The Olympicopolis scheme will see outposts of the V&A, Sadler’s Wells and Washington DC’s Smithsonian line designed by Robert Bevan.

**Mystery of what lies beneath**

**THEATRE**

**GERMAN SKERRIES**

*Neville Minutes*

**HENRY HITCHINGS**

Robert Holman’s best-known play is called Minding Nellie Quietly, and its title sums up his restrained approach to articulating powerful feelings. German Skerries, which hasn’t been staged since its 1977 premiere, is a typically watchful piece about buried emotion and self-discovery.

Near the mouth of the River Tees, on a sticky summer afternoon, middle-aged teacher Martin meets fellow birdwatcher Jack, a young factory worker. They discuss the Skerries, a cluster of rocks where a Luftwaffe plane once crashed — the symbol of this dangerous landmark revered through the play.

The other characters are Jack’s wife Carol and Martin’s friend Michael. All appear rudderless, threatened by disaster and the threat is palpable. Alice Hamilton’s production accentuates the writing’s surreal humour, while also preserving its moments of dreamy reflection. Howard Ward brings key glee to Martin, George Evans nicely suggests both Jack’s lack of confidence and his natural charm, and Katie Moore, pictured, captures Carol’s mix of optimism and defiant practicality. Above all Holman’s voice is evoked with a stage play that could feel modestly wishful. Indeed seems charged with mystery. **[11 Apr 2016](https://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/000003b4439)***
up alongside new university campuses. The architects talk through their £1.3 billion vision for the Olympic Park.

while the buildings’ frontages will face south to the sun and the sea, their re-use on Carpenters Road will also be lively, with conservation workshops and the like, akin to similar areas in New York’s Chelsea. O’Donnell is also keen on the special character of pockets of the West End where you come across the stage door of a theatre and a largely blank facade punctuated by small dressing room windows. It’s part of the physical complexity and unexpected pleasures of a metropolis.

Each institution will not only have its own architectural individuality within this brick-faced family photo but will form separate elements of the podium so that each can be altered or redeveloped separately over time. A common failing of many contemporary large developments is that they masquerade as distinct buildings above ground but are conjoined megastructures below, which are difficult to adapt over time.

All very promising – as long as the architects’ vision is not compromised. The Olympic sites’ history is patchy in this respect: witness the Athletes’ Village, which looks like something thrown up for workers at a mobile phone factory in Guangzhou.

Fees Stratford, the LLDC has the role of both development promoter and planning authority and even the presence of internal “Chinese walls” makes this a less than satisfying arrangement. But at least being a quasi-public body should mean that the cultural precinct’s squares and terraces will eventually form part of a genuine public realm.

more than enough of being awful Olympica! Our name, please?

Diversity is easy – unity is more difficult.

Westfield bridge and the water: “We set up the idea of the podium, ramped promenades, dips, pockets and places between the buildings for programmed and un-programmed uses. People will be encouraged to take a shortcut through the podium, from the bridge to the waterfront, for example. Everything has two entrances so you can walk through at ground level,” adds Bob Allies, 63. “The assumption is that [stylistically] diversity is a good thing, but I’m interested in how the buildings can be more like each other. Diversity is easy – unity is more difficult.”

Close collaboration on the composition of the buildings forms is essential, says O’Donnell, “so it doesn’t end up as lots of different things on a tray”. The shift to east London will also be marked by an emphasis on making as much as possible of the Olympic Park as a cultural centre – and Highgate’s Wells, for example, will incorporate a choreography school and hip hop academy as well as a 600-seat theatre. The V&A East will emphasise design, architecture, art and performance and will encourage public participation. The new Design Museum opening in Kensington later this year will face stiff competition when Stratford Waterfront is completed at the end of the decade.

stadium and the park,” says John Tuomey, 64. “It will intensify the urban grain and make the stadium and park feel more special.”

Shelia O’Donnell, 63, points out that the site is trickier to manage than it first appears, with an 11m drop between the building blocks left, showing the residential towers. London College of Fashion, the Smithsoniun, Sadler’s Wells and the V&A. Above, how the development fits into the Olympic Park.

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