



The main stadium is surrounded by wildflower meadows and a restored iron footbridge.

Set dressing

Temporary structures will accommodate a variety of functions during the Games



WAYFINDING BEACONS
Surface Architects
Comprising six 7m-high zone beacons, five 15m-high major beacons and two 12m-high entrance gantries, the wayfinding structures are based on the angular "Look of the Games", developed by Wolff Olins and Futurebrand. Dressed in Olympic fluorescent pink, they do their job of being visible from across the park very well.



MCDONALD'S
AEW Architects
Hailed as the "world's largest McDonald's", this 3,000sq m, timber-clad building includes seating for more than 1,500 customers, and will sell £3 million of fast food during the Games. Complete with balcony decks and surrounded by wildflower meadows, it is a considerable improvement on most fast food outlets.



SOUNDFORMS STAGE
BFLS Architects
Designed with conductor Mark Stephenson and Arup Acoustics, Soundforms is the "world's first mobile acoustic shell", a portable stage for classical performances. It is made from inflated ETFE cushions and lined with a series of profiled reflectors to project sound across the surrounding lawn, with room for an audience of 800–1,000 people.



OLYMPIC BROADCAST STUDIOS
Urban Space Management
Following on from Eric Reynolds' work at Trinity Buoy Wharf, this temporary tower of TV studios is formed from shipping containers, topped with a pergola roof structure and clad in coloured fins. In line with USM's "lighter, quicker, cheaper" approach, the containers can be dismantled and reused.



PHOTO: OLIVER WILKINSON/GETTY

The north park consists of picturesque sculpted landforms and wild river banks, while the south is a harder world of entertainment plazas and towpath edges.

with the choreographed mounds of a Florida golf course than the wilds of the post-industrial East End.

A balancing act

The feeling of walking through a stage set should come as no surprise, for that is exactly what this is — for “the greatest show on earth”, as we are constantly reminded. If the ODA built the theatre, it has been Locog’s role to erect the scenery for the event itself. “We were always keen to ensure that the temporary Olympic overlay shouldn’t dictate the park layout,” says Kevin Owens, head of design at Locog. “The park should be driven by common-sense, urban-design principles rather than event planning strategies.”

With legacy ever the driving design force, Owens’ task has been the difficult one of fitting a plethora of temporary structures into this landscape to give the impression of a park in which the Olympics happens to be taking place, rather than a relentless campus tailored to this one-off event, while also mindful of what might come after.

“We have tried to follow the layout of legacy development plots with our temporary structures as far as possible,” he explains, describing the Games as “launching the park to the world”, and conscious that any moves made now might inform how the site is used in the future — for both temporary events and permanent development.

Considering the sheer amount of stuff that the Olympics entails, Locog’s distributed masterplan — in which all components, from sponsor pavilions to concession stands, are scattered throughout the park in distinct character areas — seems reasonably successful, although it is a shame so many of the structures resort to either default hired marquees or lacklustre brand showcases. The appeal to employ young local architects fell mostly on deaf ears, save for the delightful anomalies of the Coca-Cola Beatbox by Asif Kahn and Pernilla Ohrstedt and Serie’s BMW pavilion (*Technical*, July 13).

The face of the future

Elsewhere, the “Look of the Games”, developed by Futurebrand from Wolff Olins’ original identity, has been liberally plastered across the site, with angular pink wayfinding totems and triumphal entrance arches by Surface Architects doing their required job of being very visible from everywhere.

Less successful is the giant Park Live video screen by Richards Partington Architects, which sits on stilts in the river, engulfed in a flimsy swoosh, and Eric Reynolds’ towers of blue shipping container TV studios that somehow lack any of the charm of his development at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

Post-Games plans are still uncertain, although the park will receive two new hubs — a wild adventure playground and café pavilion by Erect Architecture in the north, and a “Tivoli-esque” pleasure garden by James Corner

