



# THE 'PUBLIC' AT WEST BROMWICH

Case Study 2007

**Sandwell Borough Council commissioned landscape architects Camlin Lonsdale to produce a design brief for an area of West Bromwich around the Community and Public Arts Building known as 'The Public'. The scheme was to reflect the futuristic design of this building whilst acting as a link to the more conventional surrounding architecture.**

Close to the heart of West Bromwich city centre, the design retains a main bus and taxi access route whilst creating a public space and providing a new public seating area. Expertly laid by Design & Paving Specialist Ltd, the granite setts used have been carefully selected from different coloured stones to create a modern, warm mix of colours.

Whilst this may look random to the onlooker, careful planning of the percentage mix of each colour used made sure that the overall tone was just right. The setts were produced with cropped sides to give a traditional feel, whilst the sawn and textured surface provides a smooth but slip resistant modern finish.

The seating units used have been produced in granite to create a large 'pebble' effect as a direct link to the windows used in the building. These have been installed in an apparently random fashion to create further interest. The benches, accessorised with stainless steel, provide comfortable backrests and, in the case of the long bench, jointing plates which also act as a skateboard deterrent to avoid damage to the polished granite finish.



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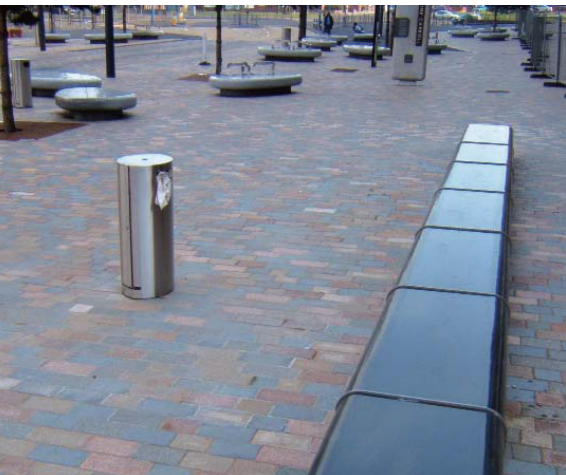


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Perhaps the most striking feature of the scheme is the colourful lighting which has been hidden underneath the benches. Designed in conjunction with lighting consultants Sutton Vane Associates, the different colours are intended to reflect those of the adjacent 'Public' building. Incorporating the lighting units into the underside of the benches helps to create a colourful effect which adds magic to the space by night.

Main contractor North Midlands Construction were keen to make sure every consideration was made to ensure the installation of the benches went without a hitch. This included the supply of sample lighting to aid the production of a mock up of the basic pebble shape, with lighting unit rebates and plinth bases being examined and approved before work in the factory was started fully.

Often the finer points of good design can go unnoticed to the casual onlooker and the long bench feature used in this scheme is such an example. Initially this structure had been included in the design as a small retaining wall to bridge the gap between different paving levels, however, it was decided by the architect that this detail could be used to good effect by the creation of a further bench feature.

Finally trees were planted to bring the scheme to life, highlighting the green coloured granite included in the paving mix. Further lighting units built into the paving is utilised to uplift the trees at night, completing the overall effect.

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