



1-2 Seating with hard back support and arm rests



Woolwich Squares

Landscape Architect: Gustafson Porter | Location: London, UK

Gustafson Porter's proposal for Woolwich Squares, encompassing Beresford Square, Greens End and General Gordon Square (approx. 1ha), signifies the consolidation of a fragmented Woolwich Town Center, rejuvenating its public spaces, and bringing people back into the heart of Woolwich, both socially and commercially.

The design is based on the concept that each square embodies an essential quality of Woolwich, whether historic or natural, to create unique spaces particular to Woolwich that can be enjoyed through the day and into the evening. The design used pedestrian movement studies to identify key routes through the town center, and developed these to create distinctive quality public spaces that both enhance the experience of the pedestrian and respond to their needs.

The soft landscaping of General Gordon Square addresses the shortage of green open space in the center of Woolwich generating a sense of calm and relaxation while providing a functional space that can be transformed and layered with other uses. The rationalizing/functionality of Beresford Square respond to the daily market, and recognizes the original historic layout.

The unity of the pedestrian space is reinforced through the palette of materials and street furniture, with special features such as the water scrim, planting and feature lighting developing the character of each square.

Design Brief

GWRA, the client for Woolwich Squares, set out key objectives to create

Project Name:
Woolwich Squares
Completion Date:
2011
Client:
Royal Borough of Greenwich
Area:
1.1ha
Photographer:
Grant Smith, Gustafson Porter

a fully accessible public space for all, with feature lighting, soft landscaping and a water feature that could drain to accommodate events. A wide range of needs had to be considered, including the existing market in Beresford Square which was renovated as part of the project. An extensive Public Consultation Process was undertaken and the team regularly met with key user groups to discuss and develop the design.

Envisaged as part of the wider masterplan for Woolwich, the project was funded through several agencies, including HCS and TfL, and completed in December 2011. The response to the completed scheme has been extremely positive with numerous events being hosted since it was opened. The robust detailing of the design has allowed the spaces to be well maintained by the council.

The town center was fragmented due to the road layout which separated the green space of General Gordon Square from Greens End, Beresford Square and the rest of the town center.



GENERAL GORDON SQUARE WATER FEATURE RENDERING



BERESFORD SQUARE EVENING RENDERING

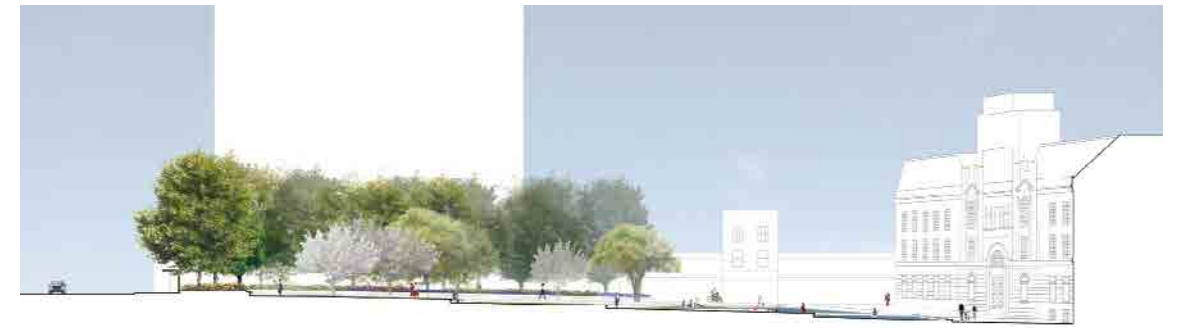


Gustafson Porter’s design proposed a unified pedestrian space with two squares of differing character that complement and relate to one another, each providing an aspect of public life within the town. Greens End, a shared surface roadway linking the two squares, was designed with one material treatment and a single identity that forges it in people’s mind as a real street rather than a sum of several parts.

In General Gordon Square, a garden quality is reinforced through the choice of trees and planting, with larger trees separating it from the surrounding roads. Lawn terraces step down gently to the water scrim which is fully accessible but can also be easily drained. Beresford Square is an altogether more functional space during the day informed by the daily market. In the evening the atmosphere changes with the use of catenary lighting to energize the square. The Royal Arsenal Gatehouse provides a backdrop to events and social activity after the market has left.

Terracing was designed in both squares to improve the usability of the steeply sloping squares, with level routes provided throughout to ensure accessibility for all users. A language of materials and details was developed that incorporated the best practice for seating, ramps, lighting and planting together with a fully accessible water feature. These features together with the protection of key sightlines through the squares were cited as reasons to award the project a Secure by Design award.

While the language of the project is modern, the design is sensitive to the historic fabric of Woolwich, especially its Grade II listed buildings which overlook each square. Both buildings are re-established by the new squares as key architectural features in the public realm. Natural stone materials



GENERAL GORDON SQUARE SECTION



BERESFORD SQUARE SECTION

were specified for their robustness and appearance, and the choice of colors tied into previously completed TfL street works, grounding the design into the broader context of Woolwich, strengthening the natural link from Woolwich Common to the River Thames.

1. Terracing was designed to mitigate the slopes while providing large level areas for gathering and activity
2. Detail of water feature
3. Place for events and social activity

