

IBP MAGAZINE
OF THE YEAR

NEW LONDON

QUARTERLY

ISSUE THIRTY-FOUR
SPRING 2018
£10

Sherin Aminossehe | Diversity special | Digby Flower
Victoria Bullock | Maccreanor Lavington | Rathbone Square



SEE YOU AT MIPIM

francesca.pont@benadamsarchitects.co.uk
+44 (0) 7799 128 955



RATHBONE SQUARE

We take a look at Great Portland Estates' 'single largest and most important development' it has yet undertaken



Developer **Great Portland Estates**
Architect **Make Architects**
Structural Engineer **AKT II**
Landscape Architect **Gustafson Porter + Bowman**

© Edmund Summer

THE DEVELOPER'S ACCOUNT HELEN HARE, HEAD OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT, GREAT PORTLAND ESTATES



Rathbone Square is unique. A 2.3-acre site in the West End is a very rare opportunity and certainly not to be missed, so when the Royal Mail sorting office came to the market, we were keen to make the most of it. For Great Portland Estates (GPE), it's the single largest and most important development we have ever undertaken.

Our ambition was to create a high-quality, mixed-use development that would stitch into the local area, feel like it had always been part of the local vernacular and stand the test of time while delivering great returns for our shareholders.

Careful selection of our team was key to the delivery: a team that bought into our desire for a collegiate and collaborative working environment – to the extent that the majority of our consultants came together to work in our Rathbone project office located just south of the site. Communication and engagement have played a key part in the success of Rathbone Square and extended beyond our project team to many stakeholders.

A combination of private residential, discount market sale housing, retail and office uses cover the site, all contributing in their own way to the local environment. With the new garden square, we have created something that did not exist before, a space that we hope locals and visitors will enjoy for years to come. We have also added new routes through, which never existed before, so for those of us who work and live here it's a great opportunity to shave

a few minutes off your journey time. It's not a closed area, the entrances were designed to create a sense of intrigue, catch people's eye and invite them in – a tranquil garden space including new retail opportunities within.

Extensive studies took place to review the local building types, shoulder heights, the plethora of materials used in the locality, narrow passageways and cut-throughs, the way people move in and around the area. It took us months to work through all of that to produce what we feel are really important architectural characteristics. We wanted to retain that artisan feel and, above all, we wanted the scheme to feel like

it had been crafted. The construction industry is full of craftsmen and this we feel is reflected in the finished product.

Central London projects come with varying levels of complexity and Rathbone Square is no different. With 5.2m safe working hours achieved by our team and just over six years in the making, Rathbone Square has pushed the boundaries on many levels. It takes a team that wants to convert the vision to reality, to strive and challenge conventions while remaining at the forefront of great design and construction. We look forward to watching the space evolve as it is carefully uncovered.



The former post office site just north of Oxford Street

© Edmund Summer



© Robin Gautier

↑ People place – the garden square

← Club class – residents' lounge

THE ARCHITECT'S ACCOUNT

GRAHAM LONGMAN, PROJECT ARCHITECT, MAKE ARCHITECTS



Few architects get the opportunity to work on a single project comprising as many uses as Rathbone Square, with its offices, homes, shops and more. The diverse scheme includes everything from a pool to an energy centre to a retained Royal Mail underground railway station.

This was our first project with GPE, who share our principles of people-focused design and collaboration. Right from the beginning, we envisioned a garden in the middle of the site – a proper public space for the local community, with buildings wrapping around the edge to repair and reinforce the old street pattern lost in the site's previous use.

Given the site's location, it seemed obvious to create a diagonal boulevard across it to form a desire line to Charlotte Street from the new Crossrail station on Oxford Street. We worked with Space Syntax and Gustafson Porter + Bowman to create a public garden that serves this purpose but encourages people to meander rather than rush through it. Jade green ceramic-clad arches encourage a sense of discovery and invite people in, as do the ripples of the garden's water features, which gently echo through the passageways.

The richness of the elevations is inspired by the different types of brick, specialist metals and ceramics of the local architecture. Along with integrating the design into the local vernacular, we sought to future-proof it. The office space's flexibility was tested and proven when Facebook came on board in 2015. We converted the basement

level below the central garden into office space to meet the company's needs, and cut rooflights into it, hidden among the planters, to flood this subterranean space with natural light.

Our appointment extended to the residential interior design, which ensured a shared material palette and a consistent standard of craftsmanship and detailing throughout the scheme. Windows are perfectly aligned with apartment entrances so residents are instantly greeted by fantastic views. Living rooms enjoy perimeter locations with likewise amazing views, while rooflights are positioned above vanity basins and baths, and private areas of the home like bedrooms are protected by balcony spaces. To avoid standardisation, we provided a bespoke mix of apartments, which could only be delivered cost-effectively through close collaboration of the interior and exterior teams.



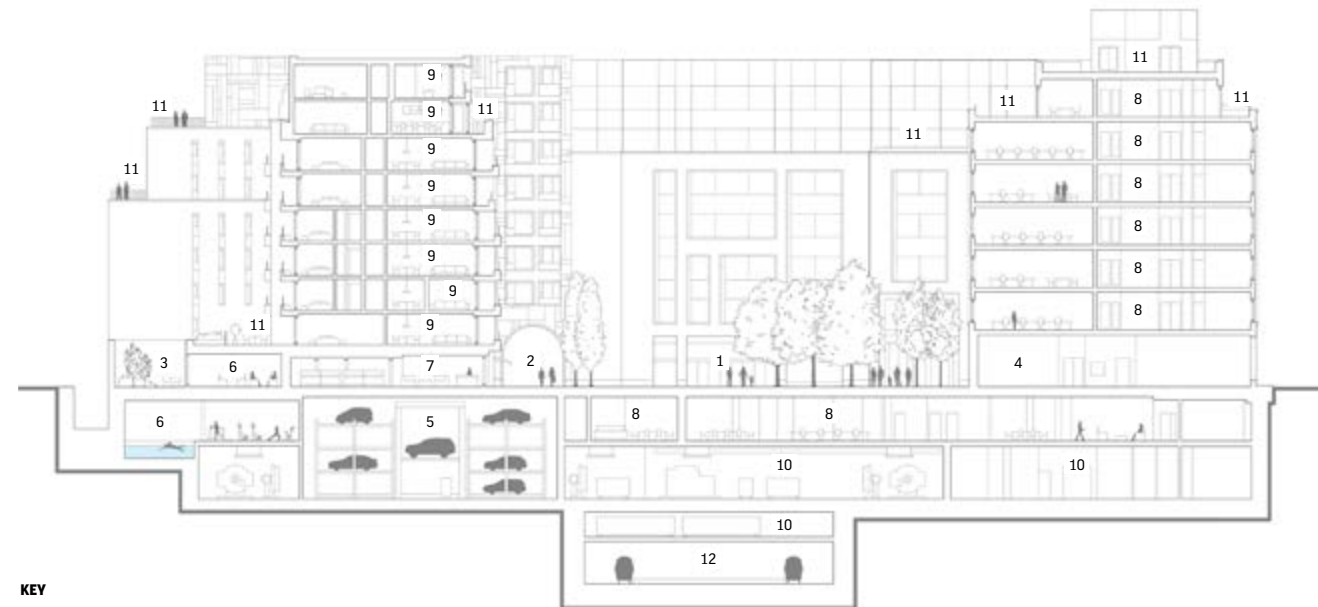
© Edmund Summer

We worked closely with Hurley Palmer Flatt to exceed the required environmental standards, achieving a 30 per cent reduction in carbon emissions, a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating and a Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. Many features were constructed off-site in fabrication warehouses. Cladding panels, windows, steelwork, water features, public art, lighting and ironmongery (to name a few) were all prefabricated, and BIM was used extensively throughout.

We love that Rathbone Square is a beautiful place to visit, live and work. It's not a windswept piazza or a single-use building only active at certain times. This is a workplace and living space that will change through the seasons, as well as each daily cycle. We look forward to watching it evolve as it becomes part of Fitzrovia.



Making a place – a mix of buildings fronting onto a new public square



KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Public garden | 7. Retail |
| 2. Public routes | 8. Office |
| 3. Residents' garden | 9. Residential |
| 4. Office reception | 10. Plant |
| 5. Automated car parking | 11. Roof terraces |
| 6. Residents' amenities | 12. Mail rail |



Complexity in the city



Clean rooms – one of the residential units



© Make Architects



←
In the swim – the
scheme's pool

© Robin Gautier



←
Rooms with a view
– the residential
balconies

↑
Residential
concierge

© Robin Gautier

© Edmund Summer

THE STRUCTURAL ENGINEER'S ACCOUNT GERRY O'BRIEN, DESIGN DIRECTOR, AKT II



The calmness of Rathbone Square's fine architecture and the quality of its public square belie the complexity of its urban constraints. The site's central London location saw it constrained vertically and from within, due to light requirements of the square. Responding to this 3D puzzle required thorough research and in situ exploration. The project was delivered through technically complex solutions, innovation and brute-strength engineering.

From the outset, we knew there was potential for items of archaeological interest, but a Civil War ditch appeared in an unexpected location, so we had to adapt the programme of works to allow archaeologists access with minimal impact on the scheme.

We also had to consider the significance of the Crossrail 2 proposals on the site. Safeguarding procedures were implemented to protect the design from any potential developments in the future.

The site was formerly home to Royal Mail Group and serviced by 'Mail Rail', which still runs in a series of tunnels below central London. Where possible, we sought to reuse all elements of the existing substructure, including retaining walls and foundations. We undertook comprehensive testing and research to underpin the new life of this building.

When the site's station box was built in the 1960s, the tunnel headwalls were constructed using unbonded post-tensioning techniques, allowing the walls to retain the soil outside the building to a height of 56ft unpropped.

The new development required the top 16ft of the western headwall to be removed to allow connectivity between the new basement and the existing one, which presented some challenges. The concrete infilled stressing pit was at platform level within the station box and was therefore inaccessible, but innovative shielded demolition techniques allowed the safe cutting of the still-live tendons.

The site's original buildings were supported on the external walls of the station box and on discrete columns positioned within the central platform. While the walls had capacity to accept increased vertical loads, the columns were limited in what they could sustain. We were unable to access these columns or the foundations to effect strengthening works, so we constructed a controlled settlement transfer structure spanning 80ft across the station box, thus avoiding depositing loads on the central column, where the office block's core was to be located.

The sequencing of demolition, propping and construction was scrutinised, with a particular eye on limiting ground movements that would affect the tunnels or adjoining properties. It was decided that areas of top-down construction would be beneficial in unlocking access to the site. As with the sequencing, the logistical approach was altered as the project progressed, to afford the most effective working interfaces.

Strategic view corridors from Parliament Hill established an upper level for the development. This led to a post-tensioned flat slab structure – unusual for a central London office – that was adopted after extensive grid and structural system exploration. This allowed a flexible floorplate and a condensed total floor zone, which negated the need to remove a floor from the development.

'The site was formerly home to Royal Mail Group and serviced by 'Mail Rail', which still runs in a series of tunnels below central London'

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S ACCOUNT

MARY BOWMAN, PARTNER, GUSTAFSON PORTER + BOWMAN



The courtyard garden at Rathbone Square is designed as a relaxing environment off Oxford Street that provides pedestrian connections to Fitzrovia. Our brief was to create an exceptional landscape within Make's masterplan, responding to the special character of the surrounding streets, mews and passageways.

The theme of water is central to the concept of the space. We worked with The Fountain Workshop to develop two water tables that mark the primary entrances into site. Their horizontal surfaces reflect the green space out to the street, and their sculptural profiling catches the light, accentuating the sensual quality of the water as it flows over the sides. The sound of water creates a threshold for the visitor entering the garden and channels flow through the planters, around benches, into the middle of the space.

The client put together a great team. We worked closely through BIM, with all design team members working to profile the podium slab and accommodate trees and soft landscaping, together with skylights and services to the basement area. It was important that visitors feel they're moving through a natural landscape – the idea was that busy streets surrounding the development would give way to a quiet, contemplative garden. The seamless integration of all these elements required close collaboration, and the iterative process of detail development with the team was very successful.



© Edmund Summer

Water is a central theme to the concept of the space

Visitors are encouraged to spend time and relax in the garden. The soft landscape and water features reduce the ambient temperature of the courtyard and provide a comfortable place for people to meet and linger. The client commissioned two artworks for the public realm: a drinking fountain by Alison Wilding to further celebrate the theme of water, and a series of bronze gates by Robert Orchardson that provide both function and beauty as one enters the garden from the surrounding streets. Stone planters are set at bench height and surrounded by evergreen, native and flowering plants, and trees to immerse the visitor in a natural environment.

Great Portland Estates was closely involved in the concept and design development, and was committed to the landscape proposals, keeping them high on the design team's

agenda. The client's ambition from the outset was for the highest quality, as Rathbone Square is the first GPE development to include a public realm. This attention to detail, from materials and planting through to the CNC stone profiling, ensured a complete and robust design was passed on to Lendlease at the pre-construction stage.

Gustafson Porter + Bowman were novated with the rest of the design team to Lendlease. The contractor took a hands-on approach, and we worked closely with their design managers to finalise the details and deliver the project at construction stage. Thanks to the positive work ethos on site, and the appointment of experienced subcontractors such as Maylim together with Willerby Landscapes, the client's expectation for a high-quality landscape was achieved. ●



© Gustafson Porter + Bowman

←
The landscape plan



© Edmund Summer

←
A place for people to linger