

MAIDA VALE FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

MAIDA VALE, LONDON, ENGLAND

MWH, BARHALE, CLANCY DOCWRA & MURPHYS (OPTIMISE JOINT VENTURE, FOR THAMES WATER)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

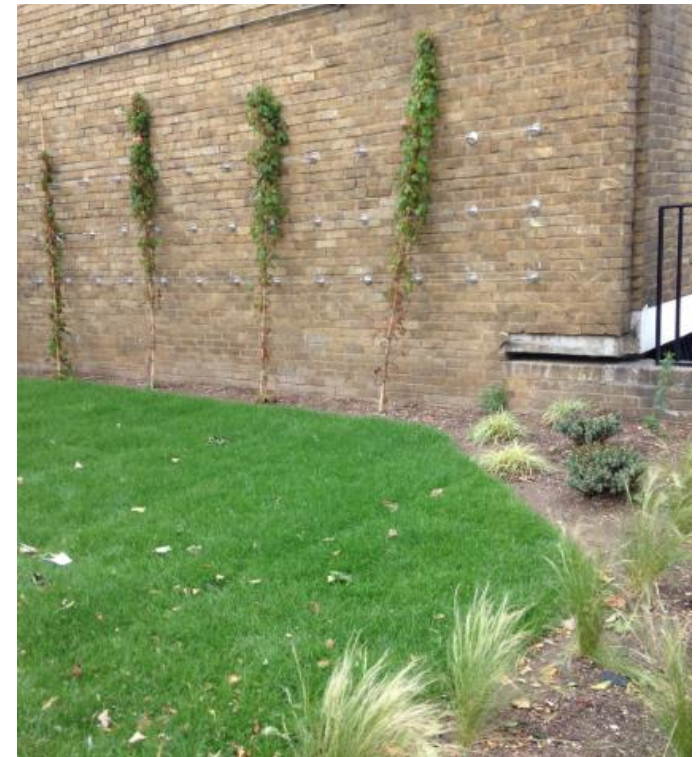
Project overview

A £17.5 million flood alleviation scheme delivered by Optimise in Maida Vale in late 2015 included the construction of enormous underground storage tanks in public parks at Westbourne Green and Tamplin Mews Gardens. The aim was to protect >300 properties from sewer flooding in their basements. With construction works in the parks for many months, Optimise and Thames Water worked with residents and local stakeholders to agree timing and mitigation. Although both children's play areas remained open throughout, the project temporarily took up a lot of amenity grassland space in both parks. Given the severe shortage of local public open space, in addition to funding and providing alternative recreation activities locally during construction, Optimise engaged with the local community and local

councillors and agreed to take on a project to permanently revamp a notorious, derelict local urban public realm site on the junction of Harrow Road and Bourne Terrace (W2 5TH) known as The Pit, an area of about 20m x 20m (0.04ha).

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

The vagrant-plagued piece of public realm comprised a sunken, concrete-surfaced site surrounded by brick retaining walls, accessible via two flights of concrete steps. It included a shrub border and a false acacia tree. On the northern boundary was the blank brick face of a block of flats with retail ground floor.



Some of the landscaping works (including green wall) at the Pit, previously a magnet for anti social behaviour

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

During negotiations with the Parks Department and local councillors and officers of Westminster City Council, regarding the temporary and permanent impact on Westbourne Green and Tamplin Mews Gardens, it was agreed that Optimise Thames Water would also compensate off-site by improving the state of The Pit.

This was later written into the planning conditions imposed. However, it is important to note that this mitigation was delivered as a gesture of good will. The scale of this off-site additional mitigation was greater than could have been reasonably enforced through the planning system, given that the flood alleviation works were in the public interest, and the impact on the parks was temporary.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The landscape design for the Pit was undertaken in full consultation with Westminster City Council's Open Spaces Working Group which included their landscape architect and local councillors, as well as community representatives. Various options were considered and debated at meetings with these stakeholders. Waste spoil from the flood alleviation scheme was reused to raise the ground levels to avoid the sunken aspect of The Pit which had attracted anti-social behaviour. A ramp was included in the design to allow disabled access for the first time. Negotiations were concluded with the owner of the adjacent block of flats to incorporate a green wall fixed to their property. The green wall comprised of *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* which is of known value to pollinators. The false acacia tree was retained by the use of a collar to protect the stem, and special porous fill material, to enable water and oxygen to reach the roots

at the original ground level. The grassed area provides an alternative to the hard surfaces and also allows the site to drain to soakaway (previously it discharged to the sewer).

How would you best describe the project?

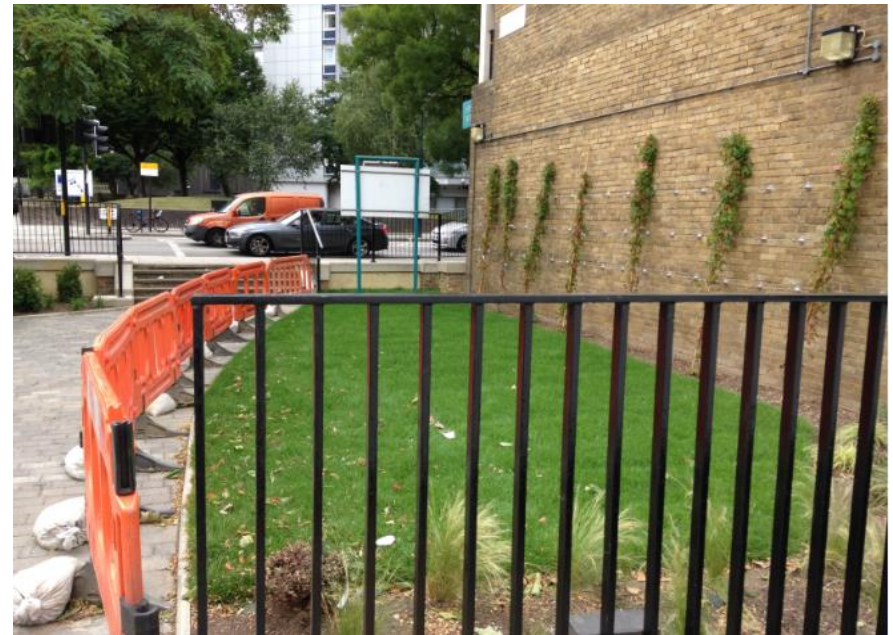
Mitigation

Further information

The biggest challenge with this scheme, which should not be underestimated, was getting a legal agreement to erect a green wall on third party property. Construction in this tight space surrounded on three sides by pedestrian walkways was difficult, and there was no construction loading and drop-off point, meaning temporary lane closures on Bourne Terrace for deliveries. For this sort of scheme in a very public location, the extent of stakeholder engagement required to agree iterations of the landscape design requires a lengthy design timescale, this stage should not be rushed.

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View looking west: Before (left) and after (right) photos of the Pit. A concrete sunken area with flower and shrub beds was replaced with a raised, soft and hard landscaped area that featured a green wall and shrub beds.

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Before (left) and after (right) photos of the Pit. A concrete sunken area with flower and shrub beds was replaced with a raised, soft and hard landscaped area that featured a green wall and shrub beds.