

Merano Residences

St James

Vauxhall, London

BIG Challenge 2015 submission category: Temporary

Project overview

The project involves the construction of a mixed development, residentially led with 40 high standard apartments and 3 floors for commercial use.

The main structure of the building is 28 levels high, formed by three stepping bays at levels 14, 21 and 28.

The works have been planned as a top down construction process. The structural elements of the building will combine precast concrete elements and exo-skeletal structural steel bracings, making it a feature of the building that will be exposed during its lifecycle.

The building has 3 levels of basement with B3 and B2 primarily car parking and B1 M&E Plant and water storage tanks.

The ground floor will accommodate vehicular access, residential and commercial servicing/refuse arrangements, electrical substation and enhanced public realm.



Photo: Stage 1 - Assemble planters & soil

All the apartments will have a river facing balcony and an eastern elevation winter garden.

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

The proposed area was originally an entrance point to the car park area towards the rear of the network rail arches. It had very little ecological value and served little purpose.

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

There were no specific conditions that led us to implement the garden. This was driven by the company's focus on

sustainable development not only through permanent design but also temporary features during the construction process.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

- A mixed selection of plants and flowers were chosen that would specifically attract bumblebees and stay evergreen throughout the year.
- The long term plan is for this temporary planting to be incorporated into the permanent development upon completion – this is a concept that could possibly be implemented into landscape designs in future projects.

- Offcuts of timber/ ply were re-used to construct the planters (All of which is FSC & PEFC certified).
- Our aim was to involve operatives on site in the process of improving the seating area by creating these particular planters. The site handyman volunteered to build and develop the planter area.
- A poster promoting the conservation of bees has been placed near the planters and seating with the aim of engaging with staff and the local community and raising awareness of biodiversity and bumblebee conservation.
- This small scale temporary project could be perceived as innovate by focusing on the different areas it satisfies.

Primarily, we have created an eco friendly area which is open to the public as well as our own employees. Furthermore, we have specifically focused on the re-use of materials to construct these planters and managed to pick plants to go into these which essentially aim to mitigate the risk of bee extinction.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.



Photo: Stage 2 - Plant placement

Further information

- In the early stages of the project, these particular planters were delivered missing some of its components, this batch was then left idle over a period of time. Once made aware of the BIG biodiversity challenge, we began to collect off cuts of timber on site over a couple of weeks with the aim of constructing the planters by inputting the missing parts with redundant materials.
- Since the plant areas have been built it has been noticed that several bumblebees have been spotted around the lavender and we hope that this will lead to a long term increase in their numbers.
- This is an idea that we are looking to implement in other St James sites in the future with the aim of increasing the size of the planting area and possibly using alternate species of plant.
- In future we also plan on making this a competition by involving contractors on site and local schools to create the most interesting planters/habitat.
- Although I believe our objectives have been met by developing this plant area, looking forward, this is an area we can constantly strive to improve by implementing new and biodiverse ideas.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

I believe it's important to promote biodiversity on site even if it's through small temporary measures, as these can raise awareness of issues amongst staff and lead to long term enhancements.

This project also had the added benefit of providing an area where our work force can relax in an ecological environment away from their responsibilities on site.



Photo: Stage 3 - All plants placed