

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Rathbone Square is a mixed-use project designed for Great Portland Estates on the site of the former Royal Mail sorting office in Fitzrovia. It is home to Facebook's new London HQ, high-spec residential apartments and retail space, all set around a new public garden that provides links to Crossrail and an oasis away from busy Oxford Street.

The garden has three access points relating to contextual desire lines. Each has its own character in terms of scale and materiality defined by how people will use them. Patinated bronze gates by Rob Orchardson, formed of a repeat trapezoidal pattern, close off each access point at night to let the garden rejuvenate and to provide privacy for residents.

Fitzrovia has a wonderful historic grain that includes the 18th-century Newman Passage. We have created two new passageways leading into the garden. They provide a sense of discovery, with daylight, colour and the acoustics of the water features drawing people through.

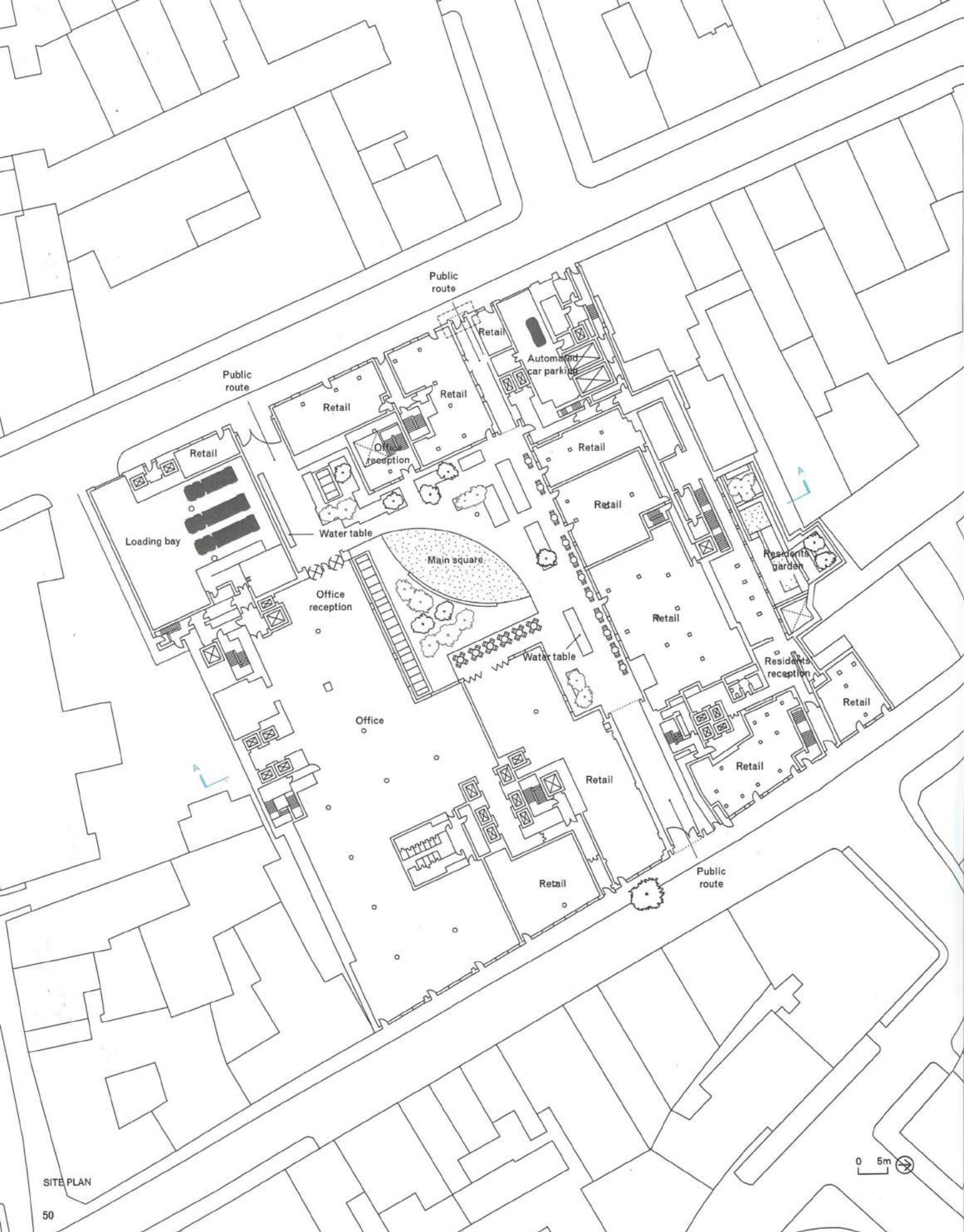
The passageway fronting Newman Street is the narrower of the two and has a bridge that cuts across the top in the centre. Here, two large arched windows provide views from the bridge towards the garden and the street beyond.

Each passageway is clad in a bespoke jade-coloured ceramic, which works with the glazed ceramic that clads the internal elevations of the garden, residential window surrounds and balcony fascias. Dark metal balconies on the residential portion, silver spandrel panels on the commercial portion and dark bronze anodised aluminium panels add to the richness of the façades.

*Graham Longman, project architect,
Make Architects*







LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S VIEW

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 primary routes into the site are different in scale and character, creating distinct experiences as one enters. Strong sightlines across the garden promote a sense of a secure and safe environment while the pathways curve gently around planters and lawn to encourage a slower pace. The theme of water is central to the concept of the space and two 'water tables' mark the primary entrances into the site. Their horizontal surfaces reflect

the landscape 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, and into the middle of the garden.

Visitors are encouraged to relax in the heart of the space. The soft landscape and water features reduce the ambient temperature of the courtyard and provide a comfortable place for people to meet and linger. Stone planters are set at bench height and surrounded by native evergreen and flowering plants and trees to immerse the visitor in a natural environment.

*Donncha O'Shea, partner,
Gustafson Porter + Bowman*

