



## The Milestone

Leytonstone, London

Completion year : 2019

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Beneath the Victorian urban fabric, Bulwer Road hides an array of unique geological, natural and historical characteristics. We propose to uncover and symbolise these features by excavating the ground. The resulting project is a rain garden, an archaeological excavation, a playground, a small public space, and a land artwork.

The Bulwer Road traffic island lies within the geological area of sand and silt, and gravel produced by the Fillebrook stream, that runs approximately fifty metres south. The course of the stream has, from prehistoric times, allowed travel through the richly forested region. Multiple prehistoric artefacts have been discovered in the area, with a particular concentration along the oldstream. Later in history, the site was on the path of pilgrimages, particularly between Waltham and Barking Abbeys. The current crossroad is also a pivot point between train stations in the area and has the potential of becoming part of an alternative, more enjoyable route through the city. Our project aims to symbolise the depth of historical and natural traces of this site. We propose to remove the asphalt layer and to excavate a bowl-shaped hole snug in the ground. The hole represents an archaeological excavation that uncovers layers of soil. We propose to populate with large reclaimed stone objects that resemble the remains of a settlement and also serve as a seating area and playground. The traffic island is planted with wildflowers and local shrubs to protect from the road and reclaim the original meadow, rich in biodiversity, colour and smells. Concentric stepping stones and paths connect the existing pedestrian crossings and introduce the visitors to the new garden. Rainwater currently collecting on the north edge of the concrete island is diverted into the bowl and filtered to the water table, giving relief from floodrisk and enhancing the landscape.

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The site has an exceptional quality in of itself: the widening of the streetscape, combined with the mature trees and the ordered Victorian terraces. We were extremely intrigued by the presence of the stream and took great pleasure in the research of the site's history. Even though the stream does not run directly beneath the site, its legacy is strong and has produced a unique opportunity for rediscovering nature and history. We are passionate about rainwater management and walkable cities principles.

The residents will enjoy a unique landscape and will have the opportunity of literally impressing their mark on the sculptural blocks. The garden will become a place to meet and a reference point in the area. We hope that the installation will also foster knowledge and pride of the area's history and unique features.

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