

10+2

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Intelligent Environments

2010 represents an important year in Planit's history and development. We are 12 years old and on January the 4th moved into our new design studio in South Manchester.

We thought it would be fitting to mark these two occasions by producing a short 'story so far' - and here it is.

We have called it 10+2 for a number of reasons:

Firstly we originally thought of the idea in 2008 to mark our tenth year, but we didn't get round to it!

Secondly, it showcases 12 projects which best tell the story of our development, our approach to design, and the people and places we have met and discovered along the way.

As landscape architects and urban designers, we are dedicated to the creation of 'place', often from the apparent start point of 'space' and not a great deal else. However, our work has taught us that look below the surface anywhere and you will find much more than simply space – there will always be a community, a narrative, an asset.

Through these 12 projects, we hope to show you how our approach has created places of quality and grain, landscapes that will last and bring joy, and importantly, relationships that have brought fun and prosperity.

Deansgate Locks

Like many new Landscape practices, our first year was very much about taking anything that paid the bills but this monograph begins in our second year with a project that represents our first urban intervention – the transformation of Deansgate Locks. Fitting also that the project was our first with what would eventually become ASK Developments – but more of that later.

Our contribution amounts to an expanse of decking, nine Corten bollards, eight trees, six benches and many enjoyable hours plotting the scheme with Simon Bate, Nick Payne and Andy Dodd from the balcony of Lock Keepers Cottage!

The relationships forged here were to become the key foundation stones on which we have built our company – working with Andy, Simon and Ken Knott on ground-breaking regeneration projects across the region, and with Nick Payne and Nikal on the transformation of Birmingham's Masshouse circus.

Our first contribution to the regeneration of Manchester may have been small, but it has stood the test of time and we think, remains the benchmark for how creative reuse of historic buildings and structures can help transform the image of a City.

Deansgate Locks also marked the birth of our sister company, Virtual Planit, whose digital animations were projected under the cathedral-like arches to a background of heavy house music on a memorable development launch night.





Great projects can often come from the most unlikely of places and from communities that are fractured, forgotten and present you with the greatest challenges. Langley is one of those places.

Langley is a 1950s housing estate, to the north of Manchester. With its Radburn layout and overprovision of green space it has degenerated into a less-than-desirable place to live, work and bring up families – despite being on the edge of the Peak District.

The challenges are common but one of Langley's saving graces has come from its biggest liability – its green space, which was under funded, un-managed and unloved. The advent of Housing Market Renewal funding changed everything. Our first challenge was, therefore, to find a way of showing the Audit Commission, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and local residents how spending on green space could lift values and aspirations.

We have produced a blueprint for the future and discovered a significant area of prime development land! Our Green Space Strategy informs the regeneration plans and delivery programme for restructuring the Langley Estate.

A fundamental component of the strategy was a link to the adjacent country park, so we set about designing Furrow's Park – a new public park, more urban than rural, more continental than countryside. With our stakeholders, we decided that in order to change perceptions of Langley for good, a major step-change was required – out with the concrete blocks and catalogue seats, in with the granite plinths, mature trees and bold public art. Four years on it looks as good as the day it was handed over.

Projects like this require dogged determination and staying power on all sides, and given that we are still working away with the community and Steve Bloomer and his team at the Council, the transformation is set to continue...



Transforming Langley







Leopold Square

Nowhere have the benefits of investing in the public realm been more clearly demonstrated than in Sheffield, and when ASK gave us the opportunity to work on their Leopold Square project we jumped at it.

ASK commissioned Planit and Broadbent Artworks in 2002 to prepare design proposals, initially for the public realm around the buildings at the former Leopold Institute. However, through collaborative design with architects Axis and Leach Rhodes Walker, a careful manipulation of levels opened up the opportunity to create a new public square in the heart of the site - and Sheffield.

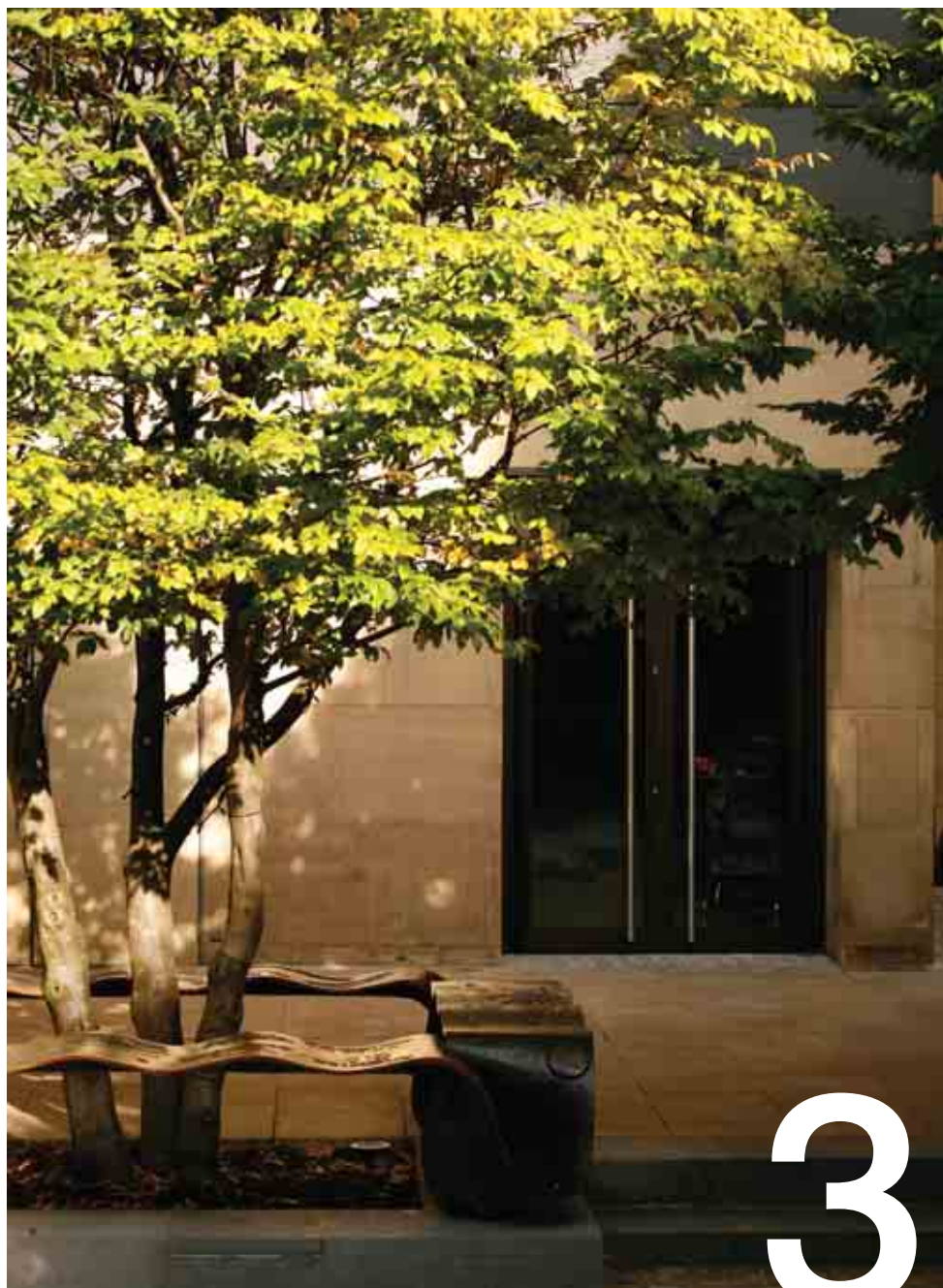
The design utilised the former playgrounds between the Victorian School buildings and used a mix of natural stone surfaces and lush planting, focused around a central 'water wall'.

This project also represents perhaps our most successful collaboration to date with Stephen Broadbent. A sensitive genius when it comes to creating art in the public realm, he captured the thoughts of former pupils, some in their 80s, and inscribed them on a pair of beautiful bronze benches.

Leopold Square has become a 'green oasis' within the context of a predominantly hard City Centre, a refuge for city dwellers and workers to escape from the cut and thrust of urban life. It is also impeccably managed by the tenants that surround it – another important component for the success of any public space.

Our relationship with Sheffield has grown steadily since then, and in early 2009 Planit were selected to join the City's Consultant Framework and late last year two of our Directors were invited to sit on what is the country's first Sustainability and Design Review Panel.





Residences

As a rule of thumb, we tell people we don't do private houses... But when we do they tend to be something special and unite us with inspiring (yet demanding) clients and visionary architects.

We have designed many one-off houses and Country Estates over the last ten years. Most are in sensitive landscape locations (Green Belt, Conservation Areas etc.), and range from pure restoration projects to overtly contemporary. We were part of the Ushida Findlay-led RIBA Award winning team for Grafton New Hall in Cheshire – the seminal PPS7 Country House.

What links them all together is our desire to create beautiful landscapes, matching, if not exceeding the quality of the buildings they surround, with an attention to detail that sees its way through from picking up the first pencil to clipping the last hedge.

Gardens are intensely personal things, and we have worked with all of our clients to create landscapes that meet their individual needs, and which they are prepared to tend and care for over the years to come.

Importantly, we understand the need to act with the utmost discretion on projects of this nature, and we see our role not just as designers but as patrons of the project.







Of all the places we have ever worked, perhaps Stoke-on-Trent represents one of the most exciting challenges to date.

Planit's involvement in the regeneration of Stoke-on-Trent dates back to early 2004 when we were part of the winning team for the City Centre South developer competition with Countryside Properties and DK Architects.

In the same year we were commissioned alongside GVA Grimley to prepare the Area Regeneration Framework for the southern area of Stoke-on-Trent to inform the emerging Local Development Framework. This led to us preparing an Urban

Stoke



Design and Public Realm Framework for the University Quarter, which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance back in 2006.

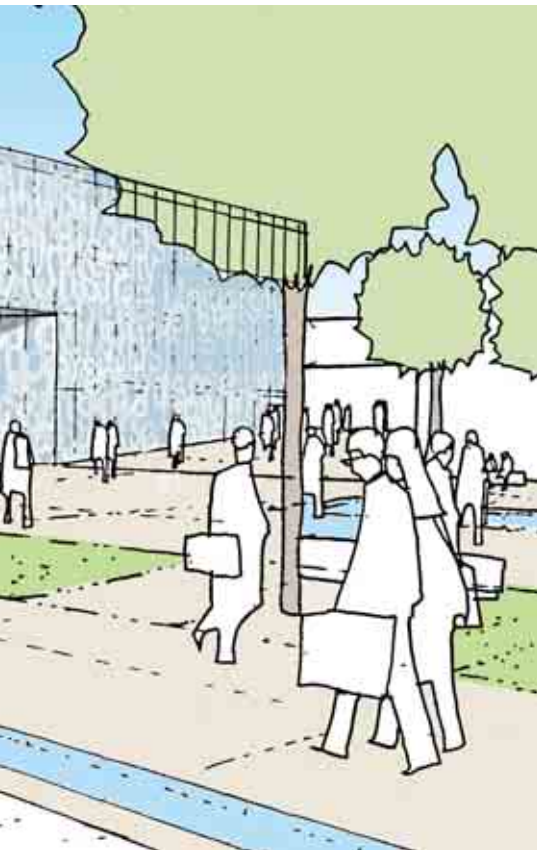
Since then we have continued to advise the University Quarter Partnership on urban design issues at CPO Inquiry to facilitate land assembly. Our involvement with Staffordshire University culminated in our appointment in early 2009 to work with Sheppard Robson Architects in the design and delivery of three new buildings within the emerging campus masterplan.

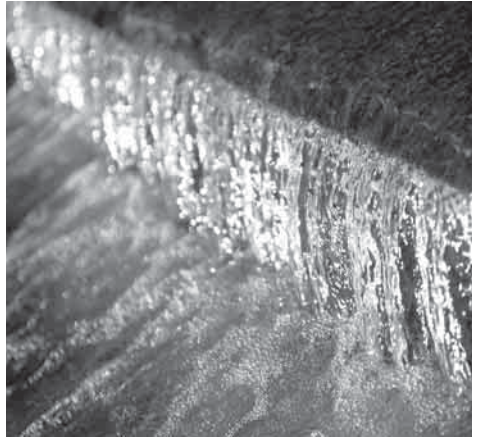
We have built a strong collaborative partnership with Sheppard Robson Architects with numerous

Academy projects we have secured through Kier Education, but this was the first time we had worked in the Higher Education sector.

Integral to our commission has been the preparation of a Public Realm Implementation Framework, to unite the campus and ensure new development is planned and integrated into what is a fine-grain urban setting.

But the story does not end here and we hope to have a big announcement in the near future as to our role in shaping the future of Stoke-on-Trent's City Centre...



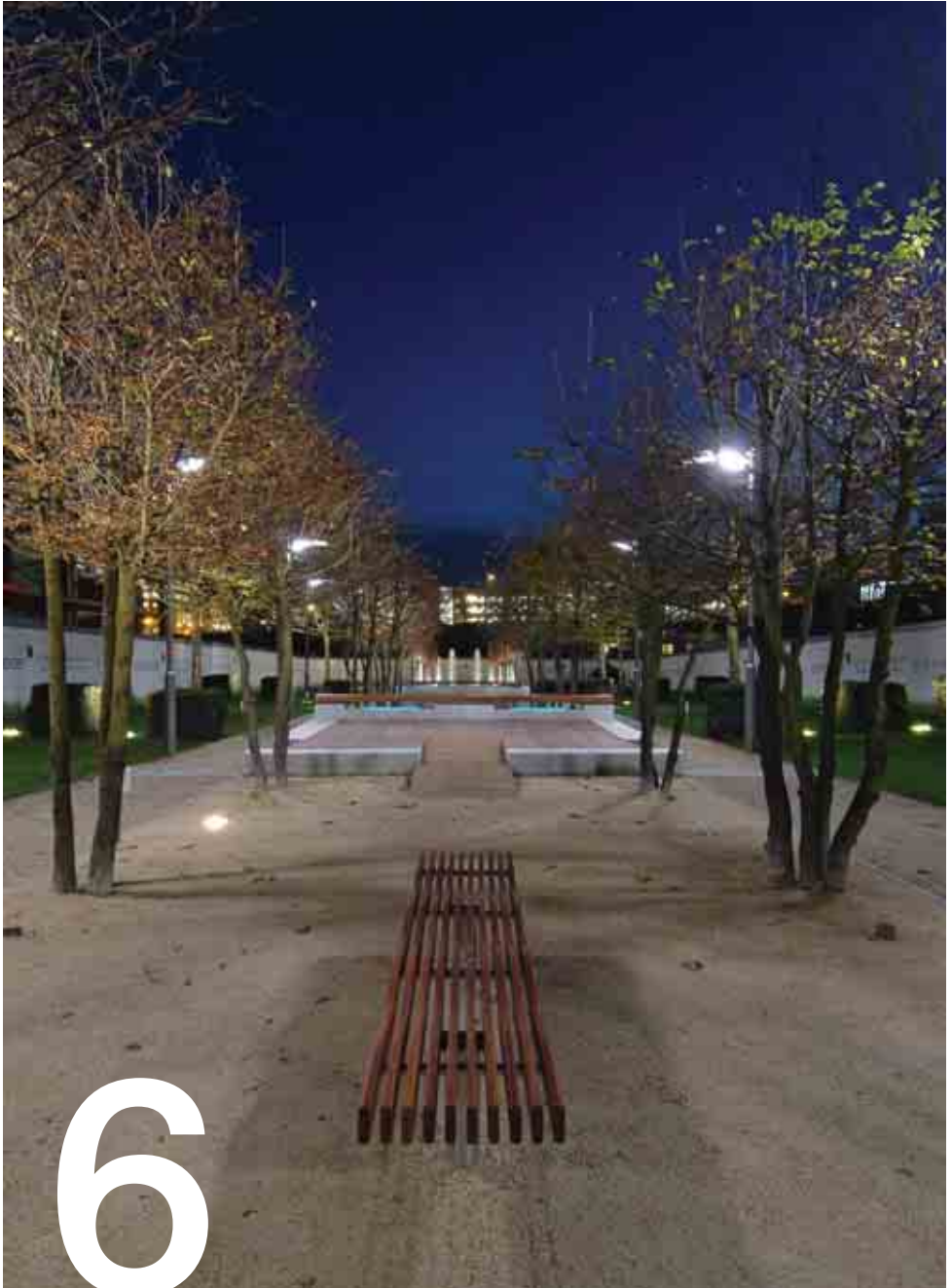


New Century Park & the Green Quarter

This mixed-use development represented Crosby Lend Lease's biggest investment in the City and Manchester's largest single residential project. We were approached by the then Crosby Homes to re-work their existing masterplan for the Green Quarter and convinced them from the outset that early investment in the public realm would provide a unique marketing advantage.

Awards for the heart of the development – New Century Park - were forthcoming very early on, and a celebration for the opening of this, the first privately financed public park for 100 years, was hosted by Sir Howard Bernstein.

New Century Park was the first of five phases incorporating dramatic water features, bespoke lighting and massive (instant impact) semi-mature trees, all within the budgetary constraints of a privately funded development project.



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During the development of any business, there are projects that come along which propel you to the next level and for Planit, Anfield has been that project. Having had no previous stadium experience, we have the faith of Turley Associates and AFL Architects to thank for giving us the chance to work on the 'Stadium in the Park' over two of the landscape profession's big hitters.

The new Stadium is to be located within the listed Stanley Park, adjacent to the current Anfield ground and is very much a landscape-led proposal.

Like many of our projects, once we had our seat at the table we were able to build relationships that would ultimately lead to this being much more than simply a stadium with some car parking!



Liverpool Football Club & Stanley Park







Following on from our work around the stadium, Planit were appointed by Liverpool City Council to lead the physical park restoration works - a £12 million scheme funded by ERDF, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and NWDA.

Every inch of the park has been touched by the restoration works from 'big impact' components of constructing a third lake, and the rebuilding of the Isla Gladstone Conservatory, to small insertions and additions.

In early 2007, just as works were about to begin on site, LFC was purchased by American sports billionaires Tom Hicks and George Gillette. They appointed Dallas based HKS Architects, designers of amongst other things the new \$1 billion dollar Dallas Cowboys Stadium.

We were fortunate enough to be retained and appointed to work with HKS, Davis Langdon and Whitby Bird engineers on the new Stadium design – based around the defining feature of Liverpool FC – the Kop. Many trips across the Atlantic and close working with the City Council saw the second and third planning approvals granted in quick succession.

We all know what happened next - suffice to say that there are currently some wide, sweeping paths that lead to nowhere! But football allegiances aside we hope that one day we are able to finish what we helped start.







Blackpool

The past four years have seen many fruitful and rewarding collaborations with Gerry Hughes and his team at GVA Grimley. We have worked together across the North and Midlands, completing major Regeneration Frameworks in Nottingham, Stoke and Kirklees, learning a great deal about the mechanics of regeneration and in return teaching GVA a little about how we practise sustainable masterplanning. Of all our collaborations, perhaps the ones that have led to us bringing about major changes on the ground have been in Blackpool.

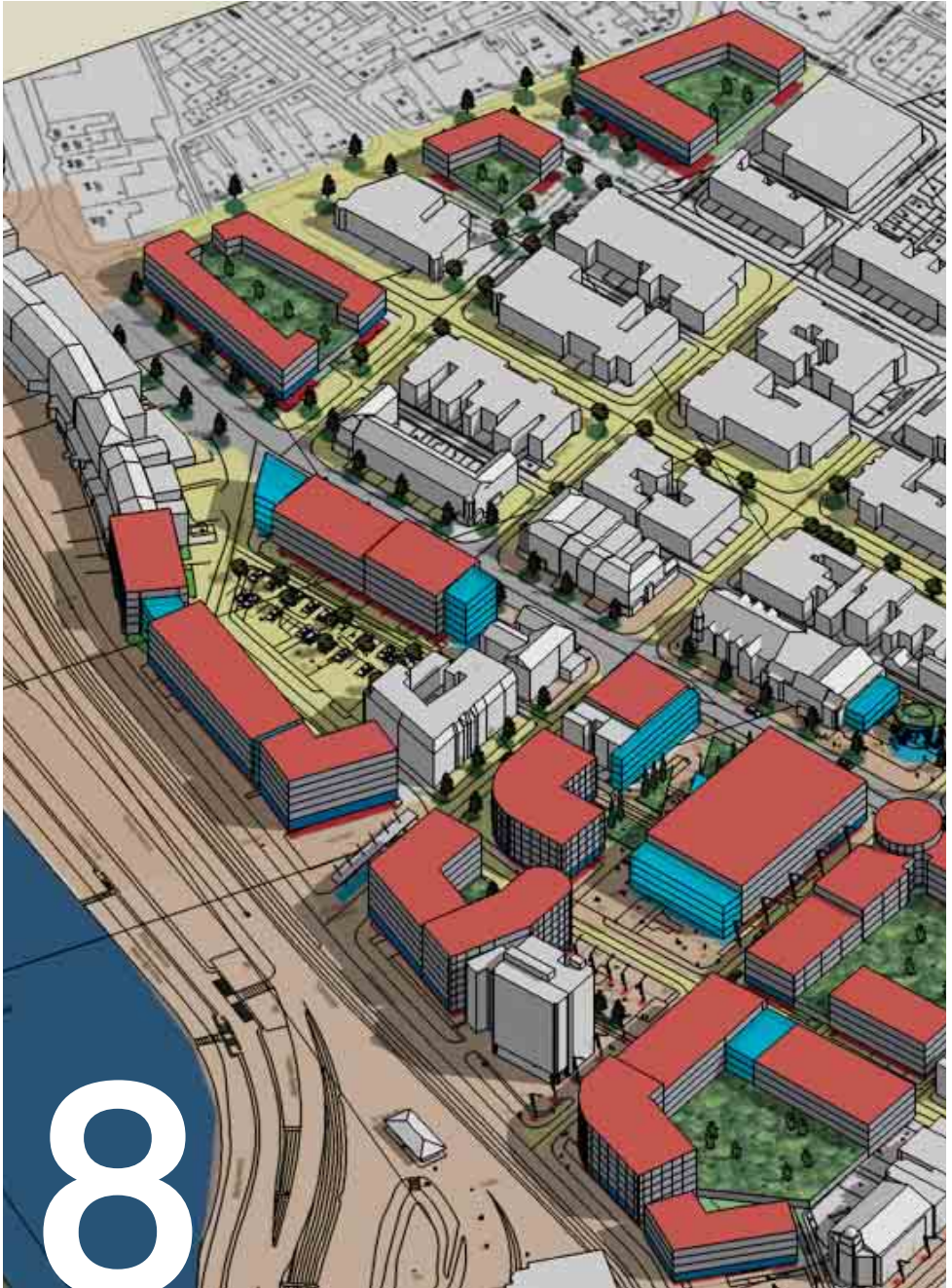
Having completed masterplans for the HCA in both the North and South Shore areas, we were chosen by Blackpool Council to prepare a 25-year Public Realm Vision and Implementation Framework for the town centre.

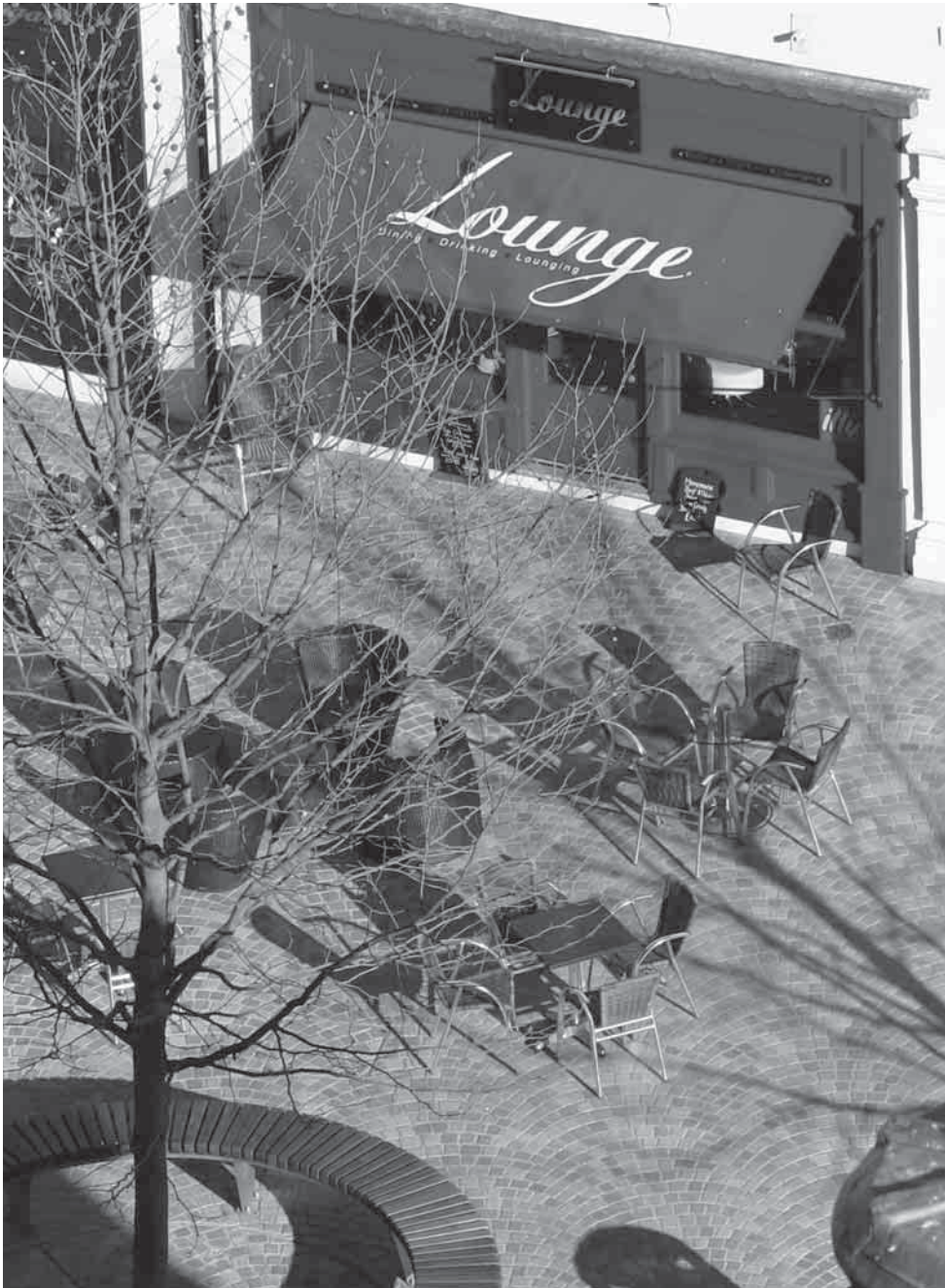
Despite Blackpool's historic reputation as one of Britain's primary seaside destinations, the town centre suffers from a poor reputation and a strong severance between locals using the town centre facilities, and visitors enjoying the seafront attractions.

Working alongside regular collaborators Broadbent, Hodder Associates, Waterman Boreham and Davis Langdon, we have worked with the Council and ReBlackpool to create a vision for the town centre's public realm that will enhance existing assets, and build upon a number of significant regeneration projects programmed to take place over the next five years.

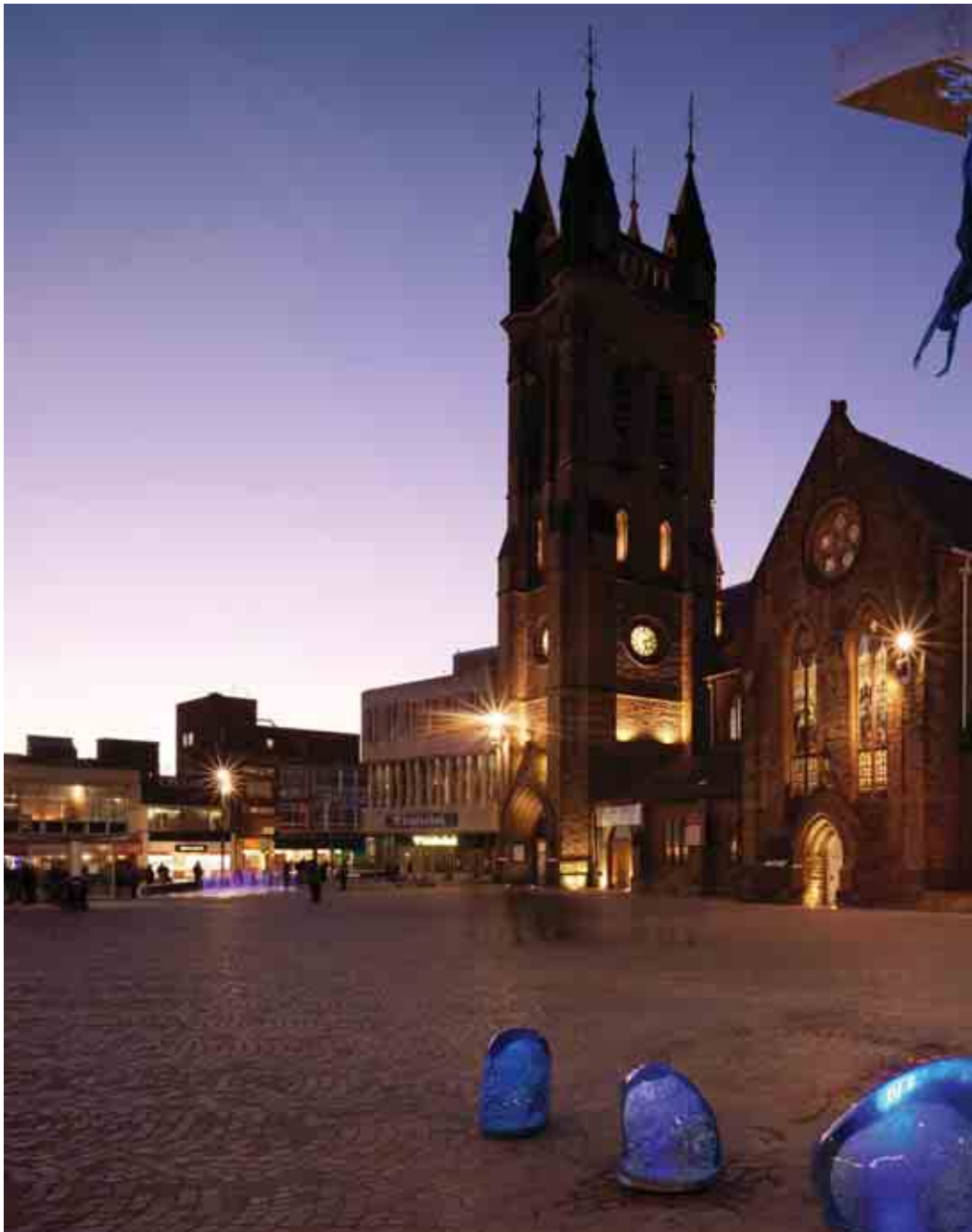
Since October 2008, we have worked alongside Blackpool Council and WSP Engineers to deliver a large part of this vision on the ground – starting with St. John's Square and Cedar Square, which are overlooked by the famous Winter Gardens.

The £5.7 million squares encompass the first true 'shared street' in Blackpool – allowing vehicles and pedestrians to mingle without definition between highway and pavement. Blackpool has embraced the change and the challenge, with vacant unit take-up, surrounding the square increasing by over 50% in six months.











Whilst we had already worked with ASK Developments on a number of projects, winning St. Petersfield would prove to be a mammoth task that required determination and staying power.

In 2004 Planit teamed up with Davis Langdon and Waterman Boreham to respond to an OJEU advertised competition run by ASK and Tameside BC, to select a consultant team to design and implement the public realm as part of the regeneration proposals for St. Petersfield, a new commercial quarter within Ashton Under Lyne. We had never responded to an OJEU Notice or led a design team, so we didn't rate our chances! However, over 12 months later, and having whittled the field down from 80 to two, we were selected.

St Petersfield occupies a key gateway position for Tameside, strategically located on the western edge of Ashton Town Centre. The site contained some important civic buildings, such as the Magistrates Court and a former listed Victorian Baths providing a series of spatial sequences. This historic pattern became our inspiration.

The concept was therefore to re-create a series of connecting high quality streets, walks and spaces that when taken in the context of the proposed buildings, become a destination and a reason for visiting Ashton in their own right.

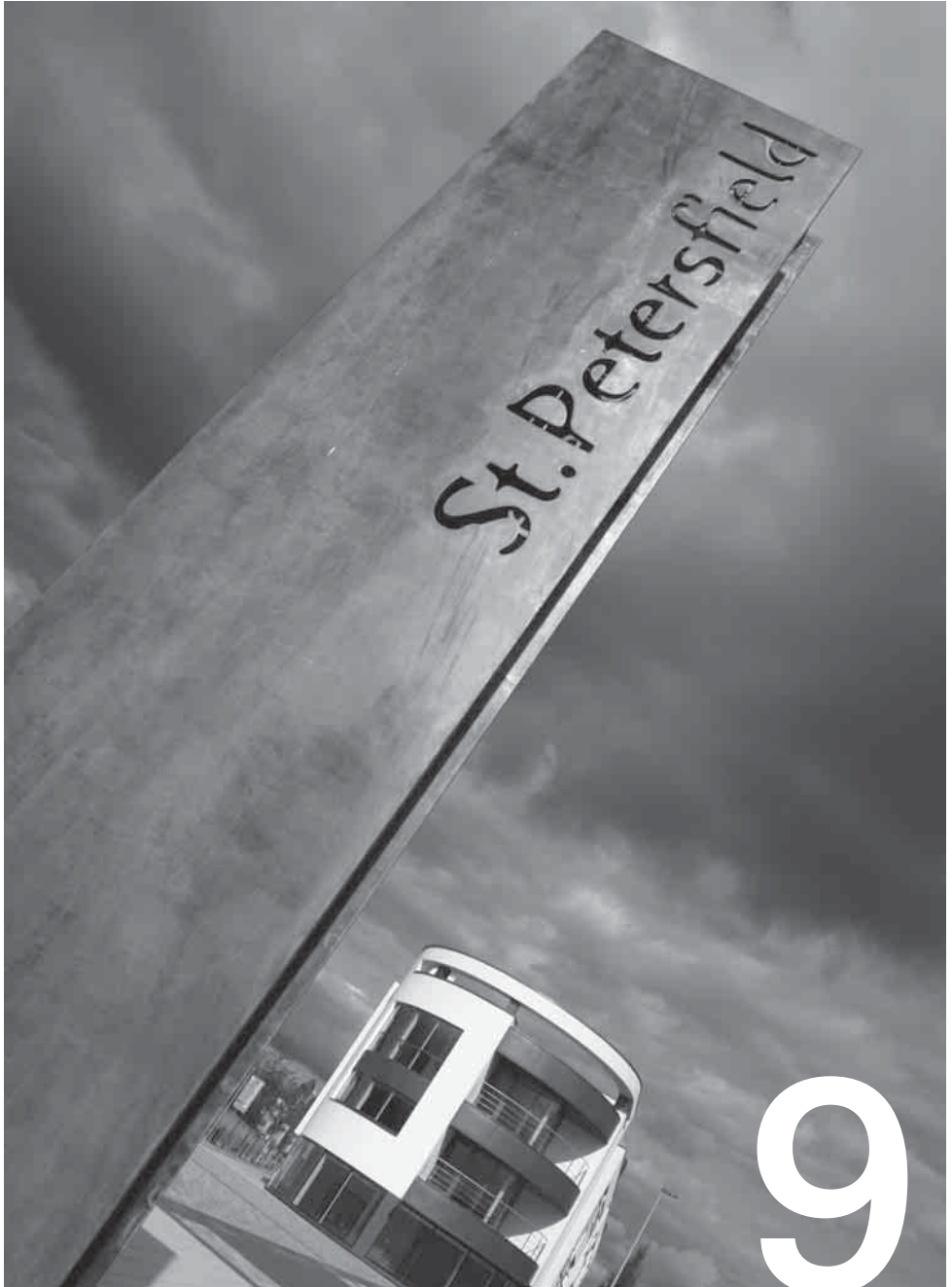
The public realm works within St Petersfield were delivered as one single phase (in advance of any buildings) funded by English Partnerships and

the North West Development Agency. Since its completion three key buildings, each by different Architects have been constructed within the development plots formed by the public realm framework.

Aside from learning how to work for a Public/ Private partnership, St Petersfield has taught us how to make a fixed budget stretch and still produce the desired quality across an entire project. It also cemented our relationship with ASK and reputation with Tameside Council, paving the way for two other major commissions in the borough – Longlands Mill for Urban Splash and the Building Schools for the Future framework with Carillion.



St. Petersfield







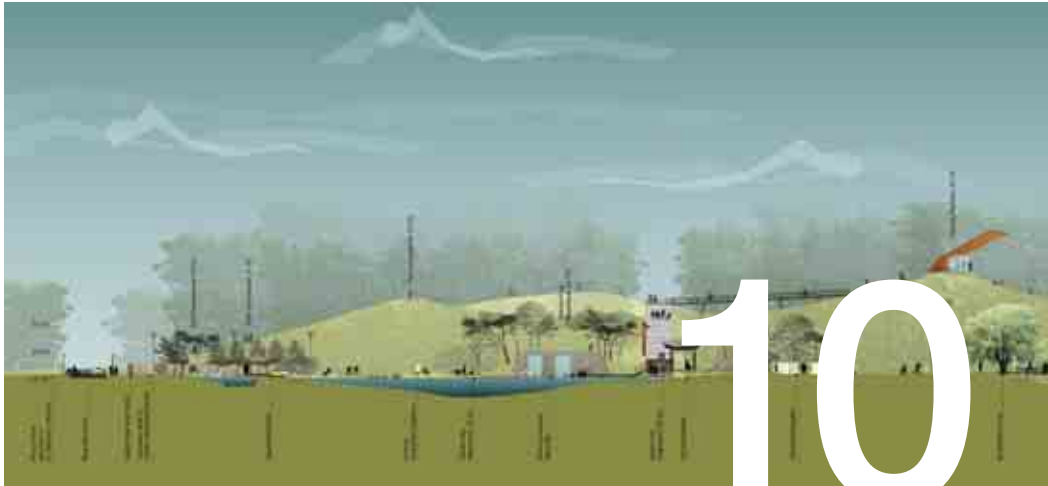
Festival Gardens

Every so often a project comes along that you would, if you could, work on for free, for the sheer joy of seeing the end product....

Our involvement with the former Liverpool International Garden Festival goes back to 2004 and over the following 12 months we managed to find our way from the previous site owner's team to the next, finally being appointed by Langtree to work up a masterplan with Carey Jones Architects for the 40 acre site. This would involve building a case for enabling development to fund the restoration of the park and returning it to the people of Liverpool – a lot to ask of a developer whose track record lay in industrial development. Suffice to say they have risen to the challenge!

The site has lain derelict for over 25 years, and our brief was for the creation of a new waterfront park for Liverpool – an integral component of the emerging vision of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park. Celebrating the relationship between the river and the city, the Waterfront Park repairs a fracture in the urban fabric and seeks to reunite the local community with the River Mersey, acting as a unique 'urban ecosystem' with the focus on its habitat and biodiversity credentials.

It has taken five years, unfaltering support from Langtree, 50 public meetings, a Public Inquiry and a close alliance with the Land Restoration Trust to secure a £3.7m grant from the North West Development Agency to finally capture the investment made by Mr Hestletine 25 years ago.









A telephone call from Capita Percy Thomas Architects back in 2004 has led to us being involved in over 40 educational projects throughout the country - and arguably helped us steer a course through the turbulent waters of the recent recession.

Pitching against two of our former employers, we were summoned to north London to explain to the Oasis Charitable Trust why we were best suited to work with them to deliver their ambitious programme of Academies. Much like our Anfield interview, when asked if we had any school's experience we had to answer with an honest "no"! However, something in our pitch must have pushed the right buttons, and four weeks later we were sitting in our first Design Team meeting!

Roll the clock forward two years and we were part of the winning bid team for the Nottingham Building Schools for the Future programme – again working with our friends at Capita Architecture.

Since then our list of clients and design collaborators has grown and grown, and with them the geographic spread and profile of the projects. All will be great challenges to our team. Though close to home, building the new Chetham's School of Music with Stephenson Bell and the St. Ambrose Academy with Sheppard Robson are two of many exciting projects for us over the coming years.

With Partnership for Schools' and CABE's intervention, the design of external learning spaces and the role of schools as community resources has begun to take equal billing with building design, so we are striving to break new ground with every project we embark upon.

Oasis Academies: Wintringham and Immingham



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2 Back Grafton Street

Like a teenage boy who has a crush on his best friend's sister who is two years older and clearly out of his reach, our attentions were taken by the design studios of Edward Cullinan Architects and Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios which inspired our appetite for success and became our shared vision for the future of Planit.

In November 2008, as the world slipped deeper into recession we tempted a local property owner to part with a neglected Victorian warehouse down a cobbled street in the emerging cultural quarter of Altrincham, and began our journey.

A big thankyou to Barclays bank, DK Architects, Deakin Walton and our contractors McGoff & Byrne who helped us to realise our vision. We moved into 2 Back Grafton Street on January 4th 2010.

Aside from saving a modest historic building from certain demolition, we now have a design studio that will allow our business to grow and flourish over the next 12 years - and beyond. Two minutes from the end of the tram line, with access by train to over 70% of our projects and some rather nifty bike racking, ours is a truly sustainable home on a number of levels.

We are delighted with our new home, and hope you find the opportunity to come and visit us, share in our passion and meet the team that has made the projects in this volume possible.









Clients & Collaborators

Aecom
 Aedas Architects
 AFL Architects
 Ask Property Developments
 Atelier One
 August Blake
 Axis Architecture
 Baker Hollingsworth
 Blackpool Council
 Broadbent Studios
 Capita Architecture
 Carey Jones Architects
 Carillion
 Carmody Groarke Architects
 Casey Contracts
 Chris Bramall Studios
 Core Construction
 Cre8
 Cullinan Architects
 Davis Langdon
 Deakin Walton
 DK Architects
 English Heritage
 Eric Wright Construction
 Evans Vettori Architects

Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios
 GVA Grimley
 HKS Architects
 Hodder Associates
 Inspired Spaces
 Kier Education
 KUD
 Laing O'Rourke
 Land Restoration Trust
 Langtree Group Plc
 Leach Rhodes Walker
 Lend Lease
 Liverpool City Council
 Liverpool Football Club
 Lloyd Evans Pritchard
 Manchester City Council
 Mason Gillibrand
 Mayfield Contracts
 MBLA Architects
 McGoff & Byrne
 Mecanoo Architecture
 Mersey Partnership
 Mouchells
 M-Tec
 Nikal

North West Development Agency
 North Staffordshire Regeneration
 Partnership
 Nottingham County Council
 Oldham & Rochdale HMRI
 Oasis Charitable Trust
 Ramboll Whitbybird
 Rochdale MBC
 Sheffield City Council
 Sheffield One URC
 Sheppard Robson
 Spacecraft Architects
 Stephenson Bell Architects
 Stoke UniQ Partnership
 Tameside Council
 Turley Associates
 University of Staffordshire
 Urban Splash
 Ushida Findlay
 Waterman Boreham
 WCP Associates
 White Young Green
 WSP Engineers

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