

## Swiss Cottage Park

- **Location** London NW3
- **Budget** £4m
- **Scheme** Urban park



Above: The 'Flicker wall', created by artist Martin Richman in collaboration with Gustafson Porter, is lit up at night and marks the gateway to the park

Clockwise from right: Elements of the park include the West Garden; visual links with the Swiss Cottage Library; and a water feature for play and aesthetics

CAMDEN COUNCIL WISHED to create a new park at Swiss Cottage that would weave together the evolving cultural and recreational needs of this diverse neighbourhood. It would also help to unify community buildings including: the public library; a new leisure centre; the Hampstead Theatre; a community centre; the Winchester Project; offices; affordable and luxury housing; and a home for the elderly.

The council commissioned Gustafson Porter to interlink the park with other projects by the landscape architect on the site: the Swiss Cottage library entrance, the Eton Avenue market, and the leisure centre landscape.

At its hub, the park has a water feature for play, as well as aesthetic

purpose: jets set at 30-degree angles shoot 15m-long streams of water arcing over a rectangular basin. Additionally, a thin sheet of water emerges from grilles set into the paving at the fountain head and courses down a rectangular, sloping granite plane, embedded into softly stepped grass banks. The scheme also provides a shallow pool at the northern end of the feature, which can be cleared via drainage valves, creating a dry paved surface. In this mode, the space can be used to host events with the Hampstead Theatre and Central School of Speech and Drama.

The presence and absence of water is intended to suggest activity and tranquillity to reflect usage of the park. A borehole sunk into the chalk subsoil provides water for the basin, which is treated, then pumped into a holding tank where it can be drawn off for the water feature, or used for irrigation and street cleaning.

Different ground levels offer opportunities for performance and observation in the park at varying

points, with, for example, a sunken sports pitch clad in Portland Stone, reclaimed from the old sports centre façade, at the southern edge of the open space. The layout is completed with two cross-axial footpaths and lines and groves of trees, which contribute to the organisation of space in the scheme.

The design aspires to create an open space that is functional and progressive, looking to the future of Swiss Cottage. The completed new park has merged assorted functions, related projects and architectural elements into a communal setting with an elevated sense of place.



### Details

<b>Landscape designer</b>	<b>Gustafson Porter</b>
<b>Client</b>	<b>London Borough of Camden</b>
<b>Area of project</b>	<b>One hectare</b>
<b>Start and finish dates</b>	<b>Began: 2005; completed: March 2006</b>
<b>Project costs</b>	<b>£4m, of which hard landscape, including fountain and sports pitch: £2.3m; soft landscape: £700,000</b>
<b>Funding sources</b>	<b>London Borough of Camden</b>
<b>Main contractor</b>	<b>Durkan Pudelek</b>
<b>Visit</b>	<b><a href="http://www.gustafson-porter.com">www.gustafson-porter.com</a> and <a href="http://www.camden.gov.uk">www.camden.gov.uk</a></b>



All images: Gustafson Porter

