



Who is Victor Callister?

He's the design-minded planner in charge of Street Scene Challenge, an impressive urban improvement project in the Square Mile of the City of London, that's who.

Running since 2003, the project mixes private sponsorship with public funds to improve streets for pedestrians. With 30 schemes under its belt, the project has chalked up its most prestigious one to date: the £1m re-creation of a traffic-free square at the foot of the Monument, complete with a freestanding pavilion by Bere Architects (above). It opened on 31 January.

Placing a new building right next to the 350-year-old, 61m tall

Monument – the viewing tower and memorial to the Great Fire of London designed by Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke – is audacious stuff. The little pavilion, set deliberately askew and off-axis so as not to appear formally connected with the Monument, is made of gabions filled with Caithness stone and then skinned in glass. It houses the Monument's staff, freeing up space at the confined entrance to the column, itself due for a £5m refurbishment.

It also has a tertiary function: an array of angled mirror-glass pieces on its roof provides a reflection of the golden orb atop the column for visitors

who have made it to the summit.

The pocket-sized Monument Square, laid out in the same dark stone as the pavilion, is the same size as Wren's original Monument Yard. It is augmented by a timber-decked seating terrace next to the pavilion, placed over a derelict basement area.

Callister's urban interventions are getting steadily more ambitious as Section 106 money from developers flows in. Next in line are a £5m scheme for Queen Street by landscape architects Gross:Max, and a larger scheme still for the area linking St Paul's Cathedral to Foster's Millennium Bridge involving a tourist kiosk by the practice Make.

