



Old Market Square

NOTTINGHAM | 2007

Old Market Square in Nottingham is one of the oldest public squares in the UK with an 800 year history as a market place. At 11,500m², it is the second largest in Britain after London's Trafalgar Square. Its regeneration by Gustafson Porter + Bowman 2005-2007 involved the replacement of a design by T.C.Howitt, architect of the square and the adjacent Council House building. Both the square and building were completed in 1929, and the square was listed in 1994.

In 2004, the City's Development Department organised an international design competition. The brief was to; provide unhindered access for all, use high quality materials, provide new water features, introduce soft landscaping, integrate street furniture, create flexible performance space, allow people to linger, encourage 24 hour use, enable perimeter activity to spill out into the space, and attract pedestrians by virtue of its design. It also had to create a sense of place and reinforce the distinctive qualities and character of Nottingham.

The new design incorporates the organic topography of the original medieval square, and accommodates existing falls by gradual level changes for wheelchair users and drainage. The predominant material is granite, to reflect the importance of the space and provide a long design life. Many UK public squares are dominated by road traffic, signage and street furniture; however collaboration with city planners has resulted in a clutter free, contemporary design.

The materials have been designed and selected to be sympathetic to their context and robust enough to stand the test of time. The central market square is composed of a large light coloured surface of slip resistant granite from Portugal that compliments the

Portland stone of the Council House. It is accessible to vehicles for staging events, setting up markets and creating the backdrops required for a variety of performances. New terraces providing significantly more seating than before and are formed of grey, black, white and beige granite blocks. These colours reflect the range of stone used in the surrounding building facades and also delineate level changes. Their tapering forms create rows of benches, whilst others form planters.

The planting creates a sense of intimacy in the space; lines of plants create a layer of separation from the activity of Long Row and the tram stop. Planters lined with a box hedge are filled with 4,000 colourful flowering bulbs, perennials and 800 shrubs that provide a living frame to the square, changing constantly in accordance with the season. These are also designed to accommodate temporary planting schemes by the Nottingham in Bloom team.

The 4,400m² water feature comprises a reflecting pool, a 1.8m waterfall, rills, 53 jets and a scrim, arranged as four terraces, which can be turned off when used as a stage or temporary viewing areas. At night the water feature is lit up to shimmer and sparkle with fibre optics inlaid into each individual water jet. Long Row has been transformed into an ambient boulevard with atmospheric lighting cast from the refurbished listed lanterns, complemented by up-lighters set in to the paving. To the south of the square, reflectors on the four lighting masts provide indirect background lighting to ensure that the Square feels safe and inviting. These are also capable of supporting temporary lighting trusses and banners, which transform the square into a stage for spectacular events.



VALUE
£8.8m
CLIENT
Nottingham City Council
PROJECT DURATION
2005-2007
SIZE
1.2ha
STATUS
Completed
TEAM
(Engineers) ARUP
(Main contractor) Balfour Beatty
(Water feature specialist) OCMIS
(Pedestrian study) Space Syntax



AWARDS
2011
Best British Buildings of the 21st Century / Blueprint Magazine
2008
Winner, Natural Stone Awards
2008
RIBA Award, East Midlands
2008
Highly Commended, Civil Building of the Year – SCALA
2008
RIBA CABE Award
2008
Commendation for Regeneration, RICS East Midland Awards
2008
East Midlands Merit Awards, Institution of Civil Engineers
2008

“The project has been very well received by the citizens of Nottingham and the space is very well used both in attending events but also using the seating areas to relax and meet. Since its opening the space has been characterised by being a busy hub throughout the day and at night, previous issues associated with antisocial behaviour have effectively disappeared with the new design.”
- Steve Hunt, Nottingham County Council (client)