

Arnold Circus: Winning support from local residents

The Boundary Gardens Estate in London's East End is a unique experiment in late 19th century social housing design and the first publicly funded housing estate in Britain. Arnold Circus is its centrepiece.

Built in the late 1890s, the tiered central gardens and bandstand were designed to promote social cohesion, health and wellbeing and to act as a unifying focus. During the last few decades, however, the gardens had declined, becoming a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

LDA Design worked closely with the community to breathe new life into the space. A vibrant new planting scheme brings colour, seasonal interest and improves biodiversity. The bandstand, formerly on the English Heritage 'At Risk Register', has been carefully restored. Modifications were made to historic railings to incorporate new seating. A rainwater harvesting system provides irrigation for the plants, improving sustainability and reducing maintenance costs.

Local residents now delight in what was an unloved and degraded space, using it for a diverse range of events. The award-winning scheme demonstrates how local groups can successfully lobby for improvements and influence a space's design and management.



Client
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Location
Shoreditch, London

Partners
AECOM, T Loughman

Services Used
Landscape Architecture

Area
0.5 ha

¹ Arnold Circus open day © Richard Kearns

² A still from a time-lapse film of the construction

³ View of bandstand and herbaceous planting © Richard Kearns



1, 2, 3 Historic images:
© London Metropolitan Archives,
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4 View of restored steps and
bandstand © Richard Kearns