get money in place whether from private donations or from other sources. And it also allows, in terms of the landscape, time for things to be put in place, to start to mature. What we recommended, as one of the first thing to do is to write conservation management plan. That's going to be starting to put in place policies, so these policies become adopted and passed on. That becomes a document that covers a ten years plan. Ten years seem reasonable in terms of management, and it is deliberately a dynamic document. It sets some rules but allows those rules to be challenged in it and to define a process for decision making.

J: A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is really important, it maps significance. It underpins all the decision making. And that's not to say that one can't make proposals in an area of high significance. But it provides a baseline of understanding, so you know what you're doing. And you know in terms of planning a historic environment, what and how to propose development or change in that setting.

Before/after



New Court, St John's College



The Backs and St. John's College



N: I think it is really important and this is often not talked about, that this is a working living landscape, so you can't just do anything without some consequences. The document takes time to be written, it needs to be signed off by those who will implement it. And meanwhile, the gardeners can do nothing. So, we need, in parallel, to identify projects that can come forward that are not so sensitive in terms of the historic nature of the landscape but start to take the ecology slightly in a different direction. What we think is relevant here to do with water, with biodiversity and education, and to make the gardeners to progress with these projects that are less sensitive.

J: ...And the wider population needs to be considered. I mean in this case, there is a school nearby. A lot of the students will progress into or are encouraged to progress to St. John's. And so, they have a broader remit, they're interested in much younger people. And they have a philanthropic role in providing the right environment for their education. There are various projects that we've suggested which will satisfy that requirement.

N: This is a new layer of landscape.

J: This triangle of land here has potential, where the compost is stored at the moment, it's the unmanicured part of the estate.

If we propose a bridge here, you could very quickly deliver something very rich ecologically in that setting.

So as Neil said, the gardener has got all sorts of ideas.

And we're encouraging the college to involve us in understanding what those ideas are, so that we can nurture any enthusiasm, we want them to be enthusiastic. We want to encourage the gardeners to be part of the process, so they can get on board and start to promote the landscape.

Stereoscope



N: And there's such a delicate thing because in a place like St. John's College, I think they have got six gardeners or seven. So, they're all busy. And we know that seven really is not enough especially at the time of the year when they are maintaining all the borders.

J: But I think the exciting thing is how that whole process of land management crosses over with the students' experience and these are not separate silos of activity of the academic grounds maintenance. And I feel that we've been able to propose something that it's really quite innovative for Cambridge.

And that it might well set the scene for a lot of other colleges to review the way in which their students approach and view the places where they're living and that will have the great benefit of enhancing well-being, mental well-being and the resilience of those kids who are under an enormous amount of academic pressure.

And St. John's College is very open to recognizing that the landscape can actually be an enormous asset to counteract this serious issue that they've got, because the students are their lifeblood. If they're not producing students who are academically excellent but also good well-rounded people, they haven't done their job. So, they see that this is something that is very good value for money. And that's very exciting to see that being recognized.

Jo wrote: "Nearly 40 years ago, as a teenager, I sat in a meadow with Dame Sylvia Crowe, and we talked about how landscape architecture was surely the most honourable profession.

She focused my ambitions not only in terms of career but also as a professional woman. Her drive was understated but enormously respected. I followed her instruction of where to study, and was infected by her love and enthusiasm for her work which influenced city planning as much as forestry practice."

How does it feel to reinterpret one of her works?

J: I feel protective over the works of Dame Sylvia. When you have a connection with that person, inevitably you feel quite sensitive about it. And it's important that we help people to understand the significance because she was a very modest woman, but she was incredibly influential.

For us, it's a great privilege to be involved in any landscape which has significant authors, but for me, this is particularly important because she was someone that for a moment you had a slight connection with...

Replanning
and replanting,
Thomas Sharp (1951)



The Wilderness



The Paddock



The Scholars' Garden



Tree species

Plant extracts
by Thomas Sharp and Sylvia
Crowe (1951)

interview tale
Anthony Blee



12 December 2016

How did you start your professional practice?

So, how did I start in my profession?

Well it really was stimulated by the fact that my brother who was four years older than me was already training as an architect. When I had to make the decision to start my professional studies, he wanted me to be an engineer.

He thought it would be more useful for him. And actually, it might have worked because I was quite good at mathematics. But I wanted to be an architect. So, he was in his final year and I started my first year.

My brother then had to do his National Service, having qualified as an Architect. He was posted to Malaya and while he was there, he decided to go in for an architectural competition.

The competition was the Owen Jones Studentship organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Owen Jones was a Victorian architect (1809 - 1874) who left a substantial of money to fund the competition annually, for research into the use of colour in architecture (he had been Superintendent of Works at the Great Exhibition in 1851, for which he selected the colour scheme).

He was typical Victorian personality and he stipulated that everybody entering the competition should write an essay on his book. (The Grammar of Ornament 1866) That way everyone entering the competition had cause to read his book.

But my brother having decided to go in for the competition found that there was no copy of the book in Malaya. So, he asked me if I would read the book and write the essay for him.

Which I now appreciate in a strange way started me on the particular method in which I work, that is basically doing thorough research before beginning to design anything. Research into the function, the history, the indigenous materials, the clients requirements.

In that case, I found the Owen Jones book, which is very big and heavy! I read it and I wrote the essay.

At that time, I was already working in the office of Sir Basil Spence and one of my friends in the office said to me "I'm going in for this competition (the same competition). will you help me?" I said "I must tell you that I'm helping my brother."

He said, "that's fine if you'll help me too!"

That year (1957) my brother won the competition, and my friend in the office won it the following year! I had enjoyed the collaboration.

And I think in a way that shaped the way in which I have worked ever since. I didn't know it at the time, but it made me really appreciate the fact that you shouldn't start designing anything until you've done your homework.

What are the most important inspirations, the important people and the experiences that have left a mark in your design thinking?

How did your experiences in Italy and abroad have influenced your design approach?

What are the fundamental approaches and tools of your design process?

I was reminded just this week about a similar situation and discipline when I was working in Athens. I was working for a big ship owner and banker. He had his own Technical Services Department. He owned five banks, for example, the shipyard, a shipping line. He owned the railway between the Athens and Piraeus.

Very wealthy. And I was invited to undertake these two bank projects in Greece. Almost the interesting unusual and interesting opportunity was when he said, "you come and walk around my Technical Service Department and choose the people you want to work with. Choose your team."

I chose the structural engineer and chose the services engineer and chose two architects who were working in that office. Well, I had created my own little office in Athens in 1974. And only yesterday the same engineer brought me to the airport after I had given a lecture there, over 40 years later on.



And he was explaining to my grandson (who is a qualified architect and who had been assisting me) how it was to work together at that time...which was the best time in my life because he was a very brilliant engineer. He has two sons, one has a doctorate from Cambridge University in structural engineering and the other one has a doctorate in engineering at the Imperial College London.

These two boys are brilliant. The fact is, their father, my old friend, now hates engineering with all the modern computer work. He is a very old fashion engineer, but very good and we share similar values.

And it was so nice to see him in Athens, I hadn't seen him for 35 years until yesterday...

I'm trying to answer your question about my own work, to explain to you my approach.

Also, the fact that I have always sought to begin to understand the country, people, materials and skills. And to discover the best that can be produced. The interesting thing after I had finished those two banks, for many years after working in Greece, the architect and the engineer that I had chosen would telephone me in London just for advice on where to go in Greece for specific skills, because I got to know the industry really well.

When in Rome, I researched so carefully when we were working on the British Embassy. I researched in order to discover the talents that were available. And then to decide who should be the contractors and subcontractors. That's how, for example we chose Curtisa in Bologna. I got to know their owner Paolo Poggi and we became good friends while I explored their products, methods and talents.

I did the same research for travertine marble and for all the other marbles who we used. I went and spent time in the studios of the marble company, who were quarrying marble from the same quarry that Michaelangelo's quarried.

Every year they provided a challenge for an invited architect. In those days, you could say "I would like to spend a week in your studio".

And you could design something from which their craftsmen would make a model under your supervision while you were there. That was particularly interesting because in the same studio they were making Henry Moore's sculptures.

So, I knew those people and their skills. Again, I knew the people who undertook the restoration of the first century B.C. Roman mosaic which we had discovered on our site. I found with a bit of research there was some hidden mosaic. When I pursued it more carefully I found that this grotto had been used as a secret place in which to burn Secret and Confidential documents from the British Embassy. The old British Embassy building on the site had been blown up by a terrorist organisation.

When I found out all that, then I felt that we had to use the mosaic in the new building, both in the landscaped pool and in the Ambassador's office. Again, that reflects the attitude that I have always held dear, that is not only to discover the best people, the best materials, and to understand the existing resources of the site, and if there's something that's historically important, respect it and use it as best you can.

I had a similar sort of an experience when I was working in the Middle East. Arab languages have very few words compared with the English language. For example, I was told when I was working on the design for the Central Law Courts in Kuwait that they only have one word for any professional which is 'expert', whereas we have four or five words. If you're working in Saudi Arabia or Iran or Kuwait or even in Egypt (And I have worked in all those countries), if they ask you if you are an expert, the English, being quite modest might say: "no, no, no, no!". But if you say that you might not be held in respect, better to say: "yes, I am", because it is the only word to describe an architect, engineer, any professional. You have to be an expert! It's interesting because, in the end, you develop an attitude which might be uncharacteristic if you're a normal modest person. But you have to reply.

“Yes, I’m an expert” and then they treat you as an expert, which may be one of the reasons why in the final stage of my active professional career I finished up acting as an Expert Witness at public inquiries and cases where the quality of design was being tested by a Government Inspector or by the Minister.

For example, I remember a situation where I was explaining one of our important schemes to the Minister, the Government Minister, and I was getting no response. I had a model and I was explaining the key features of the design, using the model, but I was getting no reaction from this man. Until, from another direction, the permanent civil servant of the Department approached, and the Minister said to him: “do we like this scheme? “. The Civil Servant who had big black eyebrows with which he indicated approval and he nodded and said: “Yes”. Whereupon the Minister put arm on my shoulder, he said, “I think it’s marvellous!”.

The moral of that story is that you have to focus that issue through understanding, through research, through experience and intelligence, through friendship to become sufficiently expert to be respected.

In Athens, I was reminded of an experience so many years ago, when I was working there in 1962 a law was passed which permitted only a bank to build one story higher than any other buildings in the area where there was a specific height restriction.

And for me it was important to discover that, because from the extra storey we would benefit from a fantastic view of the Acropolis.

I had to go to the Greek Minister from the Department of Culture and Civilisation in order to secure that extra floor.

He was an interesting man but he had a very bad posture. He had a chronic distorted back. As he was sitting at his desk he was so bent over that his head was almost upside down.

It is quite difficult and disturbing, talking to someone like that but I had to present the design. If you wanted to use that valuable extra floor you had



to show that the design would be attractive on the skyline. We had this meeting in which it would have been upside down to the Minister, because of his disability, but he approved the scheme.

We faced opposition from the bank next door, which was an old building which had been built before the historic height restriction and they were jealous of our extra storey. They objected strongly, which is why we had to see the Minister for his approval. After we finished that building, there was an earthquake in Athens.

Our building, strongly engineered by Dimitri was designed to survive earthquakes. When that earthquake happened, the lateral vibrations from our building demolished the building next door. It collapsed!

Last week, he was remembering this better than I can remember, because after working on our projects in Athens, he would come to London to work in our office sometimes and I also arranged for him to go in Rome to look at what we were doing there, to demonstrate the high standard of design and engineering which we had demanded.

And at the same time, we became friends. He was a good sailor. So when I was flying into Athens for a business meeting on site with him and the client, I would be looking out the plane's window to see what the weather conditions were like. When we met at the airport, he would greet me, saying "Anthony are we going to go sailing or working?" If the weather conditions were right we would go sailing to catch up with each other, before we then went to the site to do our work!

That characterises the way in which I'm always trying to work, which is to find who are the good people and when you know who they are, develop a respect, a mutual respect and enjoy the whole process of a project from start to finish.

Recently, when I was in Athens, I went to see a new building that has been funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

Renzo Piano was the architect, but I discovered that there are several fundamental mistakes in that building. The interesting aspect in terms of an obvious mistake as an example, is that when it was under construction they realised the design was flawed because direct sunlight would shine on all the precious books in the library and spoil them.

There was no sort of sun control on this fully glazed elevation, and due to the construction system, they have had to introduce external blinds which are going to require frequent cleaning due to the heavily polluted atmosphere in Athens.

Also, the building faces south so I anticipate tremendous problems there. When they have the blinds half down, the space between the glass and the blind will heat up. They will have to replace nearly all the windows there, because they are likely to crack. It is a mistake. And then nothing appears to have been arranged for cleaning the fenestration, the windows are six stories high. There are very few machines that can reach six stories high and there's no other system for cleaning those windows. It is fundamental.

As well as a library, the amount of sunshine you have on these books...

That made me realise that these people have not done their homework. It was interesting to me, especially because when we were doing the embassy in Rome, the design was carefully composed to deal with and control sunlight penetration.

For a short time only, we had a British Ambassador who was very old fashioned and seemed to think that he was an architect and he started trying to tell us what the new Embassy should look like! And he was condemning our design although we had already achieved approval from the British Minister. It had been accepted that we should have as a consultant the distinguished Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi. So, we were having a meeting with the Ambassador and Pier Luigi Nervi, and the Ambassador spoke Italian. In those days, I could understand Italian.

He started speaking in Italian to Nervi, saying "I think this is wrong." Trying to get Nervi to condemn our design which was inspired by the consideration of daylight and sunlight. Nervi said, "on the contrary, it is

an excellent design, because if you let the sun into your building it is like allowing a burglar to break in. I think this design is perfect from that point of view”.

The Ambassador was furious because it wasn't what he wanted to hear. But fortunately, shortly after that meeting, he was called back to London and then a new Ambassador came in and supported it enthusiastically.

Incidentally, the Government engineers for services had calculated that as compared with all other British Embassies around the world, air conditioning requirements for our building were one-third of those required in each of all the others.

In this case, we had several things to think about. Building in Italy is a design challenge in the context of Rome's great architecture, right beside Michelangelo's Porta Pia and the Aurelian Wall, the monumental scale, the sun, the archaeology.

And the fact that the line of a Roman Road came across our site. In Italy, there is a different approach, a different scale as compared with England. This was illustrated by Sir Basil Spence when he was invited to give the keynote address at the American Institute of Architecture annual Conference in Miami.

The theme of the Conference for that year was 'scale', 'architectural scale'. The invited him to give the keynote address on that subject. He asked for a big sheet of paper on which he could draw in front of the Conference delegates. He drew beautifully from memory the Michelangelo Porta Pia and he spoke of the Roman scale by drawing an elephant walking through the Porta Pia. And he said "in this part of Rome, and Italy in general, scale is on the scale of an elephant”.

Then he took another piece of paper and did a drawing of the Horse Guards building in London. He drew that building with a man on the horse, observing that by comparison "in London, the scale is that of a man on a

bodies (although often lucrative owing to the scale of many of the jobs) could be a frustrating business, as he told a journalist: "one has to go beyond just being a designer and you have to become a persuader, a thing which isn't taught in architecture schools here. It takes so long to get a building off the ground." Relations with local authorities were often tense; in a letter regarding a possible commission in Dumbartonshire, Scotland, Spence wrote: "I have had experience of councils before and it is extremely time-consuming, and in our case we just do not have the time to spare to argue about architectural design with reactionary people."⁹ As well as the frustration of big jobs that took many years to come to fruition, there were also several large projects that consumed a fair percentage of Spence's design time but which were never to be realised, such as the Mercury Theatre, planned for a site in Notting Hill Gate, London in 1964. This was a



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horse”.

He made this point so simply but it is definitely true.

Another funny thing was that one of his friends, he was a fellow architect who became President of the Royal Academy, sent a letter to Basil to congratulate for what we were doing in Athens.

And he finished the letter saying, “best wishes” and did a little sketch of the Parthenon. Basil showed me it and said: “What’s wrong with this drawing?” And I said: “well, there are eight columns on the short elevation of the Parthenon but he has only drawn six”. That’s the kind of familiarity that Basil had, and I had, with the Acropolis.

The other event in which I’ve been involved recently is the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Sussex. It’s very interesting to recall that at the time we were working on several universities

In our offices, we about 40 architects in the West of London and about 8 in the North London (head) office with another office in Edinburgh.

Sir Basil Spence lived above the North London office. Ours was a very intimate group. It has been a great privilege to be working in such a stimulating team with such an inspiring talent as Sir Basil.

In my recent talk in Athens, I showed a picture of the cathedral in Coventry. In our North London office we had a room which we called the Cathedral Room and in which we were working and making models. There were models which we made with such care and accuracy that when the Cathedral was consecrated all the British newspapers featured a big photograph.

Then we had newspapers coming to us from all over the world, with a picture, but most of those pictures were not of the real cathedral, they were of our model but it was so true to life that you could not tell the difference.

(Showing some photographs)

This is related to research for clergy stalls and choir stalls, and this is the misericord seat that I designed. The misericord is for the priest when he needs to rest on his seat, but he appears to be standing and wants to pretend to be standing, because during much of the Service, he should be standing! This is the typical scene of where we were working on the cathedral designs. That is of the congregation at the consecration when the Queen was there. We were sitting here, just behind her.

Most of these photographs were taken by a Dutch photographer, Henk Snoek. In the end, he became the most famous photographer of architecture in England during the 1960’s to the 1990’s.

And this was rather a nice idea, a book of photographs with descriptions of the photographs in Basil’s handwriting.

This is the pulpit, which I designed., The staircase does not depend upon the column. It wraps around. It is a quite interesting piece of engineering actually, a propped cantilever.

We had to work very closely with the organ builders for designing this organ, at that time you had to become an expert in this ancient art in order to achieve a display of organ pipes that were really operational, rather than false as in many Church organs.

(that concludes a review of photographs)

What is the relationship between architecture and landscape architecture in your practice?

We always like to work with landscape architects. The one who was most famous in England in those days was Sylvia Crowe. She was an incredible

landscape architect and a real example of the relationship between architecture and landscape. We worked with her at Sussex University.

Now the interesting thing about Sussex University for me is that I spent my childhood very close to the site, I knew very well. On one particular day, I was in our office and Basil came in and said "can you help me and can you drive me down to the Charing Cross Hotel? I have been asked to go to discuss a new university".

I got the car and as we were driving down to Charing Cross, Basil said to me: "Don't you come from that location?" I said: "yes, as a boy I used to play cricket on that site".

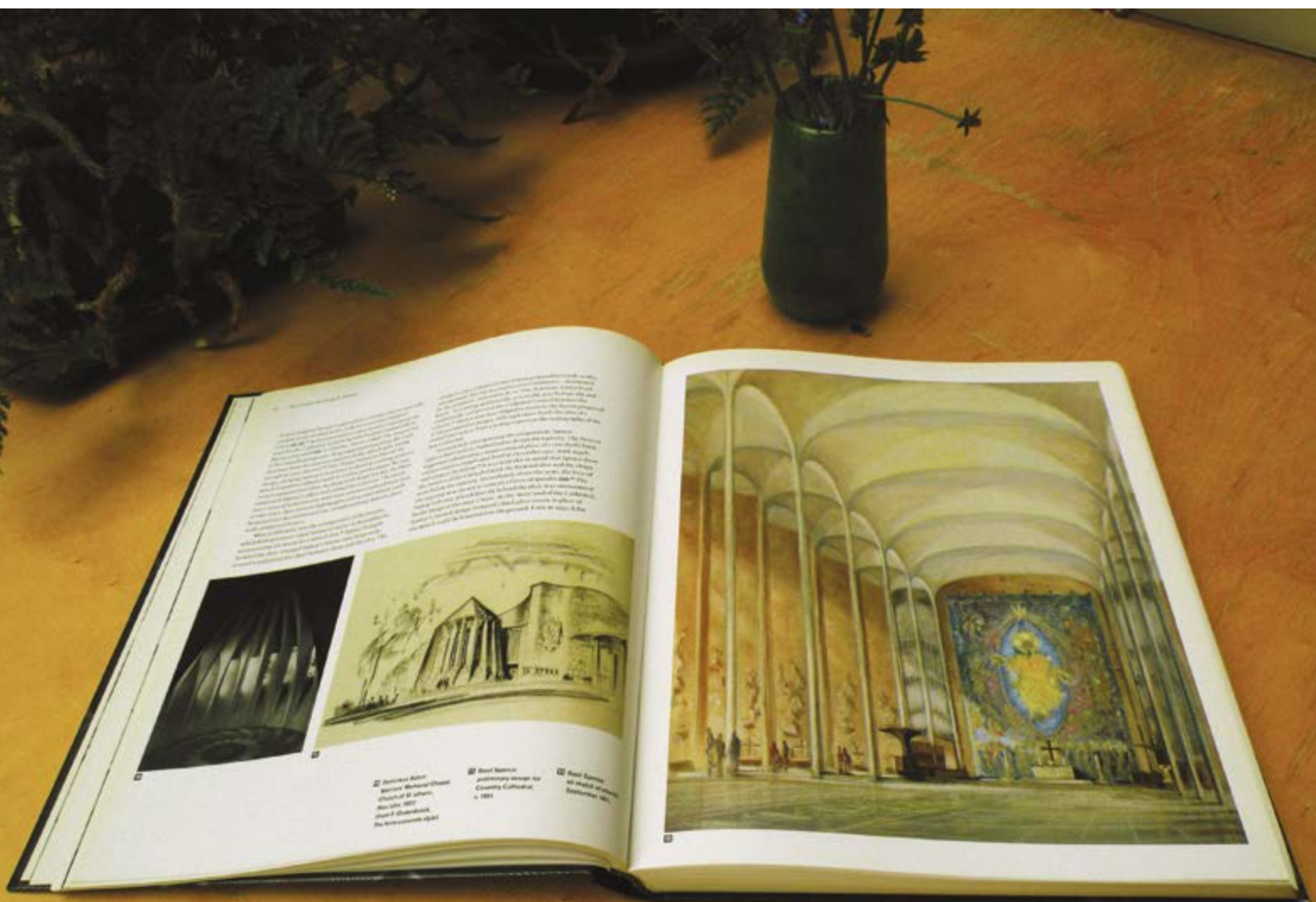
"For me, the important thing is the landscape, it is part of the South Downs which has wonderful planting, wonderful trees, beautiful hills."

Anyway, he got out at the Hotel and then I drove back to our office.

When he went into the meeting our conversation was fresh in mind. He discovered that this was one of a series of five interviews with architects who were being considered for the commission as architect for the design for the new University of Sussex. He started to talk about his understanding of the landscape (of which I had been explaining in the car) and the importance of the landscape, the need to respect the existing landscape. Even when you are going to plan new buildings in the landscape. Apparently none of the other architects being interviewed showed the selection committee any specific interest in the landscape qualities of the site.

And that's one of the reasons why Basil was appointed. In due course, on our recommendation, Dame Sylvia Crowe was appointed as the Landscape consultant for the University. This was going to be quite a small university, but it has expanded enormously so that now I think there are thousand of students and there have been many architects involved in more recent extensions.

The original campus is entirely protected by the Government listing. All those first buildings are listed, Grade I or Grade II*.



And they can't mess up that original campus for which we were responsible. Now students and alumni are all still appreciating the original buildings. One of the key objectives in the master plan was to find a way of servicing the University without allowing any vehicles to invade the peaceful pedestrian zone, maintaining a campus without cars, without lorries, basically by having a service road out of sight just over the hill. And it works that way even today. The original concept of the buildings in the landscape was governed by this range of trees all of which were retained and respected. Every building design there was an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the natural landscape.

When Basil designed the house for the family in Hampshire beside a river the Planning Officer was going to refuse planning permission, he said: "I will try to persuade them by bringing the planning committee to the site". Well, we made a model to show them. We all met on the site with me holding up the model and Basil said modestly "I simply wish to build my own house!"

All of them were somewhat embarrassed and then he said "if I cannot build what I'm proposing, what do you propose?" They said "well Sir Basil, we thought that the site being on the river, it ought to be half-timber construction. Basically, the old-fashioned framework. Basil responded, saying "look at the base part of the design is in concrete - a solid base and the upper section is entirely in timber. So, it's half timber! It wasn't what they meant when they called for half timber.

But by saying that, he disarmed them and we got the permission. Well, it's Grade 1 listed now, and Dame Sylvia Crowe was the landscape designer on that as well.

We asked her to advise on the concept scheme for a Nuclear Power Station in Wales, in a National Park. A big thing to swallow - the idea of a nuclear power station in a National Park.

We designed that massive scheme as two pieces of sculpture in the landscape assisted by involving Sylvia Crowe. There is a great lake of water in the foreground, with the power station beyond. It became an abstract piece of sculpture and she was able to help in solving a big landscape challenge.

The problem very often in designing a prominent building like this is the creation of an appropriate setting and, with constant supervision, the rigorous maintenance of high quality during the construction. This is where models can be useful. Better still it can be worthwhile ordering the construction of a prototype which demonstrates the finishes and important details, which sets the standard required.

This is the normal thing with all the major projects that we have undertaken and in which I've been involved, we have prepared a really accurate model. In the case of the British Embassy in Rome, I designed a construction which was not a building but a composition that incorporated every single critical architectural detail of the building. That was erected full size, on-site.

Then when the building was being built, if any part of it was not up to the required standard, I could say, "this is what we need, this is what we expect". I also attach great importance to the research into the function and purpose for which I have been invited to design.

The development of a comprehensive brief is vital. It offers the client the chance of enjoying a building beyond his wildest dreams.

What is the role of the art in your design thinking?

For Coventry Cathedral, 15 artists contributed to the one building. Three of the artists involved were Germans who fled from Germany in 1933-34. Many artists and many architects did the same. And these guys were chosen

because of their skills and talent. We were building a new Cathedral to replace the first one destroyed by the Germans in World War II. And here we were using three German artists. Each artist was selected on account of his/her suitability for each particular location / function. That same selective applied to every scheme in which I have been involved during a period of over 50 years. This has not been a case of applying art as mere decoration, but rather a recognition of the extra value and pleasure bestowed, when art is conceived as an integral part of the concept.

When, a few months ago, I went to this new arts centre, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation by Piano in Athens, on the highest floor level there is a gallery which I visited. The work of two artists was on display there.

And one of my friends was surprised when I said that I knew one of them, - Yannis Moralis.

I had interviewed him in 1975 when we were building the headquarters for the Bank of Piraeus. I proposed that he should be commissioned to paint a large mural in the main banking hall of the building. He was a very nice man and we got on really well together. And here, to my surprise in 2016 at the first exhibition in this cultural centre there was a major exhibition of Moralis' work.

I could hardly believe it, when on the very next day the newspaper (HKAOHMEPINH) on the front page on 11 December 2016, had a report on the restoration of the mural! To go right to the artistic aspect is why they can always find the way to enhancing the architecture where it is appropriate, it always has been a great interest to me. And it can also prove to be a great investment. This work now, my friends tell me, is very highly valued. I think the one point is that, working with landscape architects, artists, or engineers always generates a mutual respect. It is invariably extremely rewarding.

To give you another example of the benefits of introducing art into our buildings. When we had just finished working on the luxury apartments in



South of France, Cannes, where we had commissioned two tapestries for the reception area. I had a phone call from the agent who was marketing and selling the apartments, telling me how successfully the apartments were selling.

“Anthony, you are coming here tomorrow”. I said “I have no plan to go to Cannes tomorrow. “Why do you say that am I coming tomorrow?”

He said “it is because the purchaser of the largest penthouse wants to meet you, and he is leaving the day after tomorrow, and he is insistent”. So I went out to Cannes. The purchaser wanted me to design more of the interior and to purchase suitable art works.

He was Iranian and he also wanted me to design a large house for him in Tehran. In the end, I was doing three projects in Tehran. Iranians especially in my experience have a strong attitude of trust.

If they think they have found someone they feel that they can trust, then they are very strong in their recommendation.

The strange coincidence was that just after I had completed a project in England, my English client sold it to another Iranian. And the last thing he said to the purchaser was “if you ever need an architect, go to Anthony Blee”. The new owner acted on that recommendation and I started working for him and I designed several buildings for him. Having done that, one day he was having lunch with a friend whose marriage was, we say, on the rocks. The problem was that the wife wanted to stay in London, she had been a fashion model from New York, but loved London, while her husband who was an Iranian scientist, wanted to go back to San Francisco where he had studied, and he loved the West Coast.

Basically, they had this marriage problem, but during the heated discussion apparently, the wife said: “If I had a house like this in San Francisco, I would agree to return there with you.

And so this man contacted me.

I said “I know two or three good architects in San Francisco I could recommend to you”. No, he insisted that it had to be me! I became part of a marriage contract, which is how eventually I came to undertake three further projects in San Francisco.

For example, at one of the houses on which I was working in San Francisco, a stranger would come and watch me at work from time to time. Eventually, when the job was completed, this guy came again and said to my client “have you finished with Anthony?” And he said, “Yes”. Whereupon, I was commissioned to undertake a house for him south of San Francisco.

On that project, I was able to choose and purchase or design on his behalf, the entire interior - furniture, fabrics, works of art.

The point I am making is that the art of architecture can be all - embracing, commissioning art or buildings or in that case where I purchased a great many works of art, tapestries, paintings, and sculpture. That can be part of the exercise of integrating building and art and effectively eliminating all the barriers between art and architecture.

Creating linkages between space, urban space, precious landscape, trees, buildings and works of art, can be so important and very exciting.

The brutalist architecture has been neglected for a long period of time. Now it is recognised as an important part of the worldwide architecture history and politics of conservation, protection and development are applied also to these architectures.

‘Brutalist architecture’ is a term coined by Reyner Banham and was used for defining the architecture of that time.

It doesn’t reflect the quality of concrete. Brutalism in architecture focuses on aspects of scale and quality of materials, especially concrete for example. It can be a wonderful material. Historically, the Romans used the material so successfully.

Brutalist as a word to describe an architect or a building does not and should not be a term of abuse.

This Greek engineer to whom I have referred said my grandson, “do you

realise that what Anthony designed was only 5 cm thick?" This was really one of the first concrete buildings in Greece to have an athletic quality and finesse.

He was saying that almost every building built in Greece now relying on computer calculations appeared to be too big, unnecessarily big. The age when engineers were working with architects to create the athletic buildings, exciting from that point of view, is past now, because he said that everything is becoming more brutal. And that, paradoxically is true.

I think 'brutalist' was a misleading title.

Another architectural commentator who likes to coin titles is Charles Jencks and he introduced the term 'postmodernism'.

The business of labelling everything can be misleading, although the best label in history that I can think of is 'the arts and crafts movement'. That is a nice label. And it reflects that interface between art and building and craftsmanship and the best way to refer to these aspects is to talk about Japanese crafts people who can be appointed 'living treasures of Japan'.

Part of the honour of being named a 'living treasure' in Japan requires that you, as a recipient of that honour, train apprentices in your skills, so that they are passed on from generation to generation.

That's really important. And what saddens me today, compared with my young days as an architect is that there is a widening gap between the concept of the design and the talent of craftsmen.

Such living treasures that we have are not be required to pass that skill on.

That is my final conviction if you like, my attitude and concern with the scope and elements of the creative process.

These are landscape, architecture, arts and craftsmanship. Craftsmanship can be so exciting.

I recommend one of my favourite books on design 'Japanese Joints'.

At the beginning of my research, I compared the design process to a recipe. The chef's ingredients are the design tools, the process tells about the design stages, the research and the creative experimentation. According to you, which are the essential ingredients and the important stages in a good design recipe?

I think a vital recipe actually from my point of view is the establishment of a sound and trusting relationship with the client.

Nowadays, because of the way we are commissioned, my strong recommendation is to check out the client and the ability to pay and to be supportive. As I see architectural practice today that is becoming more and more important. If you cannot be really sure that the client is going to be a good client, don't do it.

The preamble with a recipe is putting down the ingredients, and the ingredients for the building should start with a good client. And the good client is going to know what kind of funding he has to be sure.

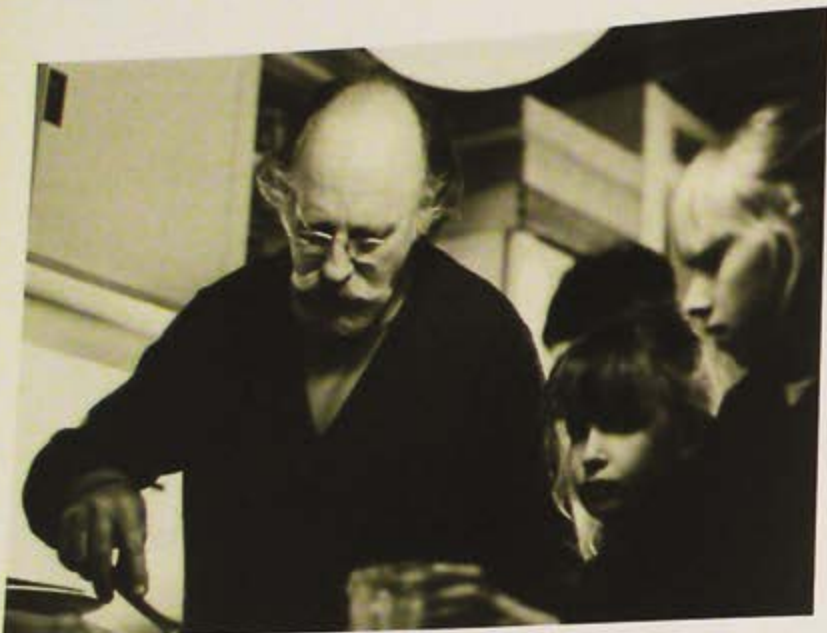
When I first went to Athens, that client came to the airport to meet me and on the way into Athens we had a confidential conversation. I had prepared for my visit information on the cost of building in Greece. As we were driving along the motorway from the airport I said to him "how much do you plan to spend for this project?" And he told me a figure in pounds. I had done my homework to know how much we would need. And his figure was far too small. I said "I think you had better turn the car around and go back to the airport. There's no way in which what you are seeking to build could be built for such a small budget".

He didn't give any instruction to the driver, only after a little more questioning he explained "I was talking about gold pounds, not today's pound sterling!" And each gold pound was about £60.

That's why I say the first recipe is to understand the client.

The second ingredient is regulations.

You have to become professionally knowledgeable in what the regulations are locally, and they differ from area to area. As a professional, the next



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9 Spence cooking with his grandchildren, Sarah and Johanna Blee.

8 Spence learned to carve stone as a student and enjoyed creating elements for the garden at Dar Tal Ghar, such as this screen.

10 Basil and Joan with the Blee family at Dar Tal Ghar.

11 Spence sketching while holidaying on Crete in 1972.

12 Spence was awarded the Grande Médaille d'or de l'Académie d'architecture in 1974.

ingredient is to know, looking at your client, how to resolve any future troubles and disputes. One has to be a bit of a lawyer. So that's another strange ingredient in the mix.

And I mentioned all the other skills of design, landscape, art and craftsmanship. But fundamentally you've got to start in the right way. And if the budget isn't right then you shouldn't even start because there will be nothing but trouble.

All the architects today seem to have more troubles with the budget. And building contractors should come under the heading of craftsmanship, they don't anymore. They come under the heading of businessmen seeking to make money.

In the unique case of Coventry Cathedral, the building contractor, when he was eventually appointed after competitive tendering, he said to Basil, "I just want to warn you, Sir Basil. I'm going to run this contract for the Cathedral in hard-headed way. When the work is totally finished and all the costs of it are known. I am going to give back to the Cathedral my entire profit". Which he did. That was an exceptional gift.

The most enjoyable project I have worked on, the Chapel / Meeting House at Sussex University, the client privately told me "I'm funding this building in memory of my two sons who lost their lives in World War II.

When we had finished the building, he asked me "is there anything else needed to make the building absolutely complete?" I said, "well one of my concerns is the way in which buildings, once you've finished them, are abused, they're not maintained properly. So, if you could create a fund to cover the cost of maintaining the chapel, for a number of years or ideally in perpetuity, it would be wonderful". So, that is nothing to do with the brief. Nothing to do with the contract. Nothing to do with the artists. But, the regular maintenance at the end of the design and construction process is important. A new building should be designed with ease of maintenance in mind. Whenever Gillian and I go back to Coventry and we see what terrible things have been done or neglected or being proposed - aspects that are not being understood from the beginning, we are upset.

It happens too often.

And that goes without saying with regard to the maintenance aspects. If, for example, you are buying a washing machine or a coffee machine you get the instruction manual which tells you how to maintain it. Very few architects produce a guide book explaining the best treatment for the proper care of their buildings.

We have always done so. The maintenance is not just the business of cleaning the floor, it is to do with knowing how the building is intended to work.

In fact, a dear friend in France who's just a great engineer, told me that one of his strategies when examining a design is to determine what is going to break down first.

That is a challenge that you might not even think of.

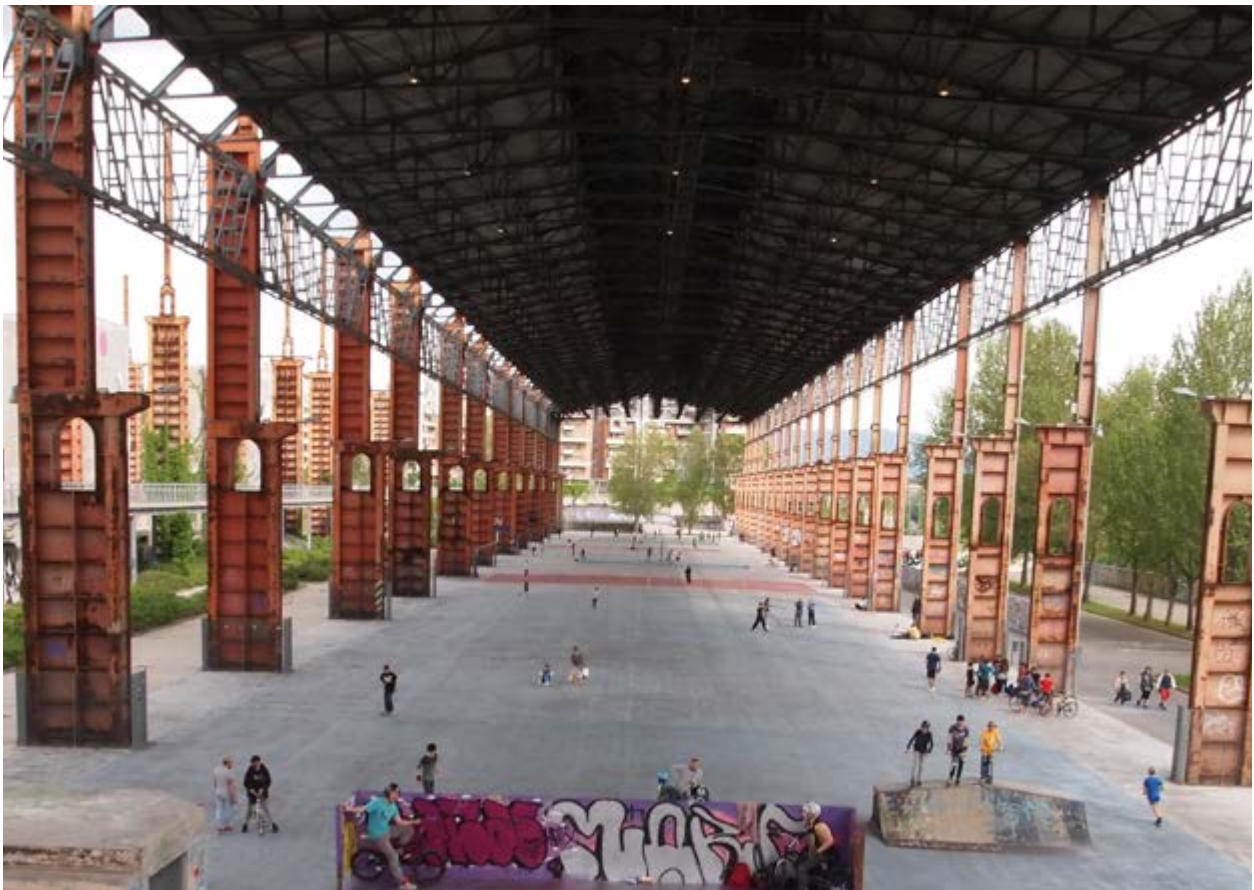
...it was like an academic lesson. Thank you!

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interview tale
Tilman Latz



20 June 2017

The most important innovations in landscape design are often ascribed to the process more than to the formal result. Which is the role of the process in your design approach? Among your projects, which are the ones that could better represent the innovation in terms of the design process? Why?

Obviously we are living in an era where overarching ideologies and big theories lose their capacity to influence a majority of projects in Landscape Architecture, Architecture and Town Planning. The diversity of projects, approaches and design methodologies has increased dramatically. This is not only a result of globalization, where it sounds simply logic that 7.5 Billion people have more than just one idea about how to live together and what design suits the best. It is also a result of a growing tendency to really and honestly work in interdisciplinary teams, integrating not only some engineers and the arts but also the people (meaning all parties involved in an area you work on or will be affected by your work on a specific area or subject) - with an enormous variety of definitions on how far this integration goes...

Another important thing is the growing dedication to the phenomenology of places. It makes projects not only more interesting and integrates a design strategy into a specific spatial context, but is - as a matter of respect - a better way to gain acceptance and longevity, not to talk of the sustainability and resilience of a specific approach.

Working that way is quite demanding and in general more challenging than doing classic design. And the task becomes even more challenging when the complexity and size of a site and task becomes bigger as well. Therefore, a well-developed process is key for success.

If you understand process as a way to flexibly respond to site phenomena, develop a project in response to actual and future users, predicted change in time and evolving functionality, to natural processes (of course) and the multifaceted challenges by public desires, klisches and prejudice - just to mention some issues - this also implies that there are projects that demand for more, if not much more process than others.

Consequently, all our large projects working with public realm represent innovation in terms of the design process the best, starting with Citizen Park Saarbrücken, continuing with the Landscape Park Duisburg Nord, including the Ariel Sharon Park and Hiriya Landfill in Israel, the Old- and New Harbour in Bremerhaven, the Plateau der Kirchberg in Luxembourg, the Masterplanning works on Crystal Palace Park in London and the Spreepark in Berlin

In Saarbrücken the Design was adapted to the findings when excavating the historic industrial surfaces of the old harbor island, as well as by the peoples' design of smaller garden entities. The constant adaptation of the original drawings makes it a highly interesting combination of professional and individual design preferences, strictly developed from the existing materials and land-forms, individual desires and demands for functionality.

In Duisburg the given structures of the heavy industry have been reinterpreted as landscape, thus opening a new potential for harmonizing cultural and natural elements with each other and finding a design language which was capable of integrating the manifold and changing interests of the people and the client. But change was also demanded from the structure itself, which was constantly surprising the team over the course of about 8 to 10 years.

In the Parks in Israel, the process is mainly driven by changing political conditions and the experiences you're making within the very long implementation process. Currently we're working on the project for more than 15 years now.

In Bremerhaven the design philosophy had to adapt to change, since most



of the investors for the plots around the harbor didn't exist when we started the project. The design language had to be highly adaptive and resilient to the partly very, very contrasting design ideas of all the developers and their architects. The real work started when we had to integrate all these into a coherent picture. All exceptions evolving from that process had to be integrated ... Within the 15 years we're now working in Bremerhaven, we can say that we're proud on the decisions we took and that the strategy continues to work and is still respected by the politicians and services of today.

As landscape architects we should always consider the memory of the place. Which is the significance of the historical layers of a site in your design process?

Usually multiple information layers can be found in the landscapes we're working on. Sometimes it is just the found materiality, its odors and colours, the feeling when you touch it, its temperature and physical weight. And sometimes it's the forms of a landscape, the lines, points and planes we find. Possibly it has to do something with what happened in a certain place and sometimes it's just about remembering us of other places and events. The last one has been certainly one of the most important parts of historic parks and gardens. The first ones become more and more important in our work today, where the interpreted phenomenology of a site makes the difference to pure design exercises. We believe that the more readings and interpretations of a place are possible, the more people will find a place interesting, the more uses will take place and consequently will result in a sustainable place. That's why we want to purge as many information layers as possible, make them visible, work them and massage them into our design. We are also convinced that when developing a design strategy from the existing and the new design merges with the given language, the bigger and stronger a place becomes. Duisburg Nord is a perfect example for that!





BIOGRAPHIES

JOHANNA GIBBONS
NEIL DAVIDSON
BOB ALLIES
PHIL ASKEW
ANTHONY BLEE
ARANZAZU FERNANDEZ RANGEL
WADE SCARAMUCCI
ELIZABETH KNOWLES
TILMAN LATZ

JOHANNA GIBBONS / J&L Gibbons



Johanna Gibbons is a Landscape Architect, founding Partner of J & L Gibbons and co-founding Director of Landscape Learn, a social enterprise. Jo studied Landscape Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art. She is a Fellow of the Landscape Institute and serves on several advisory panels including Historic England and The Forestry Commission. Jo's design expertise concerns heritage, green infrastructure and urban regeneration and she leads on collaborative cross-disciplinary practice at a strategic and local level. She was formerly a design advisor to the Mayor of London's Design for London unit and the London Development Agency, advocating and influencing high quality, inclusive design and development. She is now part of the Urban Mind cross sector research team collaborating with Kings College London and art foundation Nomad Projects. Jo is external examiner at University of Edinburgh and an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck, University of London.

www.jlg-london.com
www.landscapelearn.com

NEIL DAVIDSON / J&L Gibbons



Neil Davidson MA (Hons) is a landscape architect and partner of J & L Gibbons and director of Landscape Learn. He trained at Edinburgh College of Art. He has led on projects that include sub-regional strategic plans and urban regeneration frameworks, to public parks and higher education projects. He is experienced in the assessment, design, conservation and management of a wide range of historic and statutorily protected landscapes, parks and gardens. He is particularly interested in a collaborative design approach that reveals synergies between the natural, built, social and cultural environment, using research to explore the use of historic narratives in a contemporary context.

He is a founder of Urban Mind a cross-disciplinary project investigating how the urban environment affects mental wellbeing. Neil maintains strong links with education. He led a diploma unit at the Architectural Association and has been a guest lecturer at the University of Cambridge, CASS and Edinburgh College of Art. Neil is a Built Environment Expert for CABE at the Design Council, a member of the Lewisham Design Review Panel and a trustee of the Bethnal Green Nature Reserve Trust.

In 2016 with Johanna Gibbons, Neil created the social enterprise, Landscape Learn as a new prototype for learning and engaging with landscapes around us. Landscape Learn is using the seasonality of nature to structure an approach to adaptive and immersive learning.

www.jlg-london.com
www.landscapelearn.com

BOB ALLIES / Allies and Morrison



Bob Allies and Graham Morrison founded the practice in 1984 and together they continue to retain responsibility for its design direction.

Bob Allies trained at the University of Edinburgh and was awarded the Rome Scholarship in Architecture. He was a lecturer at the University of Cambridge and has held visiting professorships at the University of Edinburgh, the University of Bath and the University of Maryland.

He has served on the Council of the Architectural Association and the Faculty of the British School in Rome, chaired the annual Brick Awards and was a member of the Advisory Board for the CABE/DETR document 'By Design'. He is currently a member of the London Mayor's Design Advisory Group and is chair of the South-east Design Review Panel

<http://www.alliesandmorrison.com/>

PHIL ASKEW / London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)



Dr Philip Askew is a Landscape Architect, Urban Designer and Horticulturalist. Since 2008 he has worked on the Olympic Park, originally at the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) leading the delivery of the 2012 Olympic Park and now at the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) leading the Transformation of the Olympic Park into the largest new urban park in the UK for over a century.

<http://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/>

ANTHONY BLEE



Anthony Blee is a chartered architect specialising in design consultation work, notably with regard to the impact on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within the contemporary urban context. He is a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He qualified with a Distinction in Thesis in 1959. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is also a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. His consultancy practice is known as the Anthony Blee Consultancy. From 1976 until 1993 he was the Senior Partner of The Sir Basil Spence Partnership. Prior to that he had worked with Sir Basil for a period of 20 years as assistant, associate partner and partner. With the establishment of his newly defined practice arrangements, the Sir Basil Spence Partnership ceased to exist. On numerous projects, he has experienced the special circumstances arising from the juxtaposition of new buildings with historic buildings or in historic settings. He has successfully promoted the listing, de-listing and upgrading of the listing of Buildings of Special Historic or Architectural Interest and he is frequently invited to assess the eligibility of buildings for listing, sometimes making the case to resist listing.

More recently, having donated the entire Basil Spence Archive to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), (now known as Heritage Scotland) he has collaborated with the Royal Commission and the National Galleries of Scotland in mounting the Centenary Exhibition: Back to the Future celebrating Sir Basil Spence's life and work at the Dene Gallery. This was followed by participation in the preparation of the publication by the Royal Institute of British Architects of the book :Basil Spence - Buildings and Prospects.

In 1959 he married Gillian, Basil Spence daughter, with whom he had four sons and Johanna Gibbons is the one of them.

<http://www.basilspence.org.uk/>

ARANZAZU FERNANDEZ RANGEL / muf architecture/art



Since 1994 muf architecture/art has established a reputation for pioneering and innovative projects that address the social, spatial and economic infrastructures of the public realm. muf are specialists in public realm architecture and art. The practice philosophy is driven by an ambition to realize the potential pleasures that exist at the intersection between the lived and the built. The creative process is underpinned by a capacity to establish effective client relationships that reveal and value the desires and experience of varied constituencies.

Access is not a concession but the gorgeous norm; we create spaces that have an equivalence of experience for all who navigate them both physically and conceptually, muf deliver quality and strategic durable projects that inspire a sense of ownership through occupation.

<http://www.muf.co.uk/>

WADE SCARAMUCCI / ALLFORD HALL MONAGHAN MORRIS (AHMM)



Associate Director

AHMM - ALLFORD HALL MONAGHAN MORRIS

Wade gained experience in practices in Los Angeles, New York, Dubai and London before joining the practice in 2005 as a Project Architect.

Wade has worked on a broad variety of projects since he joined AHMM, including Horseferry House, the global headquarters for the fashion house Burberry and the Angel Building in Islington. His most recent projects include Google's new headquarters in King's Cross and a number of projects in the United States, including the Plow Building, which is home to the practice's Oklahoma office.

Wade was promoted to Associate Director in 2008 and assists with the coordination of design and management issues within the practice.

<http://www.ahmm.co.uk/index.aspx>

ELIZABETH KNOWLES / Friends of Alexandra Road Park



Chair of the Friends of Alexandra Road Park, Councillor
Lorraine Revah, Mayor of Camden

<http://jlg-london.com/index.cfm>

TILMAN LATZ / Latz+Partner



Partner & Design Director Latz+Partner
Landscape Architect ByAK bdlA, Architect ByAK, Urban
Planner ByAK

Tilman Latz has been heading the practice since 2011 after a ten-year joint partnership with Anneliese and Peter Latz, since 2016 together with his wife Iris Dupper.

The focus of his work is on ecological urban renewal, the socio-political potential of combined planning strategies, the interface of architecture and landscape and the meaning of material and memory.

Projects bearing his signature include the award-winning conversion of the former harbours in Bremerhaven into a new neighbourhood centre and the transformation of Turin's largest urban industrial wasteland into Parco Dora, the conversion of the former port Rambaud in Lyon, the redevelopment of Place Flagey in Brussels, St Peter's Square in Manchester, the Kleiner Tiergarten Park in Berlin and the Raadhuisplein in Emmen.

When Tilman was appointed to lead an interdisciplinary team to design a masterplan for Crystal Palace Park, he established a branch office in London in 2006, which also completed a number of smaller projects in the British metropolis. Alongside projects in the European Union, Tilman and his team are currently working in Israel, Russia and China.

Tilman Latz was able to share his experience as visiting lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where he also taught master classes in 2001 and 2003. He took on a two-year guest professorship in 2012 and continued to teach at the Universität Kassel. He is a sought-after expert at national and international events, universities and municipal institutions.

<http://www.latzundpartner.de/en/>



ENGLISH HERITAGE

They cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites. English Heritage looks after many nationally important historic gardens and landscapes, such as Wrest Park and Osborne House. Their conservation is guided by detailed management and maintenance practices, and they have developed extensive guidance on these.

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/gardens-and-landscapes/>

GRADE

The grade of a listed structure is intended to be an indication of its special interest in a national context. Scheduled monuments are not graded, but listed buildings and registered landscapes are graded I (exceptional interest), II* (particularly important, of more than special interest) or II (of special interest).

It is a myth that Grade II listing only applies to the exterior; consent may be required for any works inside or out.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND (HLF)

They use money raised by National Lottery players to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about from the archaeology to the historic parks.

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/>

LESSONS LEARNED

‘This is the first time a construction project in the UK has sought to capture the intellectual capital on this scale.’ John Armitt , ODA Chairman

Learning Legacy’s aim is to share the knowledge and lessons learned from the London 2012 construction project to raise the bar within the construction sector and to act as a showcase for UK plc. The ODA has worked closely with contractors, industry partners, government bodies and academia to capture the lessons learned and document best-practice examples and innovations for the benefit of future projects.

LISTING

is the act of identifying the most important parts of English heritage so they can receive special protection. They celebrate their significance and make sure that history can be enjoyed by present and future generations. The Heritage List is the only official and up to date database of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England. This is the web-link to search the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) for all listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks and registered parks, gardens and battlefields.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

LLDC

London Legacy Development Corporation was formed in April 2012 and its purpose is to use the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of the London 2012 Games and the creation of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to develop a dynamic new heart for east London, creating opportunities for local people and driving innovation and growth in London and the UK.

<http://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/our-story/the-legacy-corporation>

Parks for People

Parks for People is a specific HLF funding programme that helps to conserve the heritage that makes both historic parks and cemeteries special. And it gives local people a say in how they are managed in the future. Projects improve people’s wellbeing and knowledge of their area, and make communities better places to live, work and visit. For the increasingly urban population, parks are often the only green space where people can meet, play, relax and come close to nature. Parks have always been a priority for HLF and since they first started to invest in them in 1996 they have awarded over £850m across the UK, including £130m from Big Lottery Fund in England. Yet, as the recent State of UK Public Parks report highlights, many of their best-loved green spaces are in need of regeneration and investment. Applications go through a two-round process. This is so you can apply at an early stage of planning your project and get an idea of whether you’re likely to receive a grant. Then you can send your detailed proposals. At the first round you can also ask for funding to develop your project.

In England, the Parks for People programme is jointly funded with the Big Lottery Fund.

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/parks-people>

PUBLIC REALM

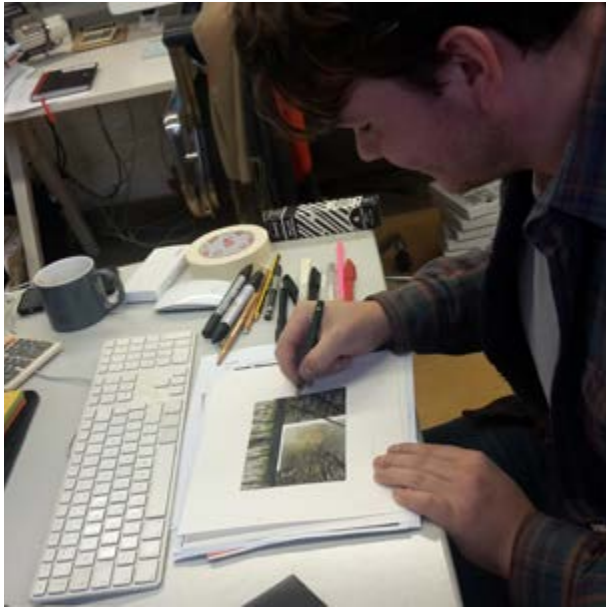
is defined as any publicly owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.

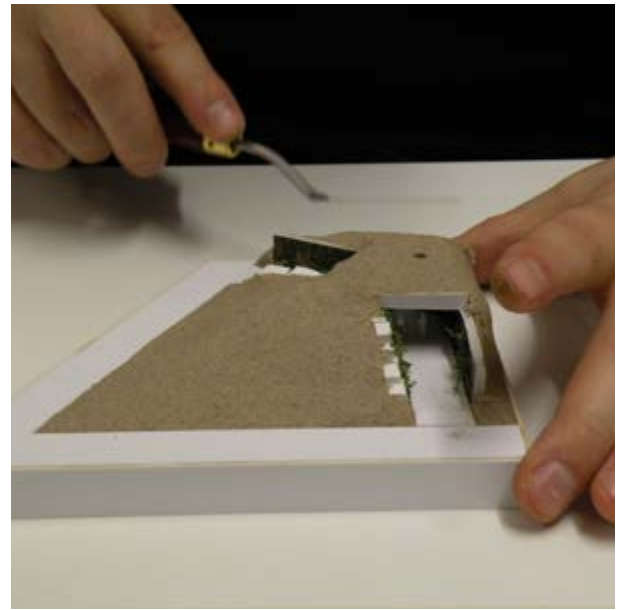
REGISTER OF HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN ENGLAND

The Historic England ‘Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England’, established in 1983, currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of particular significance. Here you can find out how and why we protect them.

he emphasis of the Register is on ‘designed’ landscapes, rather than on planting or botanical importance.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/registered-parks-and-gardens/>







Colophon

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