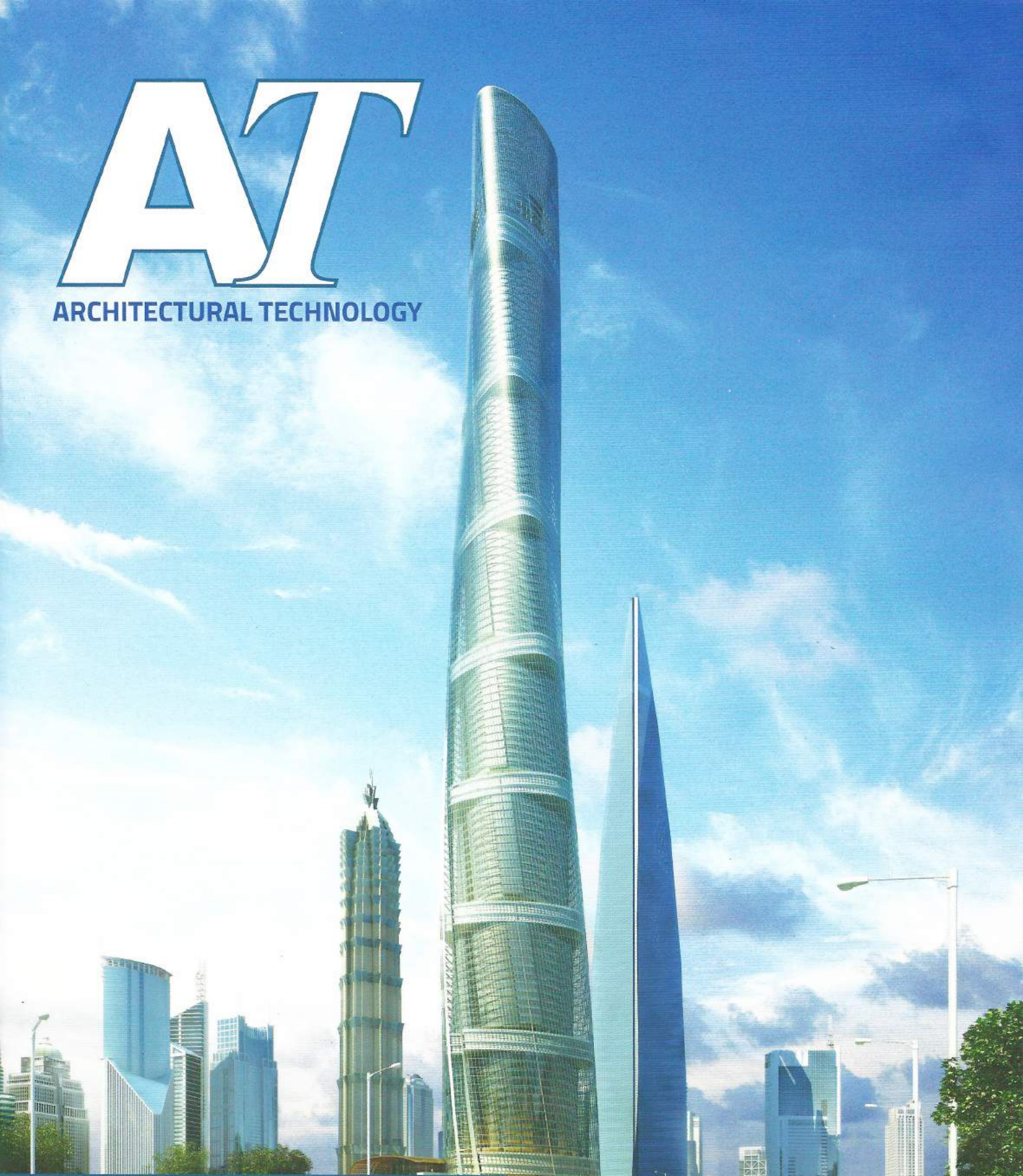


AT

ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY



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Park life

Joe Fallon MCIAT, Chartered Architectural Technologist, surveyor and building engineer was keen to try out skills gained from a BSc in Landscape Design. The resulting project received Ireland's Best Park Award 2016.



The idea came about in 2012 when my wife Deirdre came up with the suggestion 'why don't you design a park for the local community?' I had recently completed BSc Landscape Design stage 2 from Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, Dublin, and was keen to take on a project. We have two young children so I thought it would be a great for them growing up to have a place where they could play safely with other children of the community while under the watchful eye of their parents who could go for a walk, get some exercise and get to know the other parents as we had only recently moved from Dublin to the village of Templeudigan, County Wexford.

It was hoped it would be a central meeting point for both young and old and bring the whole community closer

together. In order to get the wheels in motion, I outlined my thoughts and ideas, put a conceptual design into a PowerPoint presentation and presented it to the parish council who later had a vote on it. At this stage the park almost didn't go ahead, with the vote being decided by the narrowest of margins, five votes to four in favour of the park with the parish priest having the deciding vote!

The next stage was to develop a 'wish list' in conjunction with the local community that could accommodate everyone in the village, be it the young, elderly or middle aged. So a second meeting took place, at which everyone was invited to express a view as to what was needed. Ideas for walking/running paths, an outdoor gym and playground equipment were all taken on board. A land swap with a

local farmer was proposed in order to get a location in the centre of the village next to Templeudigan parish hall. The local professionals got on board with the idea and offered their services *pro bono* such as environmental services, building and site management, along with myself a qualified landscape designer and Chartered Architectural Technologist.

Functionality and design

The brief was to create a centralised park area that would be of benefit to not just the youth but every member of the community while at the same time being sympathetic to the existing Parish Hall which is still used for funerals and formal events. It was proposed that we also provide drainage facilities for the existing local handball alley. In order to

be sympathetic to the parish hall events I drew up and specified an undulating planting plan which would not only help camouflage the bold colours of playground equipment in times of grief, but also provide shelter to play areas from prevailing winds.

In order to make use of the elongated site, I proposed the walkway/running track would loop around connecting all zones, the play areas on one side divided between junior and senior areas to minimise accidents, while exercise zones were proposed at the far side to prevent children using the exercise equipment while playing. This would be a quieter, more relaxed area away from all the playground activities. The idea was to keep the middle area as open as possible for field activities such as kicking a ball or pucking a *sliotar* (hurling ball) about along with hosting community fund raising events such as sports days.

Planting

The planting plan had to be very carefully chosen due to the location of the sloped site on the verge of the Blackstairs Mountains. Very specific plants were chosen that would not only withstand prevailing winds from the foot of the mountain but also give colour from its

foliage during the winter and bright colours from blossoming flowers during the summer. A mixed variety of local indigenous trees, namely oak, ash and hawthorn were planted to provide shelter to play areas.

Sustainability

We tried to keep as much of the expenditure on our project within the local area where possible. While design and other professional construction services were offered voluntarily from ourselves and others, a total of 87% of the total cost was spent within a ten mile radius of Templeudigan. We 'shopped locally' because we wanted to see our investment supporting and sustaining local employers and local jobs.

The main aim of the park was to create an outdoor space that would sustain the needs of the local community for years to come. In order to achieve this, we felt community involvement and input was necessary from as early as the design stage, this took place in the form of public meetings where community members could put forward their ideas. This was important in identifying the exact needs and wants of the local community. This sense of community was brought through to construction stage with local trades

being employed and over 30 locals volunteering to help landscape the park, further cementing a sense of involvement and achievement in the project within the community.

Inclusive design

The park itself is stepped down from the existing parish hall carpark to help ease the slope on the site. A ramp complying with Part M of the Building Regulations was neatly integrated to offer disabled access from car park to park without interrupting the circulation path and general flow of the park. Disabled toilets are provided for in the existing parish hall.

Awards

In 2013 Joe Fallon Design was awarded the Wexford Chamber of Commerce Social Contribution award for its *pro bono* work on for the park and in January 2016 it was awarded 'Best Park in Ireland 2016' at the LAMA Community and Council Awards – a great endorsement of the work and effort contributed by all the local community.

Have you worked on a project that you would like to tell readers about? If so please send details to the Editor, Hugh Morrison. Email hugh@ciat.org.uk



Opposite page: the completed park. This page: the park under construction and Joe Fallon MCIAT receiving Ireland's Best Park Award from Irish TV personality Miriam O'Callaghan.