



Photo of historical 'Dutch Billy' gable-fronted housing on Chamber Street.



The Chamber Court flat complex, late 1970's.



A community 'clean up' at the Chamber Court flats circa 1980's.



A view looking north west across Chamber Court, 2008.



Aerial view of the site post demolition of the Chamber Court flats, circa 2010.

Weaver Park

Páirc an Fhíodóra

Cork Street, 'The Liberties', Dublin 8

Client: Parks & Landscape Services, Dublin City Council

Lead Designer: **ÁIT** Urbanism + Landscape

The success of Weaver Park on Cork Street in Dublin's Liberties, has been in accommodating the aspirations, functions and activities of a district park on a small and enclosed derelict urban site (approx 5,000 m²). The design delivers a hive of activity within a park that will be sylvanic and ecologically functional in time. The park is open in design and provides new pedestrian routes connecting Cork Street, Chamber Street and Ormond Street. It delivers a new permeability that draws people into and through the space.

'The Liberties' is amongst the most recognisable of place names in Dublin City. It is a name traditionally associated with disadvantaged communities and the industries in which they were employed such as brewing, distilling, tanning and weaving. Historically, 'The Liberties' has also been associated with a dense population, tenements and social deprivation. Many of these tenements were demolished in the mid 20th century and replaced with social housing schemes. Chamber Court was one such scheme and stood prominently on Cork Street from the early 1960's until its demoliton in 2008.

The demolition left a valuable plot that was identified and zoned for commercial redevelopment. Given the lack of available green space in 'The Liberties' however, the parks services, local residents and community groups had begun to recognise the potential in this vacant site. After a long period of consultation between the community and the city authority, new possibilities began to emerge.

An urban greening strategy known as 'The Liberties Greening Strategy' was undertaken by the Parks and Landscape Services of Dublin City Council and was published in 2015. The aim of the plan was to identify small, medium and large scale interventions that could help define a new character for 'The Liberties' and improve the quality of life for its residents. One such intervention centred around the vacant site once occupied by the Chamber Court flats. Saved from redevelopment, this site would become the location for the first public park in the area in over 100 years.

In order for the park to be successful, it had to be a space that local residents could be proud of and take ownership. A process of community participation was initiated by the design team to determine the local aspirations for their new park. The local community were invited to prepare a sketch design at an initial workshop. Based on this input the design team prepared a series of options which were presented to the community for feedback.

Design

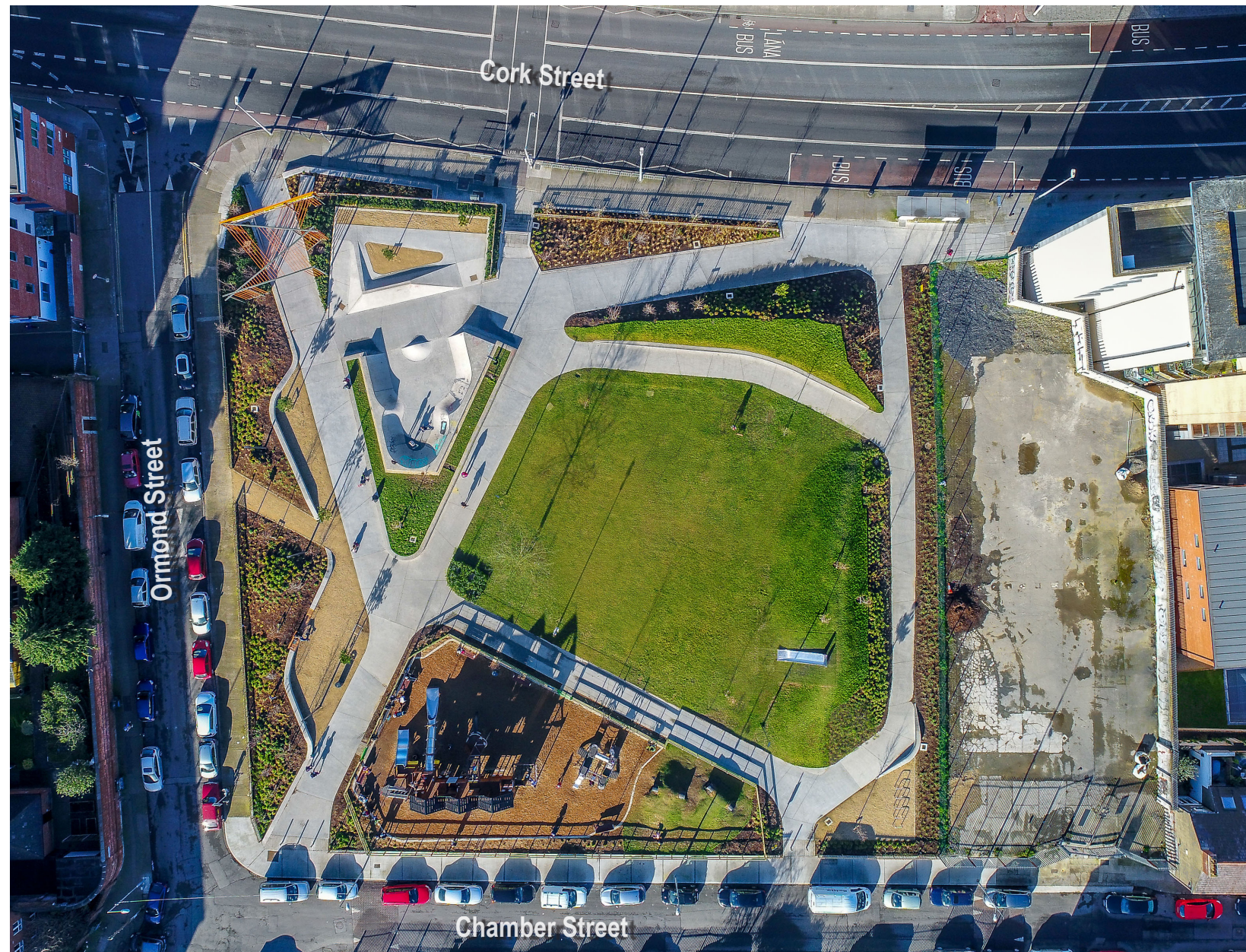
A group of local skateboarders were heavily involved in campaigning for the park and were instrumental in the evolution of the park design. The park design incorporates designated skateboarding features such as a large skatebowl and secondary features such as seating walls that can also be used for skateboarding tricks. In-situ concrete with an exposed aggregate finish is the principal hard landscape material for paths, ledges and sitting walls as it is robust, attractive and matures gracefully. The aggregates are exposed through a grinding process that uncovers a decorative matrix of colours and a polished surface that enhances the crisp geometry of the concrete installations.

The multi-functionality of the park design extends to the central open space, this is provided as a place to play kick-about; with a natural amphitheatre aspect, it can also accommodate community gatherings or be used as an events space.

The large multi-level playground installation is a unique response in accommodating the maximum range of play possibilities and age ranges on a very compact footprint. The distinctive roof profile of the structure recalls the 'Dutch Billy' architecture introduced to 'The Liberties' by the Huguenots and other continental settlers in the 18th century.

The gateway pergola is another contemporary reference to the areas rich history. Its overlapping threads are an abstraction of the weave on a traditional loom, it's poles reference the fields of 'Tenter Poles' between which fabrics were traditionally stretched to dry in the sun. It was in this location that 'The Liberties' weaving industry began, and it is in the new Weaver Park that this history will be remembered.

The fulcrum of the park is a 40-year-old *Quercus palustris*; this beautiful Oak tree now provides an instant maturity and a new focal point on the Cork Street landscape. It is an icon for the greening of 'The Liberties'.



Above: Park entrance feature - a contemporary abstraction of a traditional weaving loom.
Below: Aerial view of the park, February 2018; The 'greening' of the park will develop over time as the woodland trees lining it's perimeter reach maturity.