

LANSDOWNE PLACE

Bernard Seymour **Landscape Architects**

The redevelopment of the former Berkeley Court Hotel as an upscale apartment development in the heart of Ballsbridge should decree in the Irish context at least, that it becomes a confection of clipped box and white hydrangeas.

Conscious of its historic significance as the site of the former Trinity Botanic Gardens, the necessity of retaining the surviving vestiges, namely the living Holm Oaks, dating back to the mid-1800s have been retained. These continue the historical legacy of the use of the site as the Trinity College Botanical Gardens from 1806 until the 1960s.

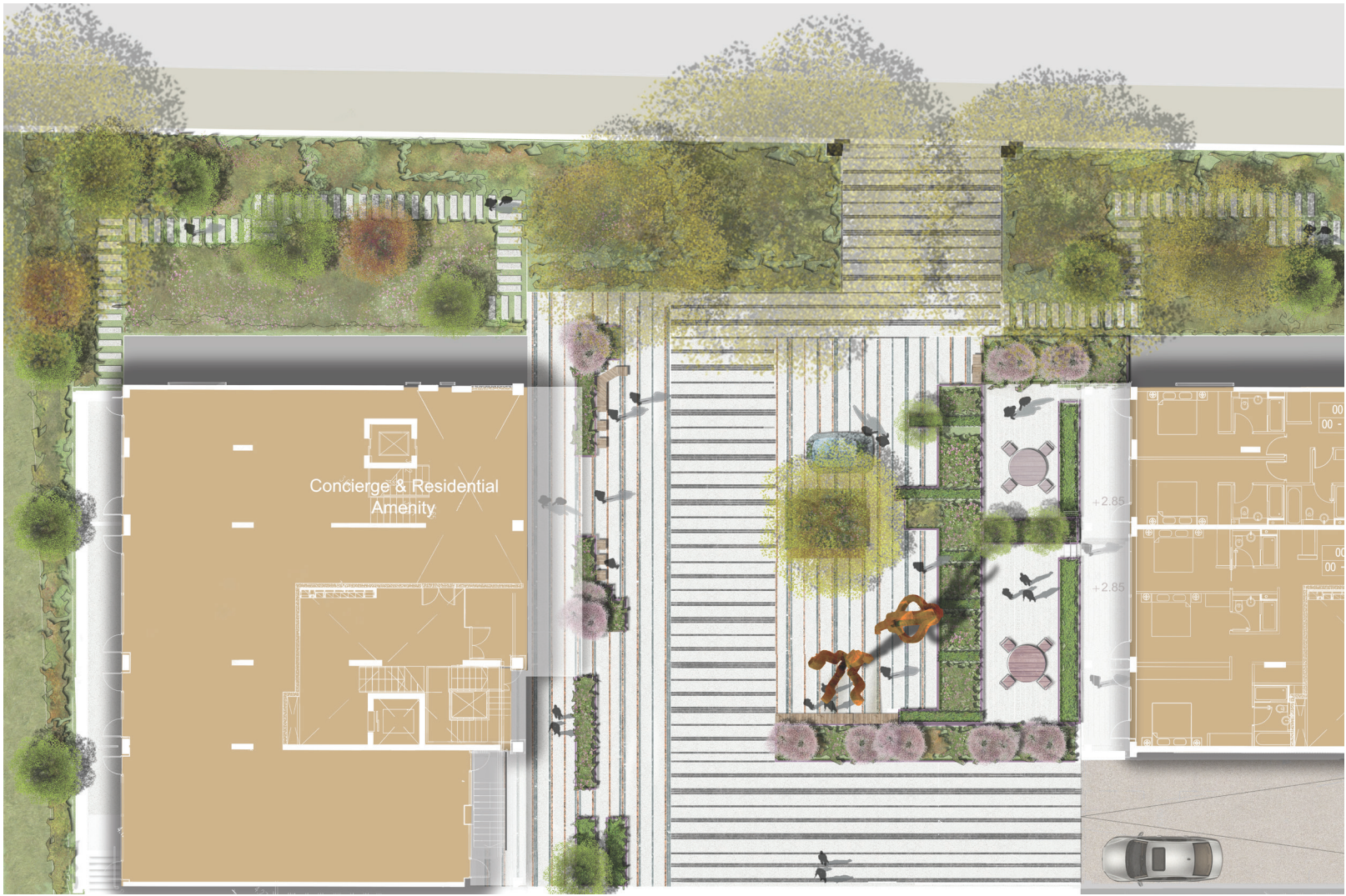
The main residential courtyard, compromised to a degree by its use as a vehicular route from the front gates through to the back and down to an underground car park would need a lightness of touch to deal with these constraints.

We set about a solution that would render the road markings no more than a watermark on a shared surface and the car park route itself designed to send a clear message that the car is the transgressor and the pedestrian commands the space. No kerbs, no lines, no tarmac and a sinuous curve linking the entrances emerged as the solution. The fact that the landscape sits on podium spaces, there are two 'concrete planting pockets' stepping down to basement level to allow for semi mature specimen tree planting, this contributes to the illusion of a more solid floor-plane. Alongside and underneath its canopy, a seemingly oversized low rock is strategically placed to reinforce the notion of timelessness and permanence. This is also gently worked as a receptacle for a water feature that trickles over its surface, catching sunlight in the low jets.

The floor plane is stone from edge to edge, in a rug like pattern of light granite shades while the planting, other than that associated with the trees, is in a series of planters. Vehicular loading is designed into the paving specification and a series of brass studs demarcate the actual drive through route on the basis that one needs to consciously look out for these markings and drive very slowly. However, if one veers off the studs the pavement remains intact.

A sculpture was commissioned to represent the fruit of Arbutus unedo, a remnant of the botanic era, the planting palette was adjusted tonally to blend with its strawberry patination.

The lighting is modern and unfussy and contrasts with a loose planting style, as does the architectural façade treatments and the orthodoxy ordained by the planters. Smaller dishes of seasonal displays are changed every two months in line with the tidier visions of the estate agent...



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