

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Streets & Walkway Sub-Committee	13 January 2014
<b>Subject:</b> Issue Report – Barbican Seating	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Built Environment	<b>For Decision</b>
<b><u>Summary</u></b>	
<p><u>Dashboard</u>  Project Status – Green  Total Estimated Cost – £250k  Spend to Date – £205k  Overall project risk – Low</p> <p><u>Brief description of the project</u>  Following public consultation on the Barbican Area Streets &amp; Walkways Enhancement Strategy in 2008, an improvement project was approved in 2011 to deliver seating, planting and lighting improvements at St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk on the Barbican Estate.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b>  To remove the seating and planters from St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk and relocate elsewhere in the City for use by the City community, and to put back seating similar to that present on site before the delivery of the City's improvement project.</p>	

## **Overview**

<b>1. Background</b>	<p>The Barbican Area Streets &amp; Walkways Enhancement Strategy was approved by the Court of Common Council in October 2008. St Giles Terrace &amp; Ben Jonson Highwalk were identified as high priority projects as a result of feedback from Barbican residents during the extensive public consultation on the Strategy. The consultation highlighted a previously unidentified need to enhance City Walkways on the Barbican Highwalks and these two areas were identified by residents for landscape, planting, lighting and seating improvements.</p> <p>Public realm improvements were evaluated at these locations in line with the adopted Area Strategy. The evaluation process was informed by the results of the 2008 public consultation and included on-going engagement with residents in developing a design that was responsive to their feedback.</p> <p>Of note, the Barbican Residents Working party met in May 2010 to discuss the designs and the feedback was predominantly positive about the proposals at that time.</p> <p>Following the working party meeting, designs were presented to local stakeholders including the City of London School for Girls, St. Giles Cripplegate church, the Barbican Centre, the Guildhall School of Music &amp; Drama, the City of London Police, the City's Access Team and English Heritage. All stakeholder consultations were positive about the proposals.</p>
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In September 2010 a public consultation leaflet was sent to all residents in the Barbican Estate, as well as key stakeholders. Three drop in sessions were held at the Barbican Estate Office where residents asked questions and provided feedback to officers in person on the proposals.

131 responses were received from residents and stakeholders about the designs. Feedback was positive for proposals to enhance wildlife and greenery, improve the quality of seating and lighting, to restore existing tiles and introduce measures to mitigate skateboard use on the Highwalks.

In June 2011, approval for the implementation of the Barbican Highwalks project was granted by the Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee. All residents were notified prior to this Committee that the report was being considered, and informed post-Committee of the decision to carry out the installation of seating and planting.

The improvements approved by Committee included the introduction of the new timber seating and planters (as now installed) on St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk to replace the existing degraded ones. The new benches are more accessible than those previously on site as some have arm rests and some without, which allows for wheelchair users to access the seating. The inclusion of arm rests also prevents damage by skateboarders, and discourages this activity. Small table/stools separate each seat on Ben Jonson Highwalk and provide additional flexible seating. The style of seating was developed by designers and architects Studio Weave, and has remained the same throughout early discussions and consultations. The seating was developed in line with a brief to have regard to mid 20th century design, and be sensitive to the listed status of the Barbican Estate.

Residents and stakeholders requested that the existing lighting on both Ben Jonson Highwalk and St. Giles Terrace be enhanced, whilst respecting the existing design. The plastic Victorian-style fittings on St. Giles Terrace were repaired where necessary and replaced with high quality lanterns. The original fittings inside the globe lighting on Ben Jonson Highwalk were replaced by fittings that direct lighting down towards the footpath, rather than up into residential flats.

Following Committee approval in June 2011, detailed design of the furniture and appointment of manufacturing companies was progressed. The manufacturing process for the seats required the manufacturer to produce expensive individual jigs, which could only be justified for a full production run. Unfortunately, this meant that it was not possible to produce a pre-production prototype of the seats as was originally expected.

In January 2013 installation of the seating and planters began on St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk in accordance with the approved layout plan as shown at Appendices A and B.

	<p>The seating/tables on Ben Jonson were installed as approved with a mixture of seats with arm/backrests and those without, interspersed with tables that can be utilised as seating.</p> <p>The seating on St Giles Terrace was also installed as approved, however the planters were initially installed with temporary timber tops. These tops were intended to ensure that the planters did not become repositories for rubbish while they were waiting for planting to be installed. There was concern from the Gilbert House Residents Group that this was actually additional seating, which would result in people sitting too close to Gilbert House and making noise. No complaints have been received about his happening.</p> <p>Following agreement with the Barbican Estate Office and the Open Spaces Department on the detailed planting design and maintenance of the planting, a verbal update was given to Streets &amp; Walkways Sub-Committee on the 11th February 2013 seeking approval to proceed with the planting. At this point the additional temporary timber tops were removed from the planters and the planting installed.</p> <p>The seating installation was completed on the 04th February 2013 and the planting was completed on the 29th March 2013. The scheme as currently installed is fully compliant with the design and layout as approved by Streets and Walkways Committee in June 2011.</p>
<p><b>2. Success Criteria</b></p>	<p>- Improved appearance/amenity of the City Walkway at St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk.</p>
<p><b>3. Project Scope and Exclusions</b></p>	<p>- Works outside of the City Walkway areas on St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk are excluded from this project.</p>
<p><b>4. Link to Strategic Aims</b></p>	<p>The project would have helped to deliver the City's Strategic Aims:</p> <p>- <i>To provide modern, efficient and high quality local services within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors with a view to delivering sustainable outcomes, through the provision of an improved public realm which would provide safer, more enjoyable and accessible public spaces in the Barbican Estate.</i></p>
<p><b>5. Within which category does the project fit</b></p>	<p>Asset enhancement/improvement (capital).</p>
<p><b>6. What is the priority of the project?</b></p>	<p>Advisable.</p>
<p><b>7. Governance arrangements</b></p>	<p>A project board was not recommended given the scale of the project. The project was governed via Project Team Meetings with the design consultant, furniture manufacturer, City Officers and the Senior Responsible Officer.</p>

<b>8. Resources Expended To Date</b>	£205,452.00
<b>9. Last Gateway Approval</b>	Evaluation and Implementation approval was given by Street & Walkways Sub-Committee in June 2011, prior to the current Gateway project approval procedure.

### Issue

<b>10. Issue Description</b>	<p>Following installation of the seating and planters in early 2013, a number of residents, initially from Gilbert House (which overlooks St Giles Terrace), voiced strong concerns over the implementation of the project and sought to have the furniture removed. Officers met with concerned parties and advised that the City would review the project and utilise an Estate wide post-implementation consultation process to gather comments on the scheme and report back to Members. It was advised that if the majority of respondents did not like the furniture and planting, then the recommendation would be to remove them and use them elsewhere in the City, replacing them with municipal type benches to match those previously in situ.</p> <p>In addition to the resident objections and despite the furniture being well utilised during the summer months as evident in the photographs in Appendix C, it has become apparent over the latter months of 2013 that the furniture has been subject to repeated misuse, leading to damage (see Appendix D). Groups of people, presumably non-residents of the Barbican, have been doing "Parkour" (urban running) on the furniture and using the seating and planters as obstacles to jump on, along and across. This activity has recently been identified as an issue across the Estate.</p>
<b>11. Last Approved Limit</b>	Members approved the implementation of enhancements to St. Giles Terrace & Ben Jonson Highwalk to a total of £250,880.
<b>12. Tolerance Granted</b>	N/A
<b>13. Cause</b>	<p>Discontent of some residents with the implementation of the seating and planting has arisen with the following key objections raised to the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listed Building Consent was not obtained for the furniture;</li> <li>• On-going resident consultation and updating was flawed;</li> <li>• The money for the project should have been spent on repair and maintenance of the Barbican Estate rather than on new furniture;</li> <li>• The original benches were better as they were chosen by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon;</li> <li>• The orientation and design of the seating;</li> <li>• Seating is too high on Ben Jonson Highwalk because it is</li> </ul>

	<p>on the vents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are more seats than originally on site;</li> <li>• Timber too bright and looks out of place.</li> </ul> <p>The furniture was designed having regard to mid-20th century design with the seating/tables utilising metal tubing and the planters utilising metal sheeting. The furniture is fit for purpose as outdoor seating/tables and planters but will not tolerate the level of misuse that is occurring on the Estate due to the Parkour activities. The armrests manufactured on the planters to prevent rough sleeping and skateboarding are being jumped on and it would appear people may be jumping from armrest to armrest. The seating, whilst not being directly damaged is being used to vault over and jump on, evident by the numerous footprints on the timber elements.</p>
<p><b>14. Consequences</b></p>	<p>Following the installation of the seating/planters, representatives of the Gilbert House Residents Group contacted officers, as they were unhappy with the scheme and raised objection to several issues including layout, design, the number of seats and the consultation process.</p> <p>As a result of the resident discontent with the implementation of the seating and planting, the Transportation and Public Realm Director met with representatives of the Barbican Association and the Gilbert House Residents Group to discuss their concerns in detail and advised that the City would review the project once the installation was complete, as is standard procedure with all public realm projects and report back to members. If the decision was taken by Members following this review that the furniture should not be retained then it would be removed and used elsewhere in the City, with benches similar to those previously in place being provided.</p> <p>This Estate wide consultation process was undertaken from 24<sup>th</sup> June to the 12<sup>th</sup> July, with responses accepted up to the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013.</p> <p>The consultation took the form of a survey of both residents and users of the spaces concerned. A questionnaire was delivered to all residents and key occupiers in the Barbican Estate with a paid return envelope, which could also be submitted at the Barbican Estate Office (BEO) or scanned and emailed to the Barbican Seating Review email address. The results and analysis of the resident surveys are included in Appendix E.</p> <p>User surveys were conducted at St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk by the Living Streets organisation on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013. The results and analysis of the user surveys are included in Appendix F.</p> <p>Over 600 submissions were received in total from both consultation methods.</p> <p>The City has utilised the Living Streets organisation to</p>

independently collate and evaluate the consultation results to ensure neutrality in the process

The user responses indicated that some 75% liked the new seating on both St Giles Terrace and Ben Johnson Highwalk. Conversely responding residents largely disliked the scheme, 69% at St Giles Terrace and 65% at Ben Johnson Highwalk.

Of those that responded to the user survey at St Giles Terrace, it was noted that the clear majority of people liked the greenery and planting as well as the number of seats. People surveyed seemed to think that more chairs had been provided or at least that the number of chairs in place was sufficient. Some people liked the seating arrangement as it can offer privacy and allow people to sit on their own should they wish.

80% of the users surveyed at St Giles Terrace worked at the Barbican, 5% were visitors, 4% residents and 11% Other.

82% of the users surveyed were using the furniture to eat their lunch and 8% for recreation.

As shown above the majority of people using the seating and planting improvements liked them with low numbers either disliking or not passing comment

Of those that responded to the resident questionnaire on St Giles Terrace, it was noted that the majority did not like the type/design of the seating and that they considered the seating not appropriate for the setting, although just over a quarter did like the seating/planting and appearance of the scheme.

Just over two thirds of respondents were specifically not happy with the type and design of seating, and close to a quarter of people dislike the type and design of planting. A further quarter of the residents surveyed feel that the seating should be reoriented to face the lake.

Clearly, the respondents felt there were a number of particular issues within the design or style of the seating, including the choice of materials, colour and perceived quality.

The majority of the negative comments raised are on design, appearance, perceived quality etc. No concerns were expressed about attracting anti-social behaviour such as street drinking or rough sleeping, even though there has been excellent mild summer conditions encouraging more outdoor activity.

Of the key objections raised in relation to the project, please see the following responses:

- Listed Building Consent was not obtained for the furniture.
  - When the project was initially considered and approved by Committee in 2011, Listed Building Consent was not considered necessary. Given the furniture is now fixed to the City Walkway, and acting with an abundance of

caution, the elements attached to the fabric of the structure would be submitted for Listed Building Consent, if the scheme was to be retained.

- On-going resident consultation and updating was flawed.
  - Quarterly project updates were issued by the project officers to the Barbican Estate Office advising of the project progress which were to be circulated to residents. It has become apparent during the post-implementation consultation process that these updates were not being as widely circulated to residents as had been expected. To avoid any repeat of this problem a new consultation protocol for the Barbican is currently being consulted upon.

- Money should have been spent on repair and maintenance of the Barbican rather than on new furniture.

The funding for the Barbican Highwalks improvement project came from the On-Street Parking Reserve and, as such (at that time), was limited in use to improvements of the City Walkway and could not be used for general Estate repair or maintenance.

- The original benches were better as they were chosen by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon.

The existing benches that were removed from both Ben Jonson Highwalk and St Giles Terrace were a mixture of municipal park bench type design, were in very poor condition and were not chosen by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon. Further the benches on Ben Jonson Highwalk did not comply with the City's Access requirements for public seating.

- Seating too high on Ben Jonson Highwalk because it is on the vents.

The seating on Ben Jonson Highwalk complies with guidelines on standard recommended seating heights being between 450mm-550mm. The previous seating was also of this height however extended further and curved toward the ground, thus appearing to be lower than new furniture.

The seating on Ben Jonson Highwalk is located on the vents because it replicates the layout of the previous seating and prevents the vent covers to Beech Street below from being lifted up and presenting a safety issue.

- There are more seats than originally on site.

The seating in both locations replicates the number of seating positions as previously available with the old style benches. On Ben Jonson Highwalk seating/table layout is exactly as the previous bench layout, whilst on

	<p>St Giles Terrace there are 21 seats which is the same as previously available. There are no seats closer to the nearest residential block (Gilbert House) than with the old furniture.</p> <p>As discussed above, the planters on St Giles Terrace were originally delivered to site with timber tops allowing the planters to be used as seats until funding for maintaining the planting was identified. This caused resident's concern because the number of seats available appeared to be more than what they were consulted on originally and that this would encourage more people to use the area, thus increasing noise. The funding was secured from the Barbican Estate Office and the timber tops were replaced with planting by the end of March 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timber too bright and looks out of place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When first installed the timber was originally quite a bright yellow/orange colour, as it had been freshly machined to form the new furniture, but through oxidation and natural weathering this has already dulled down to a muted grey colour. Furthermore the timber has also weathered down considerably, losing its yellow/orange hue entirely and will continue to grey down as planned</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The consequence of the misuse of the furniture is that structural damage is occurring. The armrests of the planters are being jumped on and many are bent/broken, which is unsightly and compromises the integrity of the metal.</p> <p>The seating, whilst not being directly damaged as with the planters is being used to vault over and many are breaking away from their fixings, with one seat having to be removed from Ben Jonson Highwalk whilst tiling repairs were undertaken to allow the seat to re-fixed.</p> <p>Damage to the seating and planters will therefore lead to ongoing costs to the City as the furniture will require removal and repair.</p>
<p><b>15. Options</b></p>	<p>The options available include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relocate the seating and planters to more appropriate locations within the City and replace with timber benches as previously on St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk.</li> </ul> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Retain the seating as approved by Committee in 2011 and currently installed and carryout ongoing repair to the damage caused by misuse and which is unliked by many residents.</li> </ul>



<p><b>16. Conclusion</b></p>	<p>Both St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk are designated City Walkway and as such available for use by all of the City community. There were mixed results to the post-implementation consultation with the majority of users supporting the furniture whilst the majority of residents opposed to the furniture.</p> <p>However given the ongoing use of the Estate by groups doing urban running and limited ability to stop/control it, it is considered best to relocate the furniture to more suitable locations in the City which have better passive surveillance and CCTV coverage</p>
<p><b>17. Recommendation</b></p>	<p>Relocate the seating and planters from St Giles Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk to more appropriate locations within the City for use by the City community, reinstating seating similar to that present before the improvement project.</p>
<p><b>18. Lessons</b></p>	<p>Misuse of external furniture is an issue on the Barbican Estate and the prevalence of Parkour needs to be a consideration for future design of external furniture, particularly on the Barbican Estate.</p> <p>Consultation arrangements with Barbican Residents should be reviewed, and this is in hand.</p>

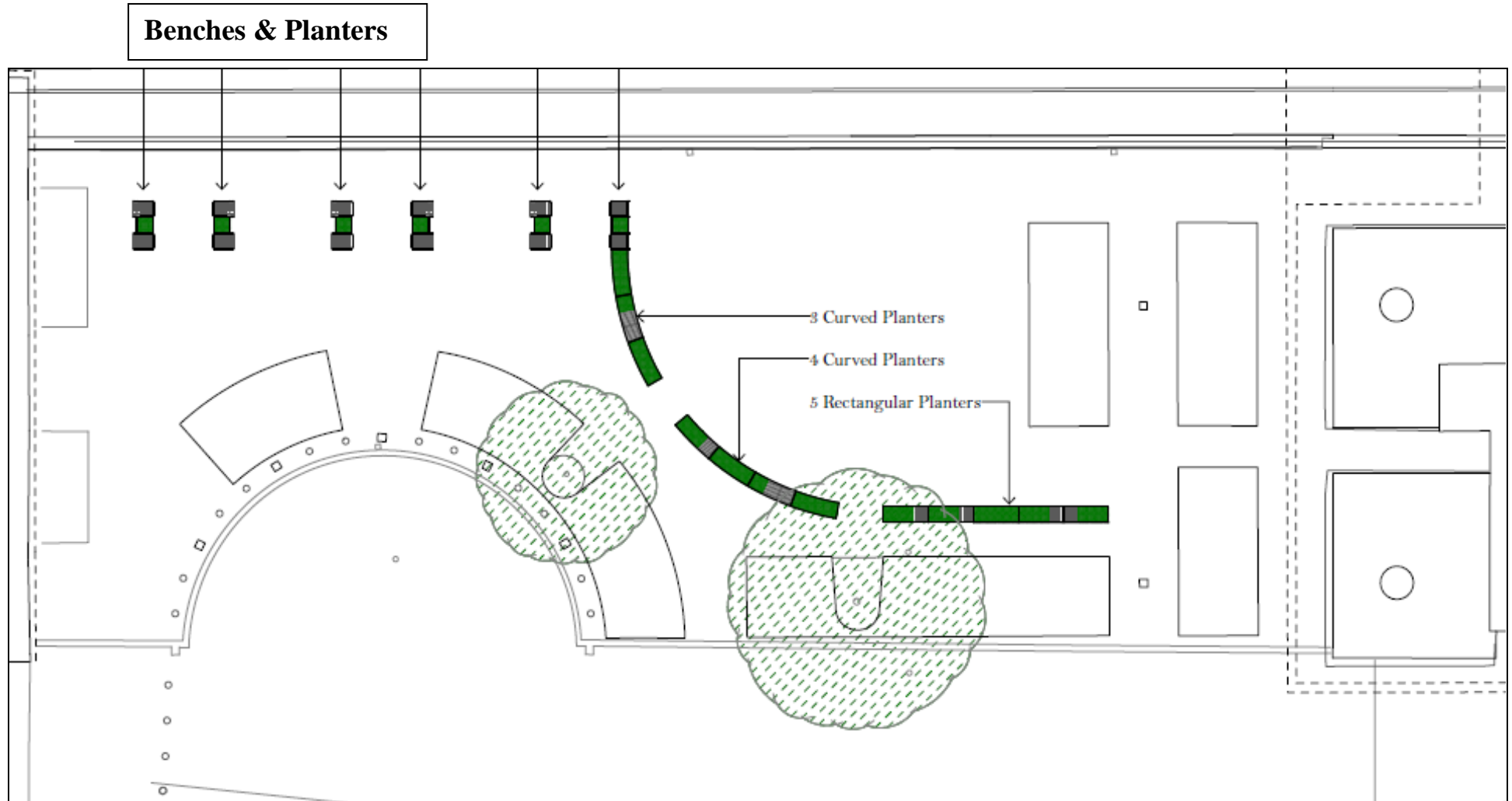
### Appendices

<p><b>Appendix A</b></p>	<p>St Giles Terrace Approved Layout</p>
<p><b>Appendix B</b></p>	<p>Ben Jonson Highwalk Approved Layout</p>
<p><b>Appendix C</b></p>	<p>Seating Usage</p>
<p><b>Appendix D</b></p>	<p>Planter Damage</p>
<p><b>Appendix E</b></p>	<p>Resident Consultation Survey Report</p>
<p><b>Appendix F</b></p>	<p>User Consultation Survey Report</p>

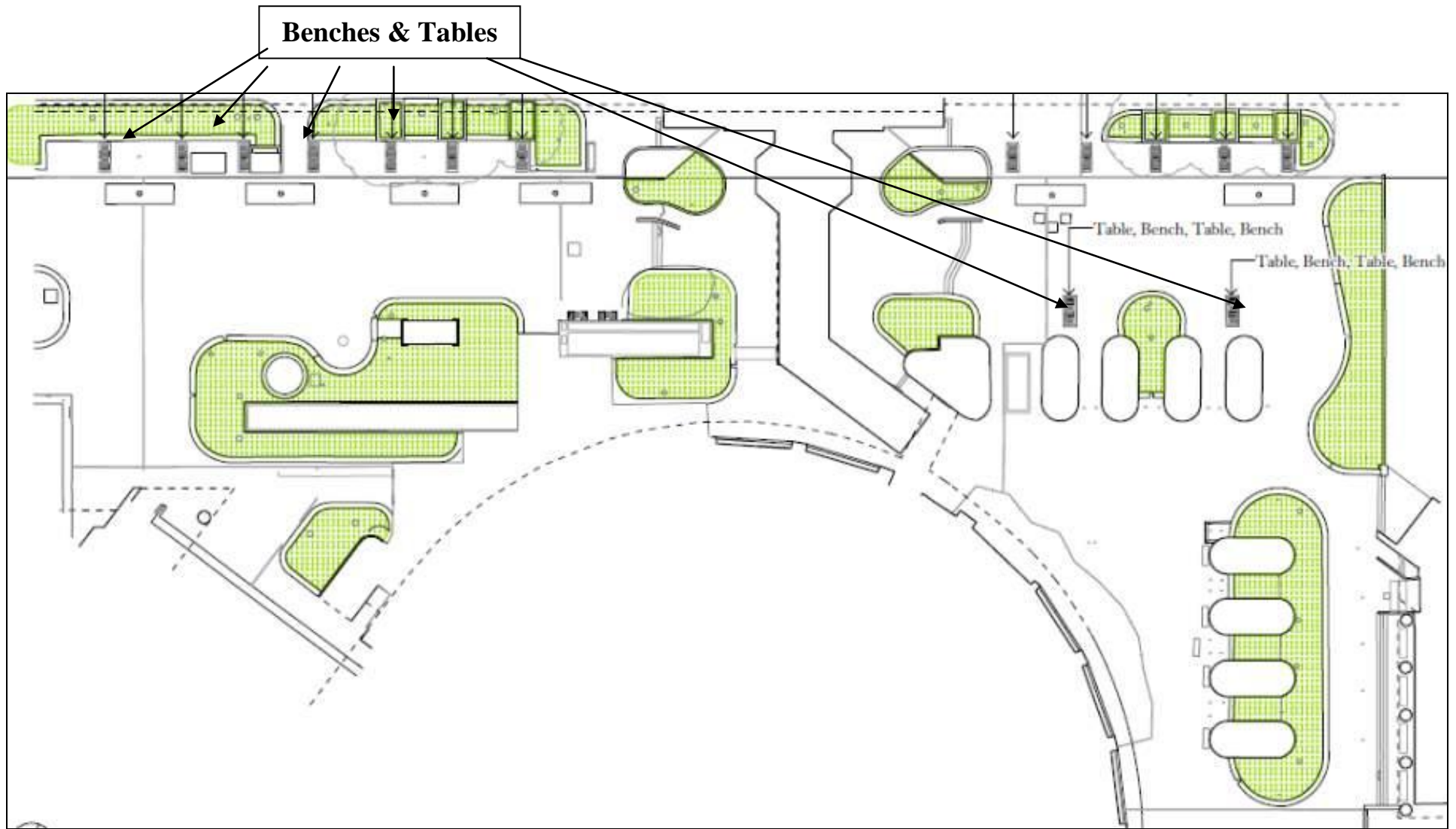
### Contact

<p><b>Report Author</b></p>	<p>Trent Burke</p>
<p><b>Email Address</b></p>	<p><a href="mailto:Trent.burke@cityoflondon.gov.uk">Trent.burke@cityoflondon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Telephone Number</b></p>	<p>020 7332 3986</p>

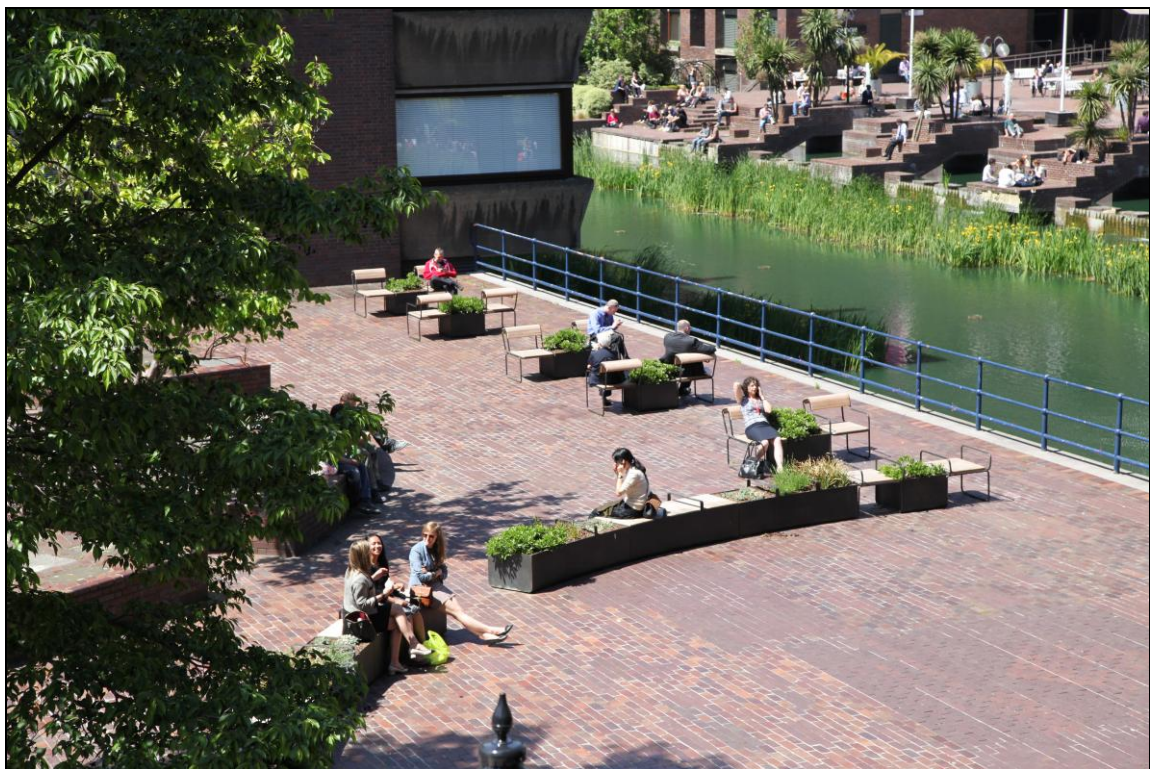
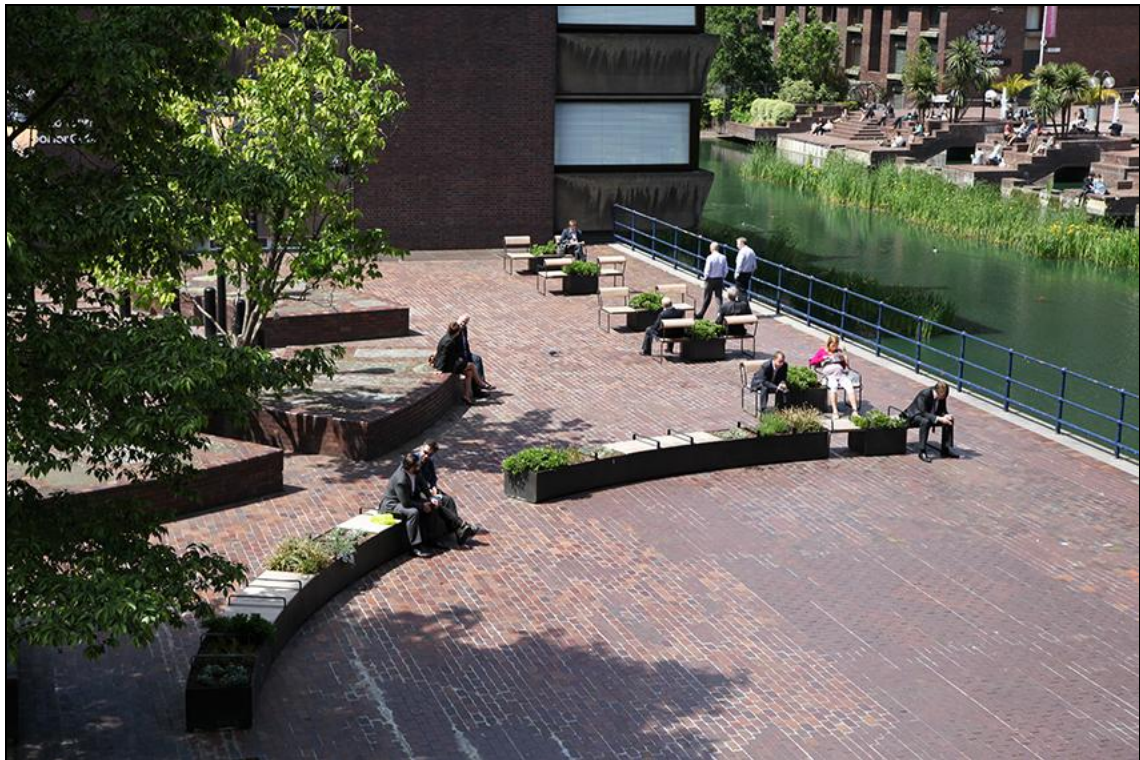
**Appendix A - St Giles Terrace Approved Layout**



**Appendix B – Ben Jonson Highwalk Approved Layout**



**Appendix C – Seating Usage**





Appendix D – Planter Damage



**Appendix E – Resident Consultation Survey Report**

See attached Barbican public realm improvements - Resident Survey – September 2013

**Appendix F – User Consultation Survey Report**

See attached Barbican public realm improvements – Opinion Survey – July/August 2013