

Elephant Springs, Elephant Park

2022 Natural Stone Awards
Landscaping Category

GILLESPIES



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Elephant Springs, Elephant Park

Entry Form

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Stone Name: Prima Porphyry

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CATEGORY	Landscape Category
PROJECT NAME	Elephant Springs, Elephant Park
COMPLETION	3rd June 2021
ADDRESS	Elephant Park, Elephant Rd, London SE17 1UB
CLIENT	Lendlease and Southwark Council
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT	Gillespies
WATER FEATURE DESIGNER	Gillespies in collaboration with Mel Chantrey and The Fountain Workshop
STONE SUPPLIER	Hardscape. Stone sourced from the Stonegroup Quarry in northern Italy.
PHOTOGRAPHY	John Sturrock, Charles Emmerson



Elephant Springs, Elephant Park

Elephant Springs is a magnificent 420 sqm natural playscape located within Elephant Park, a new green space at the heart of Elephant Park, the £2.5bn revitalisation of Elephant & Castle by Lendlease and Southwark Council, which is setting a benchmark in city living. At 2-acres, the Park is an inclusive and sustainable community space featuring expansive lawns, colourful rain gardens, a water playscape and walkways nestled within naturalistic planting.

The Park is a celebration of nature and a tribute to Elephant and Castle's diverse population and existing ecology, offering everyone living or visiting the area unforgettable social and recreational experiences, and an opportunity to slow down and connect with nature.

Elephant Springs feels like a natural part of the landscape, a rocky, watery landscape with multiple mounds, ravines and channels inspired by the natural world. Designed by Mel Chantrey and The Fountain Workshop in collaboration with Gillespies, Elephant Springs is constructed from 300 tonnes of colourful Prima Porphyry stone, an igneous rock formed 230 million years ago, meticulously sourced by Hardscape from a family run quarry in the Albiano region of northern Italy.

The colourful textured stone is layered to mimic 2.3-metre-high rocky outcrops and completed with water streams, pumps, activated jets and slides, offering children an opportunity to play, learn and get lost in the wonder of nature and water.

Porphyry was chosen to create the topography of Elephant Springs because it naturally breaks away in large slabs in the quarry. This means that it is the perfect material for building stepped landforms with a variety of different levels. It is also incredibly hard-wearing and has good slip-resistance when wet, and its texture and colouration establish a raw, rugged aesthetic like a rocky outcrop.

The design development process was undertaken through hand sketches, specification requirements, CAD drawings and a 'built to scale' plasticine model created by Gillespies and artist Mel Chantrey. The model allowed the design team to test different ideas quickly and agree on changes to the rock forms and channels ahead of construction. This combined information formed the basis of the briefing pack for Hardscape who created detailed

drawings and worked with the local quarry to source appropriate stone. Due to Covid travel restrictions at the time the team had to adapt the planned process and use video calls to allow monitoring remotely.

Stones were selected and assembled dry in a yard at the quarry to match the forms of the plasticine model and test the arrangement at full scale. Gillespies and Mel Chantrey were then able to travel to the quarry and make changes to the mock-up, reselecting and fine tuning the stone positions until all were satisfied.

Hardscape managed the prebuilt phase; primarily in Italy and gained sign-off and comment by the client team remotely using online digital 24-hour available viewing platforms. Hardscape then carefully documented and labelled the mock-up and deconstructed the materials to be rebuilt once they arrived at Elephant Park. Behind the scenes, Hardscape's sister company IP Surfaces were involved in drilling, shaping and processing the underside of 2-4 tonne Prima Porphyry boulders to house the water fountain infrastructure.

On site the concrete foundations were poured, and the imported stone installed to match the mock-up layouts by Carey Contractors with Mel Chantrey based on-site to oversee the process and assist with problem solving in the stone layout, and Gillespies monitoring progress via regular site visits. Getting the levels millimetre-perfect was essential to achieving the right distribution of water in the stream beds and pools.

Elephant Springs opened to the public in June 2021, providing a much-needed destination for play and essential human interaction within the city: an accessible and tactile space designed to delight, challenge and excite children and adults alike, where all the senses are simultaneously stimulated.

Vintage water pumps, cascading water channels and motion activated water jets provide active fun and educational experiences for both children and adults. The playscape has been designed to encourage safe but adventurous play. The team undertook risk/benefit analysis, assessing the design and adjusting to mitigate for dangerous risks, consulting with Rospa throughout the design process, during construction and at completion. The scheme was recently awarded 'Best Publicly Accessible Playground' at the ROSPA Play Safety Awards, as well as the NLA Award for Placemaking.

With carefully arranged stone formations, hand laid with traditional artisan skills by a family of stonemasons, the space has been purposefully designed to provide a multifunctional and accessible experience for every visitor and has been fitted with seating perches and wheelchair ramps for disability access. As a day to night destination, Elephant Springs is transformed by dappled light projectors that enhance the multi-coloured porphyry formations of the natural play, creating drama and a unique sense of space.

Neil Matthew, Senior Associate at Gillespies, said:

The entire water feature is constructed from porphyry stone imported from a family-run quarry in Italy. We looked at British alternatives, but porphyry has such a rich variety of colours which the water enhances further. It is extremely durable and it splits naturally to produce a riven finish with intrinsic anti-slip qualities. The use of this stone has created a unique and memorable space that is warm, inviting and reveals the best of porphyry's natural colour and character. The space has received an enthusiastic reception, not least from the hordes of children who gather there to splash about and play in the summer months.

About Elephant Park

The £2.5bn Elephant Park regeneration project by Lendlease and Southwark Council will set a new standard in green city living, delivering around 3000 new sustainable homes together with high-quality workspaces, shops, cafés and restaurants. The development is arranged across five distinctive neighbourhoods and connected by 11-acres of high-quality public realm, consisting of open green spaces, private gardens, tree-lined streets and a brand new central park.



Plasticine model of Elephant Park and Elephant Springs

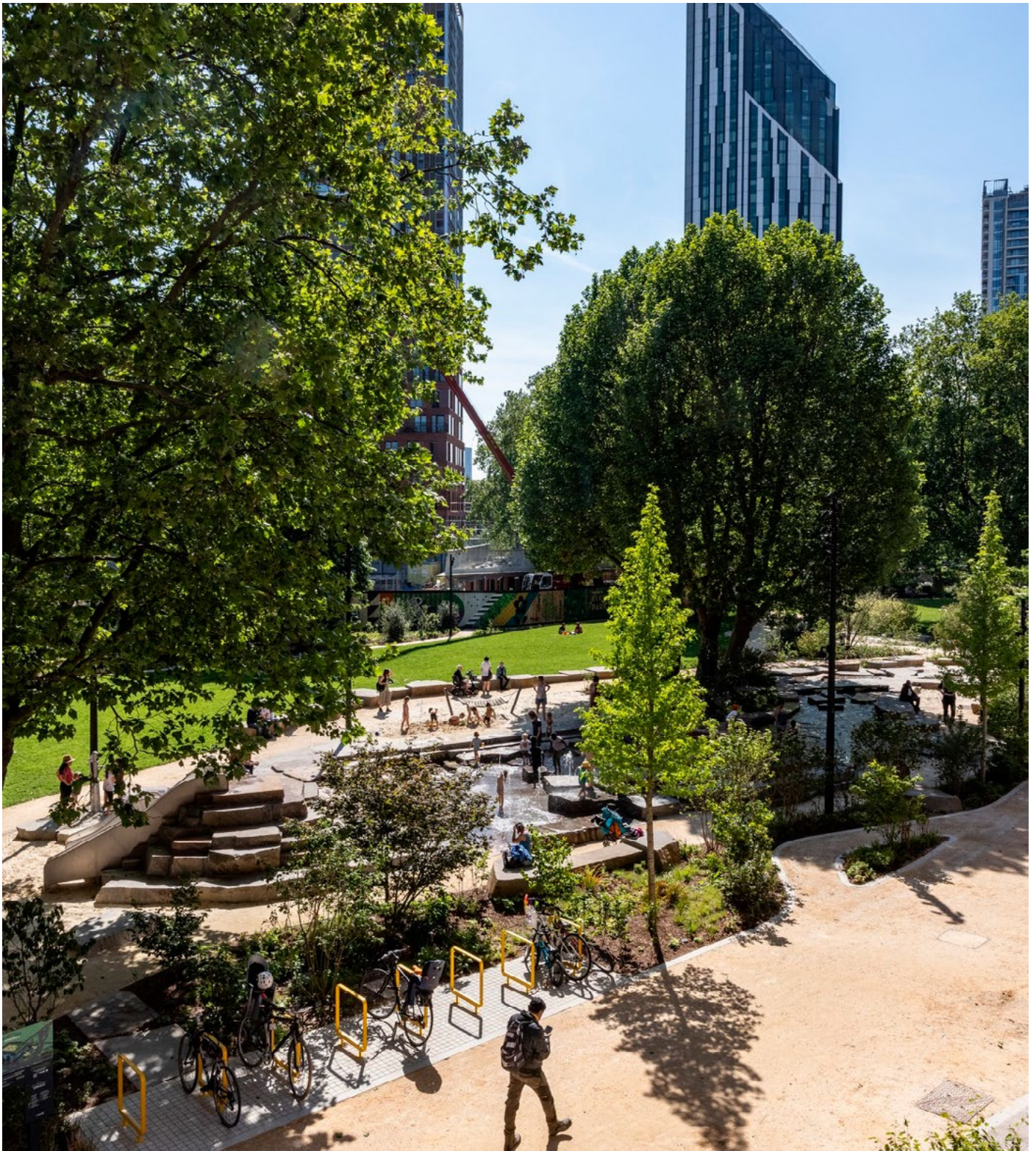


Stone selection onsite in the quarry in northern Italy



Construction of Elephant Springs - March 2021

Images of Elephant Springs



Elephant Springs sits at the centre of a two-acre green space known as Elephant Park. © John Sturrock/Gillespies



Dappled lighting projections enhance the multi-coloured porphyry formations of the natural play. © Charles Emmerson



An intelligent lighting scheme by Speirs Major enhances reflections of the waterfalls and sculptural effects of the space, creating a dramatic after-dark experience. © Charles Emmerson



Water pumps, cascading water channels and motion activated water jets provide active fun and educational experiences for both children and adults. © John Sturrock / Gillespies

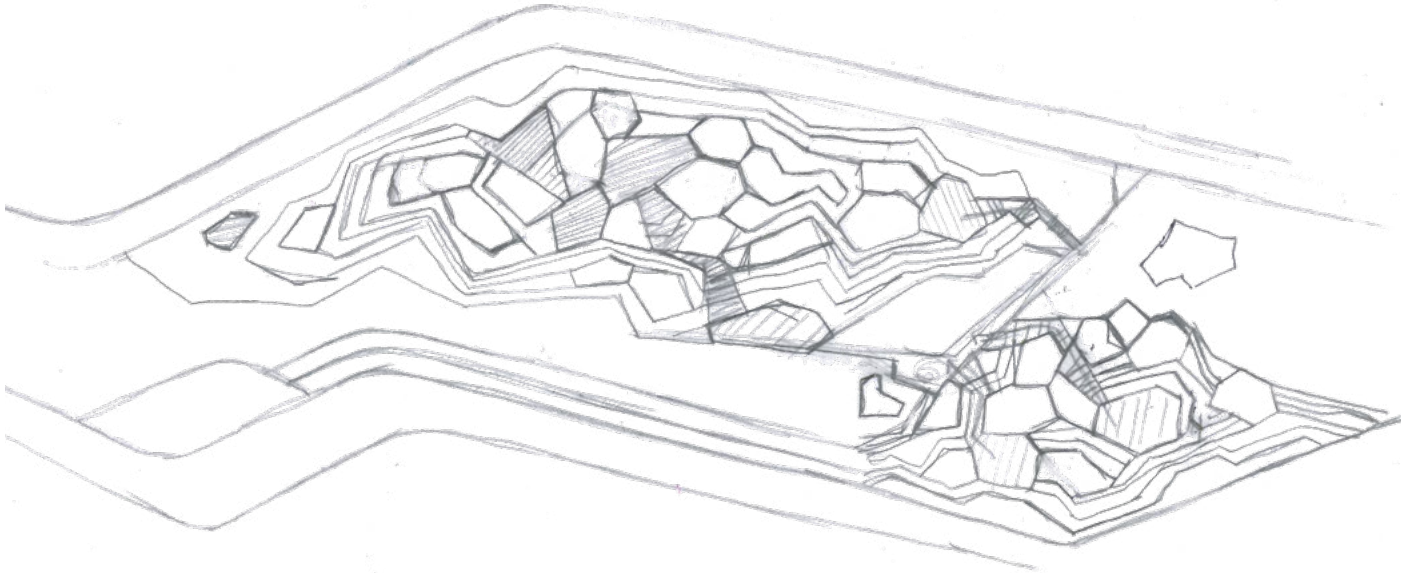


Water naturally rises from Elephant Springs' rock formations and babbling brooks which resemble a prehistoric world where children can let their imaginations run wild. © John Sturrock / Gillespies

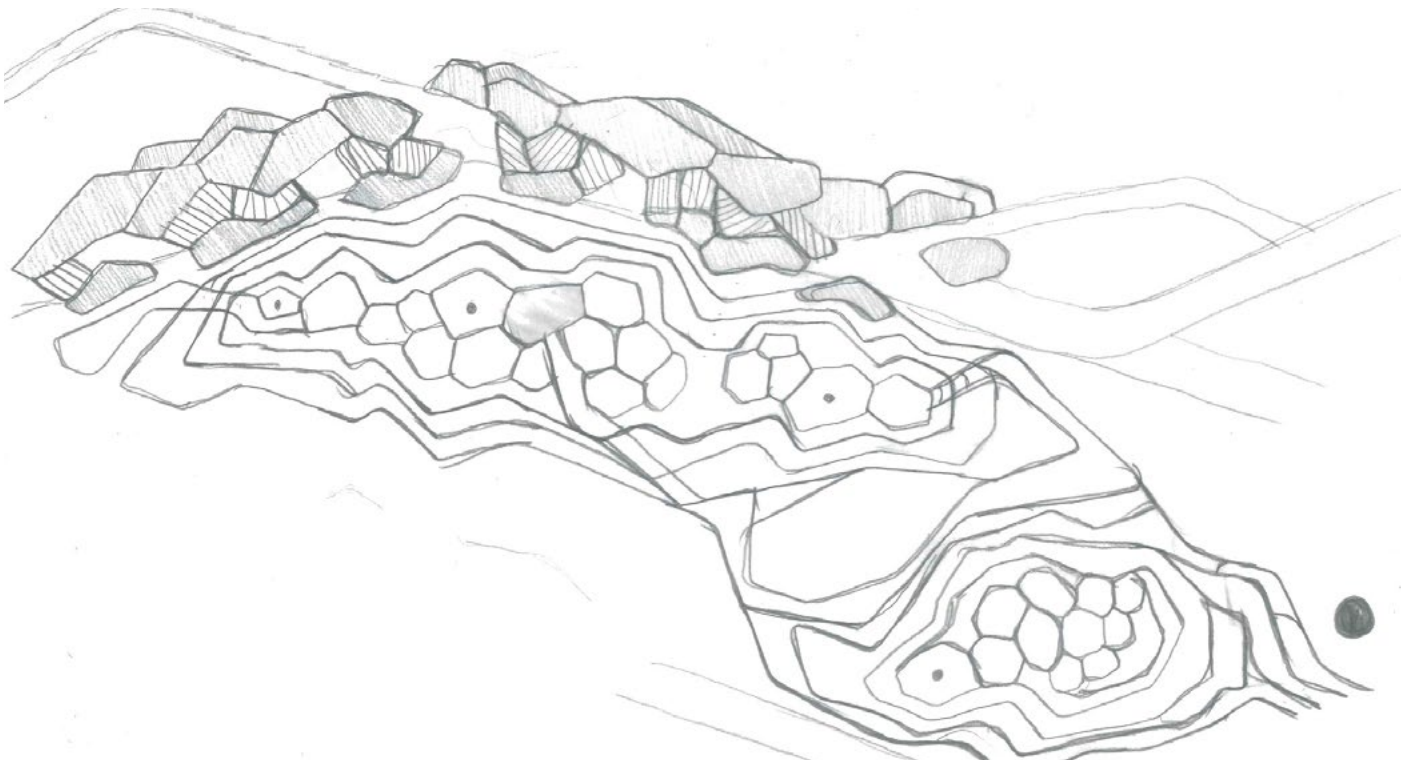


The colourful stone is layered to mimic 2.3-metre-high rocky outcrops. The arranged stone formations were hand laid by a family of stonemasons. © John Sturrock / Gillespies

Concept development



Early concept sketch showing the stone formation © Gillespies



Early concept sketch showing the stone formation © Gillespies

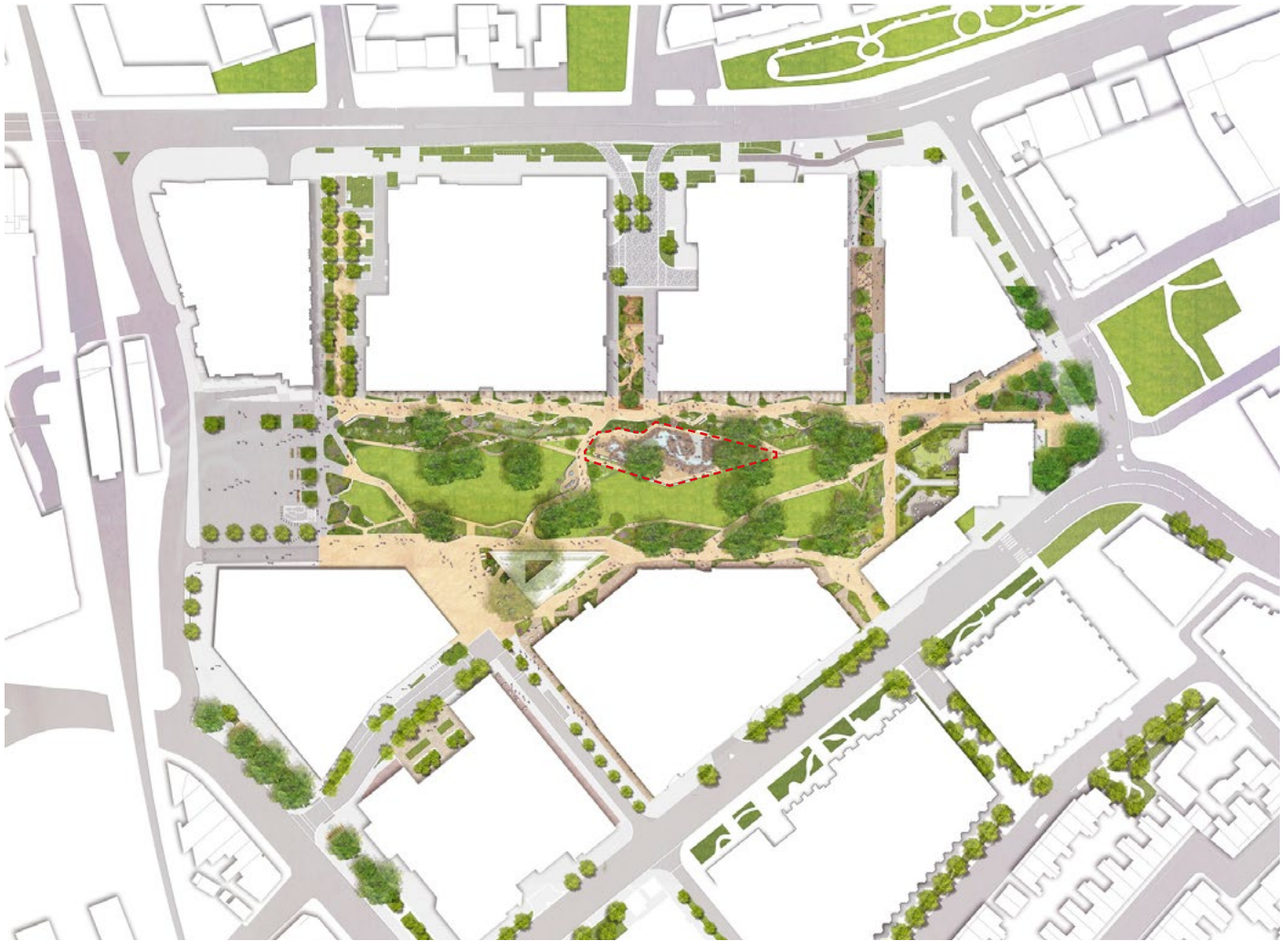


Early concept sketch showing the layout of Elephant Park with Elephant Springs at its centre © Gillespies



Early illustrative concept of Elephant Springs © Gillespies

Drawings of Elephant Springs

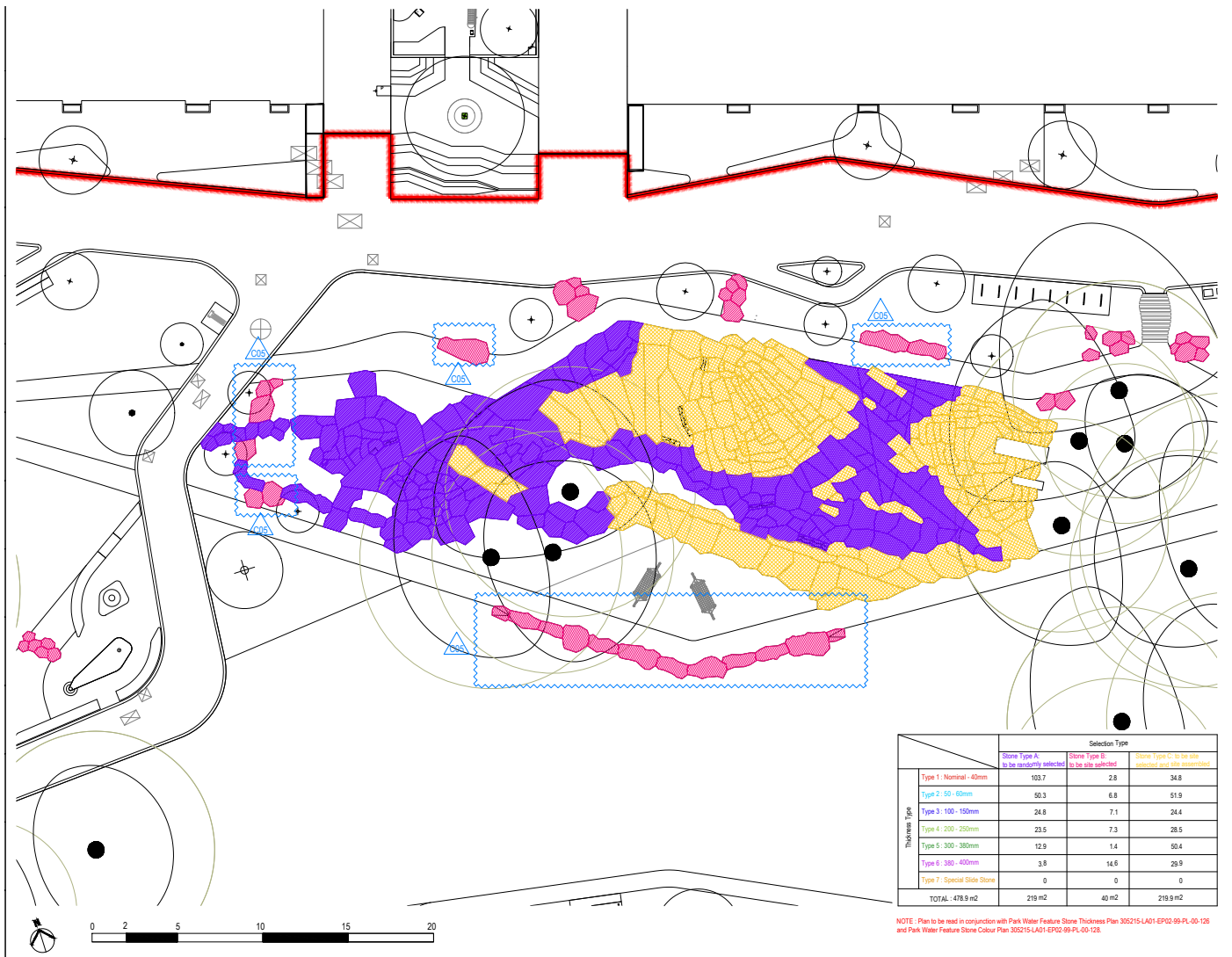


Landscape masterplan showing the location of Elephant Springs within Elephant Park © Gillespies

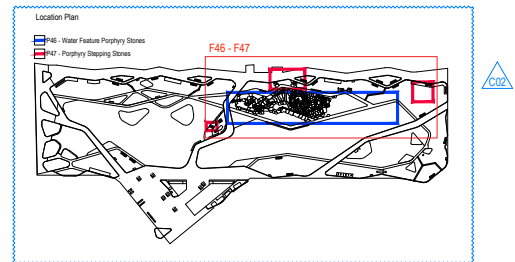
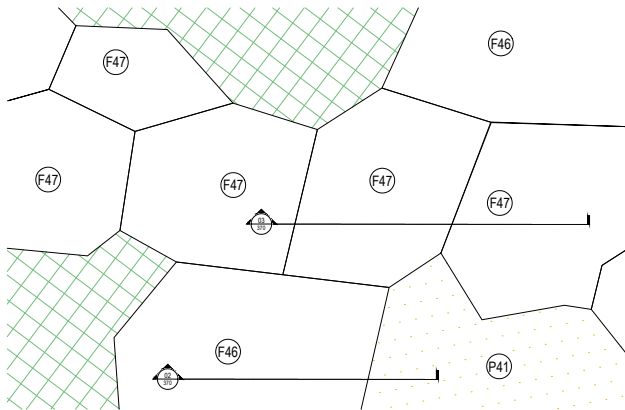
Red Line Boundary - - -



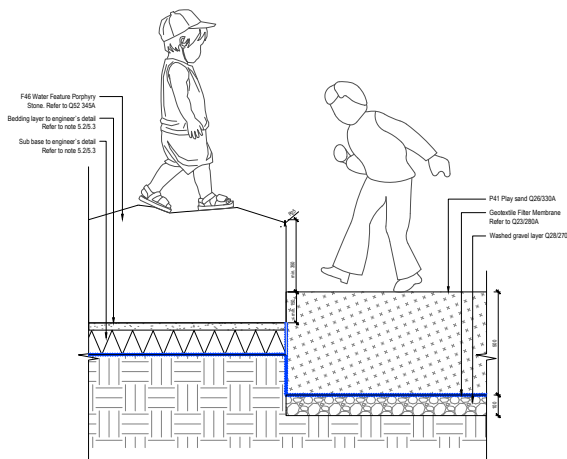
Detailed plan showing layout of Elephant Springs © Gillespies



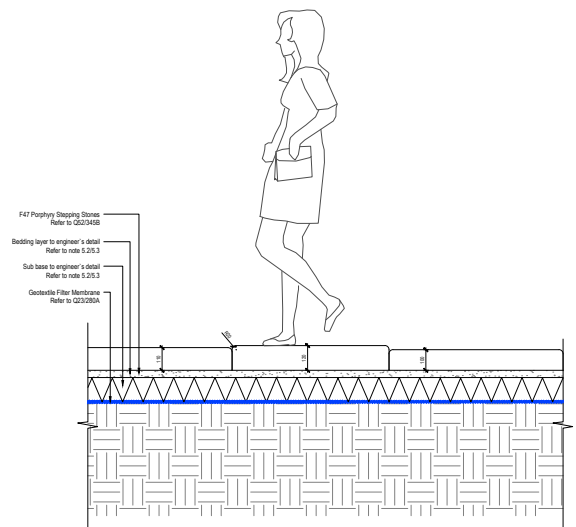
Stone selection plan for Elephant Springs water feature © Gillespies



F46 and F47 - Water Feature Porphyry Stones and Stepping Stones - PLAN
Scale 1:10 @A1



F46 Water Feature Porphyry Stones - SECTION
Scale 1:10 @A1



F47 Water Feature Porphyry Stepping Stones - SECTION
Scale 1:10 @A1

Detailed sections of the water feature porphyry stones at Elephant Springs © Gillespies

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