



Woolwich Squares

LONDON | 2012

Envisaged as part of the wider Woolwich masterplan, the Royal Borough of Greenwich set out key objectives to create a fully accessible public space for all, with feature lighting, soft landscaping and a water feature that could drain to accommodate events. The practice saw off almost 40 rivals from across the world to win the contract, with the work completing in 2011.

Gustafson Porter + Bowman's design is based on the concept that each square embodies an essential quality of Woolwich, whether historic or natural, and seeks to create spaces that are particular to Woolwich. The design used pedestrian movement studies to identify key routes through the town centre, and developed these to create distinctive quality public spaces that both enhance the experience of the pedestrian and respond to their needs.

Terracing is utilised 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. Natural stone was chosen for its robustness and appearance, and its colours tied into the palette of the wider town centre. The robust detailing of the design has allowed the spaces to be well maintained by the council.

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 which are re-established as key architectural features in the public realm. The soft landscaping addresses the shortage of green space by creating a 'Garden' that generates a sense of calm and relaxation while providing a functional space that can be transformed for other uses.

With respect to the development of the planting concept, this was done in close consultation with the relevant Council officers and maintenance teams. Trees and shrubs were selected for both aesthetic qualities and their ability to thrive in a town centre location. Where there are vulnerable locations, more robust species were selected. To ensure year-round interest, a large number of evergreen shrubs were specified together with species of trees and shrubs that flower from early spring through to autumn. In the interest of sustainability, no irrigation was included in the lawns, and a drip irrigation was installed around the planter beds which is only expected to be required in the driest months. The placement of trees and shrubs has created a microclimate that separates the heart of the square from the noise and pollution of surrounding bus filled roads.



VALUE
£4.2m

CLIENT
Royal Borough of Greenwich
Greenwich Waterfront Regeneration Agency

PROJECT DURATION
2008-2012

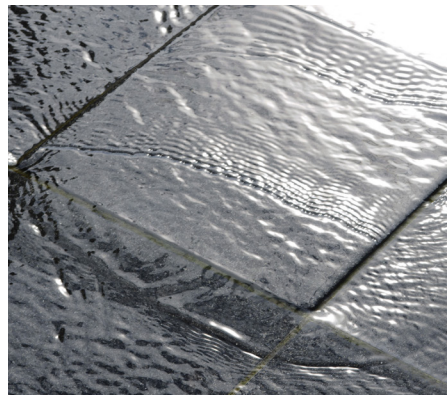
SIZE
1.1ha

STATUS
Completed

TEAM
(Engineers) ARUP
(Main contractor) Volker Highways
(Water feature specialist) Fountain Workshop
(Pedestrian study) Space Syntax
(Public consultation) Soundings
(Access consultancy) David Burdus
(Soil scientist) Tim O'Hare
(Art consultancy) Modus Operandi

"General Gordon Square is now a wonderful space for the community and we've enjoyed seeing people from all over the borough and visitors enjoying events in the square and children especially enjoying the new water feature."

Councillor Christ Roberts,
Royal Borough of Greenwich



AWARDS

2015
Shortlist, Plan Awards, Category: Landscape

2014
Shortlist, New London Awards, Category: Public Spaces

2013
Winner, London Planning Awards, Category: Best Town Centre Project

2013
Shortlist, London Planning Awards, Category: Best New Public Space

2011
Finalist, New London Awards, Category: Future Projects / Placemaking