Buildings
MacEwen Award: shortlist

Micro-interventions improve vital route along Thamesmead

Jan Kattein Architects collaborated with local residents and schools to develop a series of public realm improvements to one of the most densely populated parts of Thamesmead in south-east London

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Words: Pamela Buxton

An exercise bench on Claridge Way multi-tasks as seating and playspace. Credit: Jan Kattein Architects

Project The Common Plan for Claridge Way
Location Thamesmead, London
Architect Jan Kattein Architects with Peabody
Project type Public space

'I liked this because they set a budget and they set about collaborating; it was a really good way of getting people to take responsibility and ownership.' So said judge Denise Bennetts of the Common Plan for Claridge Way, a series of public realm interventions in one of the most densely populated parts of Thamesmead in south-east London.

Housing association Peabody, which owns 65 per cent of the land in Thamesmead, commissioned Jan Kattein Architects (JKA) to come up with a plan of action for a 506m-long thread of underused public space connecting the Moorings – the third phase of Thamesmead – to local schools and shops.

Rather than imposing a masterplan, the architect concentrated on fostering a creative dialogue with local residents, community groups, and schools to find out what they would like to see along the Claridge Way site. This involved a wide variety of consultation events including hands-on workshops, a giant tea party and virtual-reality design sessions to reach hundreds of residents and in doing so 'tease out' the brief, says JKA director of projects Gabriel Warshafsky.

'Collaboration was a really good way of getting people to take responsibility and ownership'

Common plan proposals. Credit: Jan Kattein Architects

1 of 10

The resulting Common Plan strategy consists of a series of micro-interventions that reflect the diverse priorities of those in the local community. Students of Windrush Primary School worked with the architects on the design of playful line markings that run the length of the site. Pupils from Hawksmoor School were involved in designing planters for a new gardening club along the route. Play facilities, such as a treehouse, have been included in a new woodland adventure walk.

Five new exercise benches were installed after consultation with young people from the Hawksmoor Youth Hub. These multi-task as informal play structures and seating.

Residents of nearby homes that back on to Claridge Way were given the opportunity to have new garden fences with back gates, allowing easy access to the public space along with a new planter for them to use. Insect residents are also catered for with the inclusion of a wildflower 'bee road' created with Peabody's grounds maintenance team.

The project has enabled Claridge Way to reach its full potential as a vital route between the Moorings and local communities, according to Peabody head of landscaping and placemaking Kate Batchelor.

'It's been great to see the enthusiasm of the local community in helping us improve the spaces that they use every day,' she says.

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Credits

In numbers
Cost £400,000
Site area 16,000m^2

Architect Jan Kattein Architects
Client: Peabody
Collaborators Hawksmoor Youth Hub, Windrush Primary School, Hawksmoor School, Woolwich Polytechnic, Safety Net, Good Life Garden, Titmuss Avenue Gardening Association, Radio Thamesmead, Hobs3D
Contractors CL Roadmarkings, MJO Signwriting, Accent London, Demco Construction, Duncan & Grove, James Green

Region: London
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