

Previous state

Empty open space below motorway bridge, mainly used for car and bicycle parking; pedestrian and bicycle link.

Aim of intervention

Construction of the 'House of Religions' and the transformation / regeneration of the urban district as catalysts to create a public open space.

Strict design guidelines: commuter hub, main cycle path and deliveries for 'House of Religions'

Description of intervention

Levelling of the open space to create sightlines and visual links resulting in exposure of foundations of motorway bridge. Bespoke stepped seating elements in varying heights are used to cover the exposed pillar bases. Ample steps help to overcome the level changes between open space and the newly built 'House of Religions'. Lighting elements are attached to the pillars of the motorway bridge. At night, the pillars appear like bright volumes that illuminate the open space.

Evaluation

Solid and precise interventions have turned an underused and rugged place into an attractive and inviting public open space. The imposed design guidelines actually provided an opportunity to create a unique open space that combines design aesthetics and functionality. Today, the space is animated and well-used during the day and at nights. It has turned into a focal point and makes a positive contribution to the image of the neighbourhood.

Until recently, the transport infrastructure was considered an impassable gap between central Bern and its urban fringes. A clever urban intervention helps to link previously disconnected neighbourhoods and offers the opportunity to patch up an urban void.

