

FITZROY PLACE LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

SIR ROBERT McALPINE Ltd

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Medium Scale Permanent Award

Project overview

The redevelopment of the former Middlesex Hospital site in Fitzrovia in the heart of London has provided 235 select apartments, offices, retail space, 54 affordable homes, health and education facilities, all set around a landscaped public square and a retained Grade II listed chapel. The project also included the restoration of the original building's Nassau Street façade. A peak workforce of more 2,000 staff worked on the £200 million development which includes 66,000m² GIFA and was completed in June 2016.

The site-wide landscaping strategy, which included a combination of approaches – from green and brown roofs, to bird and bat boxes, and biodiverse gardens – helped deliver a more than fivefold increase in the ecological value of the site.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The inner city site was derelict for a number of years, with a biodiversity score of 0.38 species per hectare. The empty lot was overlooked by the surrounding neighbours and contained just bare ground with short ephemeral/short perennial vegetation.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The client was committed to achieving BREEAM Excellent and Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and as such the design team targeted biodiversity as one of the key features for the project. There was also the opportunity for the central London site to create a new biodiverse public square, a quiet oasis just off Tottenham Court Road, and a new focal point for the local community.



The wide range of biodiversity measures implemented at Fitzroy Place resulted in a fivefold increase in the ecological value of the site.

The project went above and beyond the requirements for its assessment methods and planning to increase biodiversity in the area.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

A mix of green and brown roofs provide more than 600m² of new biodiverse habitat, interspersed among the photovoltaic arrays that provide electricity for the development. To attract bats and birds to the development a collection of bat and bird boxes were located in optimum locations around the development (quiet, protected, in the correct orientation and with minimum light pollution for a central London site). The boxes were designed to house a range of bird and bat species local to the area. Care was also taken to ensure the correct plant species were selected to attract them.

The spacious new central courtyard created by the development acts as a natural sanctuary, offering protection against the traffic, pollution and noise of the surrounding streets. The courtyard is heavily landscaped with a combination of trees, a biodiverse physic garden, turf grass and pergolas, all of which is accessible to the local community.

In total, the project has resulted in a fivefold increase in biodiversity. This will be maintained going forward by the **development's** manager to ensure that the landscaping continues to be a positive feature of the development.

To ensure that the landscaping features of the completed project were a success and used by the local community as well as new tenants, we worked with a range of stakeholders in the local community during construction to develop and enhance biodiversity across the local area. This included everything from building gardens at local schools and community centres using salvaged site materials, to creating kitchen gardens for local charities. Our staff actively engaged with these stakeholders, and devoted both their time and experience on these schemes to help ensure their success.



The development incorporates a physic garden containing more than 20 native species

How would you best describe the project?

The project is a major enhancement to the area, providing a new protected green square for the benefit of the community, and enhancing the diversity of species for the benefit of local wildlife. Fitzroy Place has left a significant positive lasting legacy on the biodiversity of Fitzrovia, as part of its wider contribution to the local community.

Further information

The landscaping was completed in line with the project programme, with the office block green roofs, chapel and then residential roofs finished first before the completion of ground level features. In revisiting the scheme two months after completion it is great to see how popular the space has become with people looking for a restful spot to enjoy their lunch break or just to sit and relax at weekends.

The commitment to native species where possible has helped contribute to attracting more diverse wildlife including birds to the site. The management company has committed to maintaining the landscaping as a critical part of the general upkeep of the development as it is seen as a major attraction within the area.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

I think it is incredibly important that for dense urban sites accessible green spaces are an intrinsic part of the design, and this project has done a great job of providing an attractive, and engaging space within the community that will have a long-term and positive impact on biodiversity.



Recycled plastic raised beds containing herbs, fruits, salad, edible flowers and an insect hotel form part of a roof garden installed at All Souls School.