

- Public realm regeneration
- Iconic conservation area
- Shared surfaces
- Designing in detail

BROWNFIELD REGENERATION LONDON



Introduction

Edition 2 includes the latest Master-plan Layout and 2015 photos of completed final phases.



This case study explores the role of precast concrete paving in the regeneration of the Brownfield Estate in Poplar, East London. The Estate began to be developed in the 1950s and now has a settled resident base and strong local identity. It incorporates a conservation area, linked to the local landmark Chrisp Street Market with its innovative 'Idea Store' community library. The Estate also includes listed, iconic high rise blocks, designed by architect Ernő Goldfinger in the late 60s and early 70s – Balfron Tower, Carradale House and Glenkerry House – which contrast with the surrounding low rise buildings.

Before regeneration, a key issue with the Estate was the variable quality and

character of the urban realm, which was ill-defined with uncertainty about identifying public or private spaces and fronts or backs of buildings.

With standard width carriageways and very wide pavements and no defensible space to frontages, the streetscape was bleak. Usable open space was sparse and there were few play facilities. This regeneration project, designed by PRP for Poplar HARCA and implemented by Blakedown Landscapes (SE) aims to transform the public realm associated with both existing and new infill dwellings, creating new, improved building entrances and connections to the wider area.



Photo courtesy of PRP

Master-planning

A master-plan approach was adopted, intended to be cohesive and responsive to existing neighbourhood constraints, so ensuring long-term, sustainable improvements. The design works within the general layout of the existing, refurbished buildings and adopted streets, but introduces new buildings to improve the streetscape: in addition to a new residential tower on Willis Street, two infill sites, contained by 1950s maisonette blocks, have been developed.

Public realm interventions seek to clearly define footpaths and defensible space, introduce new front gardens for low-rise buildings and add new public spaces to give a sense of arrival. Art will be introduced at key points and trees added more widely to soften the environment. Parking will be distributed throughout the Estate, not concentrated in parking courts, and a new 'white light' scheme introduced.



Master-plan Layout

Hard Landscape

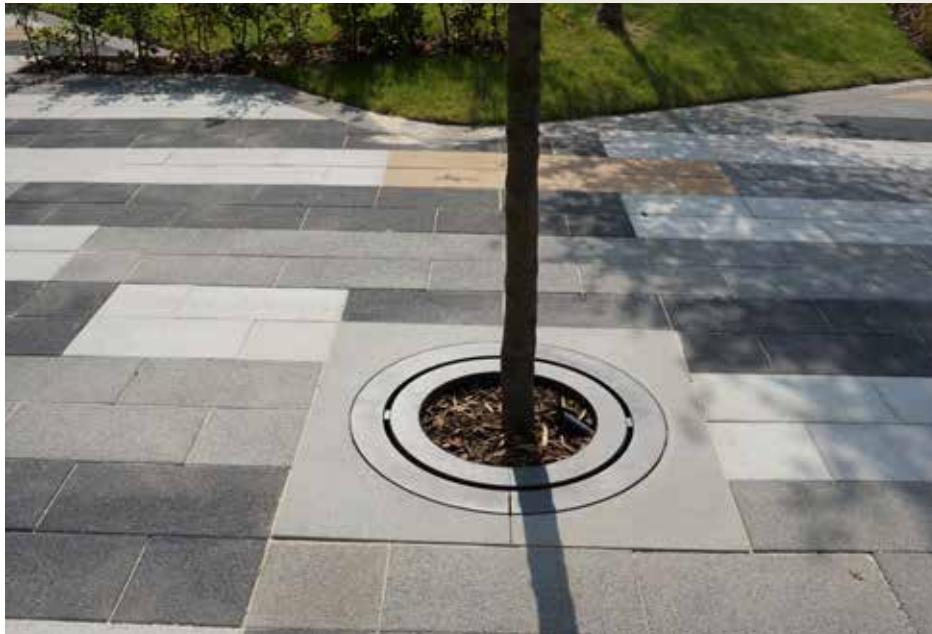
In terms of materiality, the designers aim to unify disparate elements of the site using a simple palette of hardscape materials, developing a language that unites the neighbourhood. Wherever possible, multi-use streets and spaces are developed – bold and contemporary in character, using robust and high quality landscape elements.

Designs are characterised by a uniform application of concrete block paving on un-adopted, HARCA land with feature paving announcing estate entrances and around key buildings. Here, concrete flags in strong colours are arranged in bands to create a bold linear feel. Then, throughout the scheme, silver-grey concrete setts, with enhanced granite surface adding sparkle, highlight footways, while charcoal setts identify private amenity space.

Other materials are also used, such as resin bound gravel and tarmacadam to match existing adopted highways. Edges and transitions are defined by enhanced

finish concrete kerbs – some laid flush, others raised. The material palette is complemented by high quality street furniture – seating, bins, tree grills and reflector lighting.

This is an exemplary scheme, demonstrating the importance of considered, detailed design and execution in the public realm, and the transformative power of hard landscape with precast concrete.





Gateways & Infill Blocks

The final phases of regeneration, completed in 2015, comprise distinctive entrances to the estate announced by bands of concrete flag paving in strong colours. New, residential infill blocks have also been completed, served by concrete block paved external surfaces. At the time of publishing, proposals are in place for 'listing' the whole estate including external areas.



Willis Street

The Panoramic Tower Plaza, located off Willis Street in front of the new residential tower, acts as a gateway to the Estate. As a key public space it uses concrete flag linear paving, in bold colours to

complement the buildings, and feature planting to identify one of the main east-west pedestrian routes through the site. The linear paving also reflects the verticality of the tower façade.



"Concrete flags in strong colours are arranged in bands to create a bold linear feel."

Willis Street

The linearity of the paving contrasts with the informality of the adjacent Local Area Play (LAP) space. Carefully detailed, cut granite units define curved edges between hard and soft landscape while tree-circle units coordinate with the modular concrete paving grid. Surrounding existing buildings will have new front gardens with defensible planting to soften the building edge.





Photo courtesy of PRP

Langdon House

"the strategy includes uniform application of concrete block paving on un-adopted land with feature concrete flag paving announcing estate entrances and around key buildings."

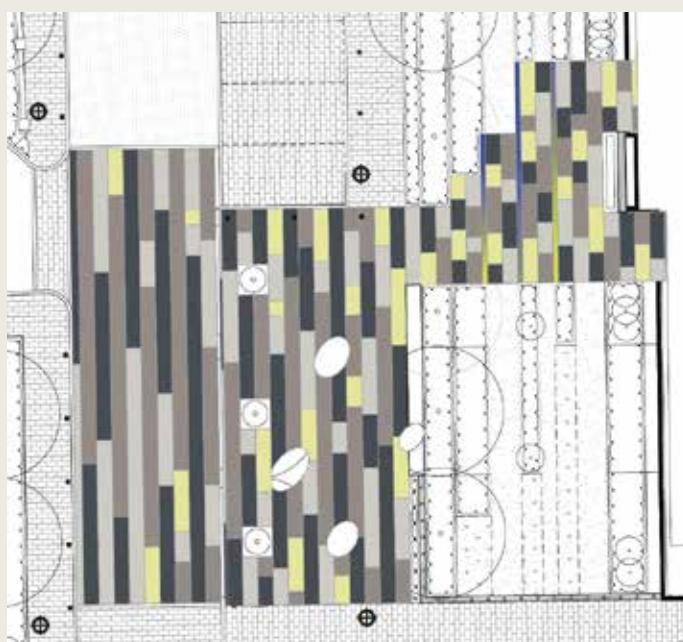
A long, 7-storey block plays a prominent role at the heart of the Estate. This went unrecognised by its previous ill-defined building accesses and grass strip fronted by a low wall of little streetscape

value. The new design is based on the symmetry of the building, with linear bands of low planting and a central tree avenue.



Langdon House

Two matching plazas now announce the new entrances with adjacent black water-walls and public art installations in front. These plazas are characterised by strong coloured concrete flag linear paving, continuing out into the wider environment as raised shared surfaces within the street itself. Concrete block paved parking, shared spaces and footpaths link the plazas and also serve the rear of the block.



Langdon House





Photo courtesy of PRP

Adderley Green

"the aim is to unify disparate elements of the site using a simple palette of hardscape materials, developing a language that unites the neighbourhood."

Although this key, central area originally contained open green space, it was largely under-used (other than by dogs). The pedestrian avenue was unattractive with an uneven surface. Linear concrete flag feature paving now enhances

the identity and quality of the avenue with new trees replacing old diseased examples. Enhanced finish concrete kerbs are used to define areas, raised up to protect planting or laid flush for accessibility.



Photo courtesy of PRP

Adderley Green

The open space has been structured as a focus for play with a real identity, working around retained mature trees. It now includes a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) and a new ball court with decorative screen. Good connections to the rest of the Estate have been clearly defined.



Photo courtesy of PRP



Photo courtesy of PRP

Susannah Street

“edges and transformations are defined by enhanced finish concrete kerbs – some laid flush, others raised.”

A bland, under-used pedestrian area separating two rows of houses has been brought to life with a diagonal design of planters surrounded by modular paving, working around retained mature trees.

Here, silver-grey concrete setts, with a granite surface adding sparkle, continue the linear theme with planted areas protected by raised, enhanced finish concrete kerbs.





Photo courtesy of PRP

Ida Street

Although this typical residential street layout has been largely retained, its random surface materials have been replaced with a more rigorous application of high quality concrete block paving,

with silver grey for pedestrian areas and charcoal for parking, alongside a new tarmac carriageway. Tree and shrub planting, and high quality street furniture add to the enlivened streetscape.





Acknowledgements

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Poplar HARCA

Blakedown Landscapes (SE) Ltd
www.blakedown.co.uk

PRP

(including photos, drawings and extracts from the project Design and Access Statement)
www.prparchitects.co.uk

Case study by Hodsons.
www.hodsons.com

Photos: Chris Hodson
(unless shown otherwise)

Paving Essentials

With precast concrete paving and kerbs, distinct, modular units and designed variations in colour, texture and shape can break up areas giving visual interest and a human scale not possible with monotonous, formless materials such as asphalt. In recent years, Interpave manufacturers have transformed this concept, moving away from simple, regular patterns and colours to expand an extensive palette of styles, shapes, colours and textures to meet current demands in urban design, matching – and often exceeding – the visual qualities of materials such as stone. This is a valid and sustainable interpretation of the requirement for 'local materials' in adopted guidelines. It is generally unrealistic on cost, availability and accessibility grounds to specify locally extracted stone which may have been used in the past, while imported stone fails to meet sustainability criteria.

Essential requirements for paving materials, from Manual for Streets and other guidelines, can be summarised as follows:

- visually attractive able to deliver distinctive local character
- capability for visual or tactile differentiation between distinct areas
- durable and maintainable with reliable product supply
- accessible to all with consistent slip and skid resistance
- well drained to avoid standing water and compatible with SuDS
- sustainable – in the widest sense

More information on how precast concrete paving is uniquely placed to satisfy all these requirements can be found in [Planning with Paving](#), via www.paving.org.uk.



www.paving.org.uk

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