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Louise House & Forest Hill  
Library Entry Landscape

Design and Access Statement

October 2015





CONTENTS

1. Introduction & background

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 V22 Vision
- 1.3 Planning context
- 1.4 Site context

2. Landscape Proposal - Front Garden

- 2.1 Vision and objectives
- 2.2 Hard Landscape Strategy - Walls and Surfaces
- 2.3 Hard Landscape Strategy - Railings
- 2.4 Soft Landscape Strategy

3. Landscape Proposal - Rear Garden

Report to be read in conjunction with supporting documents:

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Tamla Trees;
- Heritage Study by HTA Design LLP
- Planning Statement by HTA Design
- Former Laundry Design & Access Statement by V22 and HTA Design;
- Rear Laundry Building Survey by Peter Brett Associates;
- A complete drawing package by HTA Design.



1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Louise House is a Grade II Victorian building consisting of fifteen self-contained studios split over two floors with a front and back garden. There is also an ancillary building to the rear of the building. Formerly Louise House provided the Girls Industrial School for the area; a home for girls who were either orphaned or whose parents were living in workhouses.

Louise House (the former Girl's Industrial School), together with the Forest Hill Pools (Building of Local Interest), the Public Library (Grade II) and Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School (Grade II) forms a strong group of four municipal Victorian buildings at the southern tip of the High Street.

The site falls within Forest Hill Conservation Area, forming part of the historic High Street, and is accessed from Dartmouth Road. Forest Hill received the Portas Pilot (SEE3) award in July 2012 with Sydenham and Kirkdale. The Forest Hill Pools forms the eastern site boundary of the Louise House site, reopened in September 2012 following a capital investment to provide a new pool and a refurbishment to the facade of the old building.

Along with Louise House, Forest Hill Library is a building of architectural merit in the local area. Forest Hill library was completed in 1900 and is Grade II listed. Its massing includes a gable that relates to neighbouring Louise House, marks entrance and presents a single storey wing that relates to Holy Trinity School. The library is of an orange brick with warm, pale terracotta dressing and relief. The composition is balanced, the detail is rich and much of the early fabric remains, including the coloured glass to the principal windows. The whole describes the nobility ascribed to a place of learning and community resource at the time.

Forest Hill Library provides an extensive timetable of community events from under-fives songs and stories through to a film club, councillors' survey to 'learn my way IT support sessions'. The library also hosts creative activities including the Chatterbooks Craft Club and Origami Classes. Due to the topography of the site level access to the library can only be provided to the rear of the site. As part of V22 proposals the rear pavement forming this access route will be improved, in addition to creating a contemporary setting for the Grade II listed building. Lewisham Council is currently consultation on extending the community library model to Forest Hill.



Louise House present day



Louise House and Forest Hill Library, early 20th Century - Lewisham Archives



Forest Hill Library present day



1.2 V22 Vision

Background V22

V22 is a multifaceted art organisation, with a shared ownership model, which specialises in the collection of contemporary art, the production of exhibitions and events, the provision of artists’ studios, workspaces and artisans’ workshops at affordable rates, and the running of community engagement and education programmes.

V22 won a tender from Lewisham Council to purchase a 125 year lease for Louise House - a listed property in Forest Hill, London. Originally a Victorian Girls Industrial Home, it now houses fifteen artists studios in the main building, with plans for the garden and the rear of the property to repair the buildings and bring the back into use as a vibrant cultural centre.

V22 and Louise House

V22 is creating in Louise House a long term sustainable art and community centre: with working studios in the main building; in the rear building: a large flexible space for Studio + - our planned graduate professional development programme; a community studio which can be used for a range of public and semi-public uses and our annual Summer Club; a community garden at the rear; and a front garden commissioned as a living artwork.

The Rear Building space is divided into two large rooms, and a basement. One room will house Studio +; the other will become a community studio which can be used by various groups, artists and partner organisations for a variety of community-engaged and cultural uses; the basement will be used predominantly for film screenings, performances and possibly live music with a café/bar offering.

Studio + is V22’s new professional development programme for recent art graduates making the transition into the professional world. Selected recent graduates are invited to become part of the programme. The space becomes a flexible public and project space to be developed by the graduates themselves. Studio + is part of our aim to support art education and professional development.

The Community Studio has been informed by public access membership initiatives we have run in studio buildings and the V22 Summer Club. The Summer Club is a series of events, exhibitions, performances, screenings and happenings, a key motivation in our programming is a desire that local people experience and enjoy our space/centres. Bringing the Summer Club to Louise House each year we intend to invite local art/creative groups to use the space and build successful partnerships and networks, based on sharing interests and expertise, while reaching local communities.

Gardens:

The front garden is being designed by an artist: Fergal Stapleton, as an artwork. The front garden has links with civic buildings on either side: the Public Library and Forest Hill Pools. Lewisham Council has long envisaged joining these three public spaces to enable a great public realm space along Dartmouth Road for the benefit of the local community. Creation of the front Garden as an artwork will be the centre of this new development and is a fantastic opportunity to incorporate a high quality art commission into the everyday lives of the local community.

The long leasehold provides a real opportunity for V22 to develop strong roots within a community and build a sustainable long term business model for delivering arts events and programmes. Past successes in and around our studio and exhibition buildings have always been curtailed by short term leases. We are looking forward to developing a sustainable art centre at Louise House.



1.2 V22 Vision

Consultation

The Community Engagement Strategy for Louise House, which was initiated in Autumn 2013 and is still ongoing, is approved by Lewisham Council. To date, we have engaged a broad range of local stakeholders, including local interest groups and businesses, councillors, artists and art organisations, and interested individuals.

From the beginning, when we first won the tender for Louise House, we have understood that a great deal of community time and energy had been sent saving the building from demolition and convincing the local council to support a cultural use within the tender process for a new leaseholder. In addition, our time spent within communities in shorter term buildings has taught us that top-down structures imposed on areas and communities are never as successful as those that grow out of a grass roots movement or an integral understanding of an area and community.

For these reasons, in Autumn 2013 we launched a comprehensive community engagement strategy for the planning of Louise House. To date we have met with over 500 individuals, groups, neighbours, local councillors and politicians, local business owners and traders, as well as the artists working in Louise House. Forest Hill is a thriving and active community, very willing to engage with their local environment and community and to take active steps to make it better. We have been welcomed in Forest Hill and the feedback, suggestions, ideas and support has been overwhelming.

Our community engagement strategy has revealed enormous support in the area for an art and community centre. It has shown a great need for community arts space, support for a contemporary art initiative to enhance the area’s creative networks, and has revealed a real need for greater public realm space. V22 had always envisioned a key artist studio offering within the main building of Louise house. V22 believes it is vital to support the production of art alongside its promotion and exhibition. The studio unit also enables sustainability - both financially and in terms of a neighbouring stakeholder involvement long term. We are delighted that our plans for the rear building and the gardens surrounding the property have been informed by the local community, their needs and desires for the area. We already have a waiting list of local people wanting to present and deliver initiatives in the community studio and garden.

Funding & Works

V22 is very pleased to have received funding from the Mayor of London’s High Street Fund and Arts Council England Small Capital funding in 2015/16 for the redevelopment of the property.

With this funding we are able to:

- purchase the long leasehold on the property;
- renovate the rear building as an exhibition space, community studio, café and events space;
- provide ramped access to the rear building at both ground and basement levels;
- provide a community garden to the rear of the property with disabled access and disabled toilets;
- redesign and build the front garden to form a single space in combination with the Forest Hill Library and Pools;
- integrate an artists’ garden – created by Fergal Stapleton – into the front garden as a piece of public art;
- repair windows and external doors;
- repair and replace some downpipes and soil stacks and remove redundant piping to front façade.

All of these ideas have come about through discussions with the local community, our artist tenants, officers from London Borough of Lewisham, and our local conservation officer.

Integral to implementing our aims for the future of Louise House will be progressing the project with a high quality of design. Equally, the long term nature of the project requires the most stringent adherence to excellence in construction methods, finishing, and being fit for purpose.



1.3 Planning Context

Forest Hill High Street

Our High Streets have long been a popular topic of conversations amongst planners and other professionals due to their changing nature and the need to adapt to continuously changing consumer trends, technological advances and economy. Discussions intensified with the publication of Portas review, which unleashed a string of robust discussions on the topic of whether our belloved high streets will survive, or is it time to say goodbye. Forest Hill with Sydenham and Kirkdale became a Portas Pilot (SEE3) Town in July 2012.

Forest Hill, a Portas Pilot Town, is classified by the Core Strategy (2011) as a 'District Hub'; a strategic place of activity in the borough and is the sixth largest of the major and district centers in Lewisham, indentified as an area of 'underutilized land' with 'regeneration potential'.

District Hubs are seen by both Lewisham's local planning policy and by the London Plan as key locations for change and concentrate uses which serve the wider and local community. Following the extension of the Overground train line accessibility to central London has significantly improved. A small creative sector has also established in Forest Hill with live/ work units at Havelock Walk and Clyde Terrace. The listed library adjacent to Louise House, the swimming pools and the small park on Dartmouth road are seen as important community assets in the area.

The provision of cultural and creative opportunities in the borough is strongly supported by Lewisham's Arts Strategy 2009-2015 which seeks to develop the borough's identity as a vital, creative place to live, work and learn through the re-provision of high quality creative destinations.

The High Street is moving from being a retail designation to providing a vital role within our society and local communities and the shift towards the so called 'retail theatre' concept, whereby there are a combination of uses is proving to be very successful in bringing people into shops, due to its offer of a unique visual and shopping experience. Opportunities for high streets and independent stores which offer not only retail, but also a social element, such as workshops or on-site product making are becoming increasingly popular.

The proposals seek to contribute to the vitality of the District Centre of Forest Hill in line with the ambitions of Policy SP3 Core Strategy to improve the streetscape and public realm of Forest Hill, enhancing the town centre's historic character and supporting the delivery of a creative, literacy, active quarter at this end of the High Street.

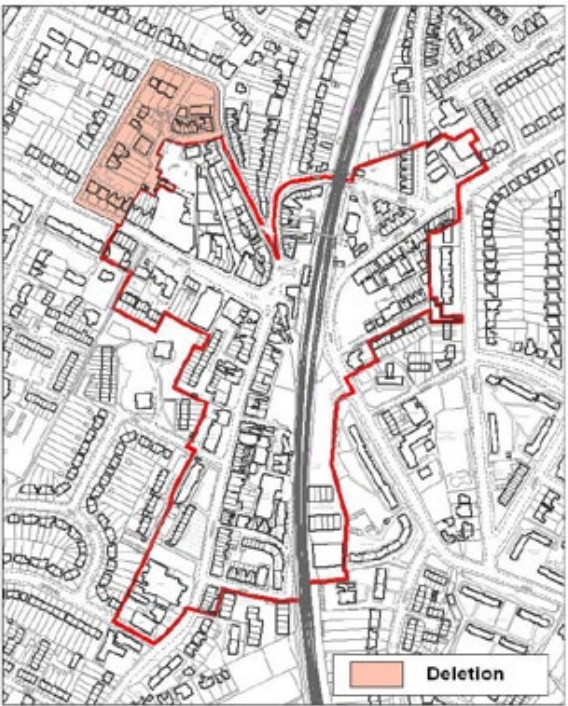
Planning Context

Lewisham's Local Development Plan is formed up of a number of strategic, local and supplementary documents. Those which are relevant to consider for Louise House include The London Plan (2015), Lewisham Core Strategy (2011), the Site Allocations Local Plan (2013), The Development Management Plan (2014) and the saved policies of the Lewisham Unitary Development (UDP) 2004. A number of supporting planning documents (SPDs) support the implementation of the formal development plan documents (DPDs) including the Conservation Area Appraisal for Forest Hill adopted by the Council in July 2010.

Site Specific Planning Designations

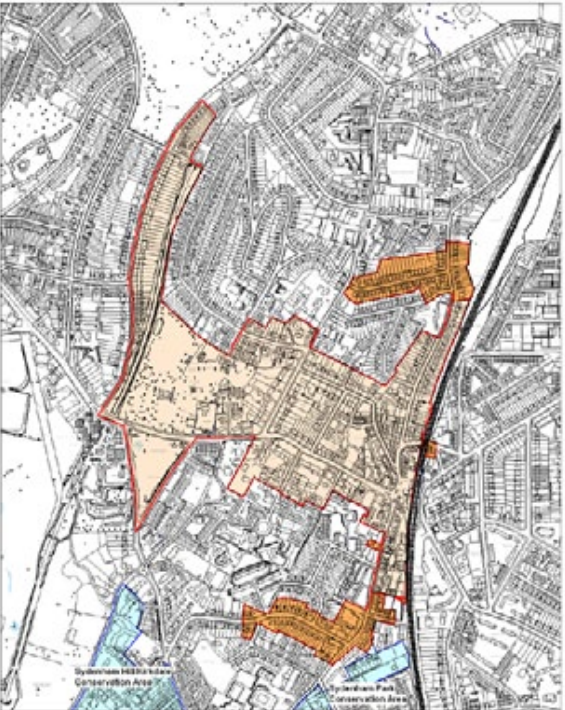
The site falls within the boundary of the Forest Direct Centre and Forest Hill Conservation Area (CA). In 2010 the boundaries of the CA were extended to include Louise House, the Library and the Forest Hill Swimming Pools.

District Centre Boundary



Deletion to Forest Hill District Centre

Forest Hill Conservation Area (2010)



1.4 Site Context

Earlier this year Lewisham Council consulted on a proposed feasibility design for wider public realm improvements to the Dartmouth Road streetscape in Forest Hill, SE23. This project is partially funded by TfL through the Borough's LIP Programme.

The work aims to develop ambitious plans to attract further funding and set a high standard for the streetscape in key places across the borough.

The detailed design phase will continue until December 2015, and this will include further public consultation. It is anticipated that work will start on site in March 2016.

V22 has developed the proposals for Louise House and Forest Hill Library in conjunction with Project Centre, the designers for the wider public realm improvements of Dartmouth Road, with the London Borough and Lewisham to ensure a holistic scheme can be delivered as part of the wider public realm enhancements proposed. Project Centre are developing proposals to introduce wider public realm enhancements along Dartmouth Road in conjunction with Transport business area of Lewisham Council.

Due to the funding V22 has secured, V22's planning application is coming in advance of these wider public realm improvements to meet funding requirements and ensure delivery. However V22's proposals will complement these wider proposals and V22 will continue to engage with Project Centre at the detail design stage to ensure a cohesive street scheme is delivered.

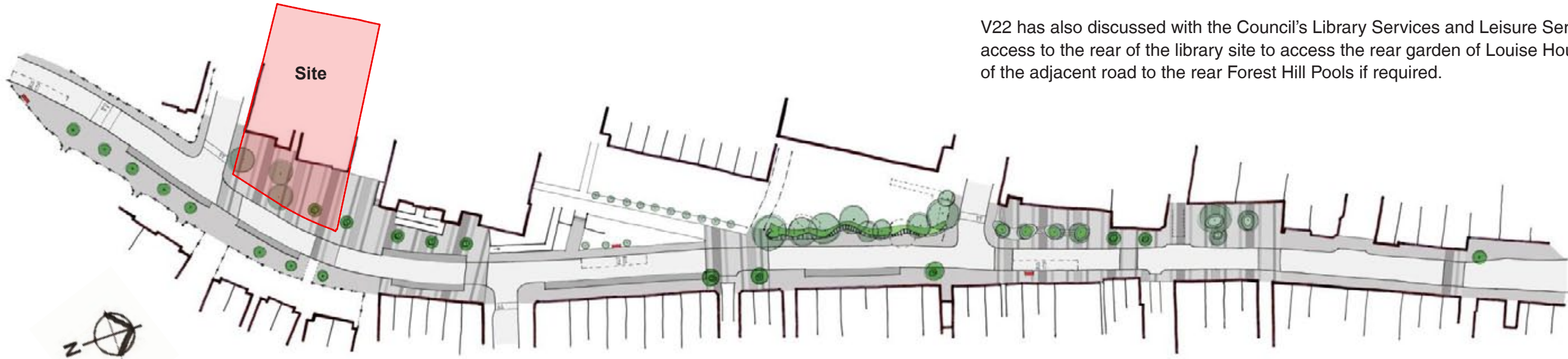
Key scheme objectives for the Dartmouth Road Improvement Scheme include;

- to reduce speed to 20mph
- manage traffic and parking
- support the local economy
- enhance the environment
- improve the sense of arrival in Forest Hill; and
- increase pedestrian activity along Dartmouth Road.

Initial consultation has taken place on the wider improvements proposed along Dartmouth Road with key stakeholders and were presented by Lewisham Council to the Forest Hill local assembly on 24 March 2015. Leaflets have also been delivered to properties immediately affected by the wider Dartmouth Road proposals and the initial feasibilities are available to view online. Emerging proposals were also presented at the SEE3 Town Team Meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The scheme considers raising the entire street, providing high quality materials at key spaces, narrowing the carriageway to 6.2m, inserting parking bays and new bus stops, and explores retaining some existing trees and planting new trees where possible.

Engagement with Project Centre and Lewisham Council will continue through the future detail design stages to ensure harmony in the materials being used as part of the wider public realm improvements to Dartmouth Road. The works proposed outside Louise House and Forest Hill Library use a similar material palette to share an overall aesthetic with the other key spaces on Dartmouth Road.

V22 has also discussed with the Council's Library Services and Leisure Services to agree access to the rear of the library site to access the rear garden of Louise House and the use of the adjacent road to the rear Forest Hill Pools if required.



PROJECT CENTRE

Dartmouth Road  
Public Realm Enhancements – Feasibility Design

SEE3 Town Team meeting, 16 April 2015



2.0 Landscape Proposal

2.1 Vision and Objectives

Louise House Front Garden

The landscape strategy for the Louise House front garden seeks to reinstate the garden as usable green space which both reflects on the heritage of the Louise House building and complements its use as artist studios.

The proposal seeks to revert the now predominantly hard frontage to Louise House back to a space which celebrates its garden potential and provides a platform for artistic expression which can be enjoyed by all. It also seeks to enrich the pedestrian experience from Dartmouth Road, once again allowing sight lines across the garden and to Louise House.

The proposal will provide a visually elegant frontage to Louise House, with framed terraces gently stepping down to Dartmouth Road, providing appeal through the use of varied evergreen and perennial planting, as well as seasonally blossoming trees. From the street, views toward the historic building are opened up and visual connection is created between Louise House and Forest Hill Library.

PLAN KEY

- ① Main entry to Louise House from Dartmouth Road retained
- ② Secondary stepped entry to Louise House from Forest Hill pools
- ③ Rebuilt entry steps to Louise House/ Forest Hill Library
- ④ Open lawn terrace
- ⑤ Amenity planting
- ⑥ Upper library terrace
- ⑦ Stepped access to library terrace from Dartmouth Road
- ⑧ Stepped access to library terrace from Louise House
- ⑨ New seating on library terrace
- ⑩ Feature granite steps leading to open lawn terrace
- ⑪ Childrens sculpture plinth
- ⑫ Artist designed entry gate
- ⑬ Artist designed mirror installation
- ⑭ Existing covered bike stands, now easily accessible from Louise House/ Forest Hill Library

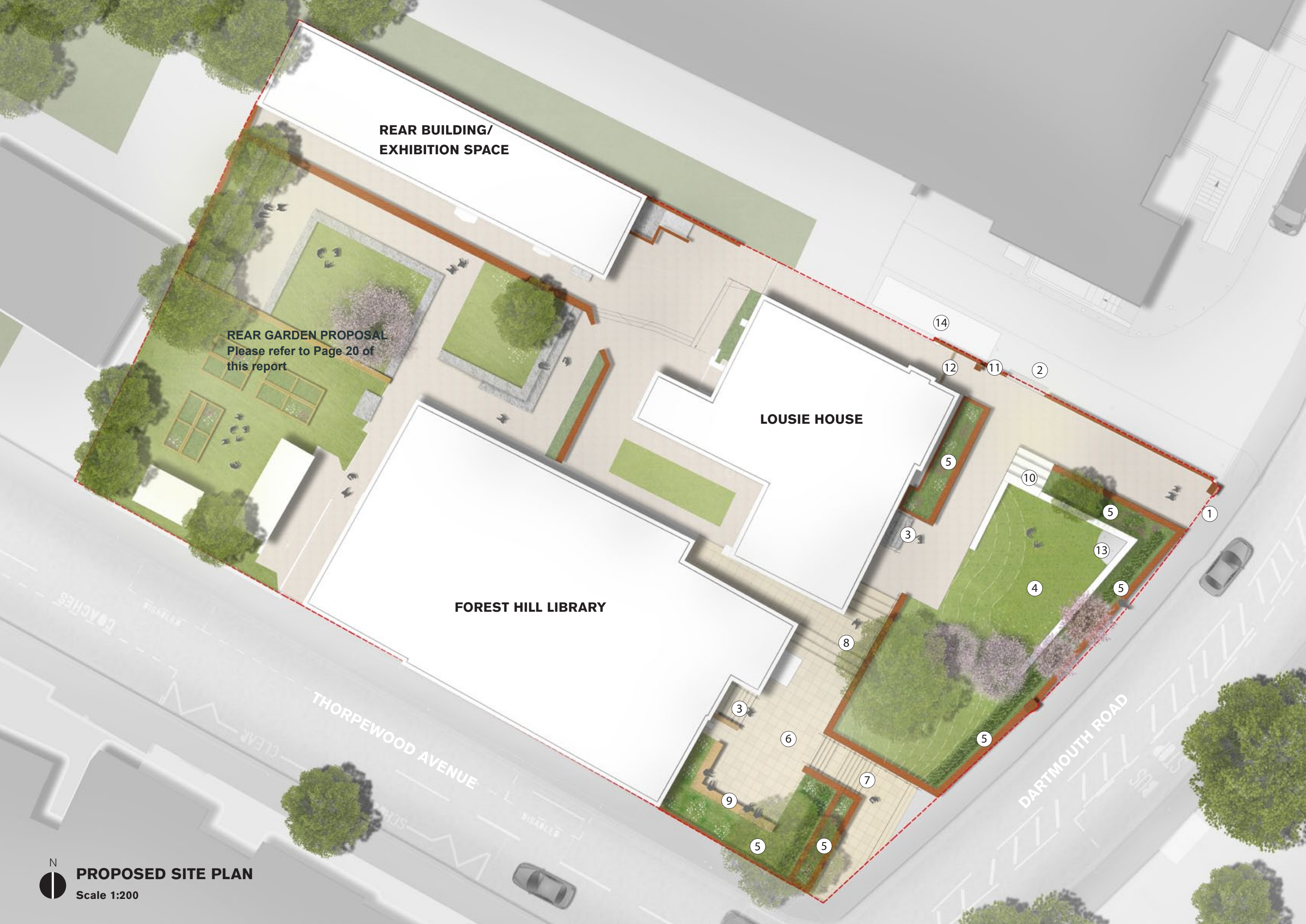
Forest Hill Library Entrance Landscape

The proposal for the Forest Hill Library Entrance Landscape seeks to open up views to the building from the street and create a more welcoming, direct approach to the Library entrance than the current site allows. It seeks to provide an ease of circulation between proposed upper and lower terraces, which each provide seating opportunities. Introduced sensory planting seeks to enrich the entrance and provide an enjoyable place to rest and meet.

The overall proposal will also provide increased permeability between Forest Hill Library, Louise House and Forest Hill Pools, with the design allowing for flexibility in consideration of the proposed future works to Dartmouth Road.

Louise House Rear Garden

For the Rear Garden proposal please see page 20.



Indicative View West overlooking Dartmouth Road toward proposed Front Entry Landscape  
HTA Design - Louise House/ Forest Hill Library | V22 - Landscape Design and Access Statement



2.2 Hard Landscape Strategy - Walls and Surfaces

The Hard Landscape materials for Louise House Front Garden and Forest Hill Library entry landscape are chosen to complement on the existing building treatments, while also improving the overall quality and usability of the surfaces and furniture.

Low walls fronting Dartmouth Road are rebuilt in brick, with a deeper profile allowing for seating edges throughout the site. On the upper exhibition terrace low granite walls are used to frame the open grass area, with an on-grade mirror installation incorporated, as designed by artist Fergal Stapleton. Resin bonded gravel reflects the historic gravel found in the Louise House front garden c1910, while the raised terrace fronting Forest Hill Library is re-paved in a sandstone paver to complement the existing cladding on the current facade.

Existing Site Plan



Indicative Material Schedule

	Use/ Description	Material	Size	Colour
Surfacing				
ST1	Louise House footways	Resin Bonded Gravel	To LA specificaiton	Rose Pink 1-3mm
ST2	Paving and Steps to Forest Hill Library entrance	Sawn sandstone paver	600 x random lengths	Moseldon
ST3	Surfacing to make good Dartmouth Road footway	Macadam surfacing	To LA specificaiton	n/a
Walls				
E1	Brick wall edging to main thoroughfares	Dutch Brick	440mm x 65mm x 107mm	Red/Brown
E2	Granite Wall and Steps to exhibition terrace	Granite	Custom to suit	Pale Pink/ White
Furniture				
F1	Bench seating to Forest Hill Library	Reinforced cast stone	3m (x3 units)	Beige

Proposed Site Plan



2.2 Hard Landscape Strategy - Walls and Surfaces



ST1 Resin Bonded Gravel Surface Treatment



E1 Dutch Brick Walls



E2 Granite Walls to exhibition terrace



ST2 Moseldon Yorkstone Paver



Tactile paving to steps



Seating to Library Terrace



Granite Stair

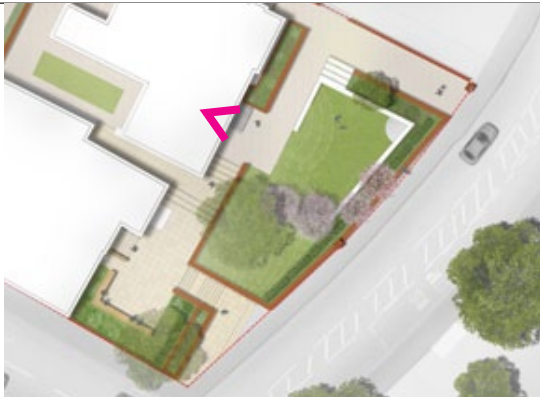


Yorkstone Stair





Location Plan



Location Plan



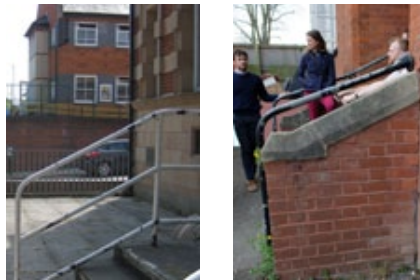


2.3 Hard Landscape Strategy - Railings

There is a need for new metalwork as part of the alterations to the forecourt of the library and the curtilage of Louise House. This includes the railing to the existing steps to Louise House, the railing to Forest Hill Library, the guarding to Thorpewood Road, several handrails throughout the site and a feature entry gate addition between Louise House Front and Rear Garden.

Existing metalwork found on site provides inspiration for several of the proposed railing designs. For detailed explanatory text relating to the design of the proposed railings, please refer to the Former Laundry Design and Access Statement by V22 and HTA Design.

Existing Site Plan



Existing Library Railing (left) and existing Louise House entry wall and railing (right) to be removed and replaced



(Above) Existing Library railings at entry to be removed and replaced

(Below) Railing between Louise House and Forest Hill Pools to be partially removed to allow access route through



PLAN KEY

- Existing railing to be removed
- Entry gate - refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 014
- Safety railing to Upper Library Terrace - refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 015
- Handrail to Forest Hill Librarys steps - refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 015
- Handrail to Louise House steps - refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 014
- Handrail to access routes - to suit proposed railing design family

Proposed Site Plan



2.3 Hard Landscape Strategy - Railings



Existing metalwork to Louise House entry



Existing metalwork to Louise House entry



Existing railing to back garden to be retained



Existing railing between Forest Hill pools and Louise House to be partially retained



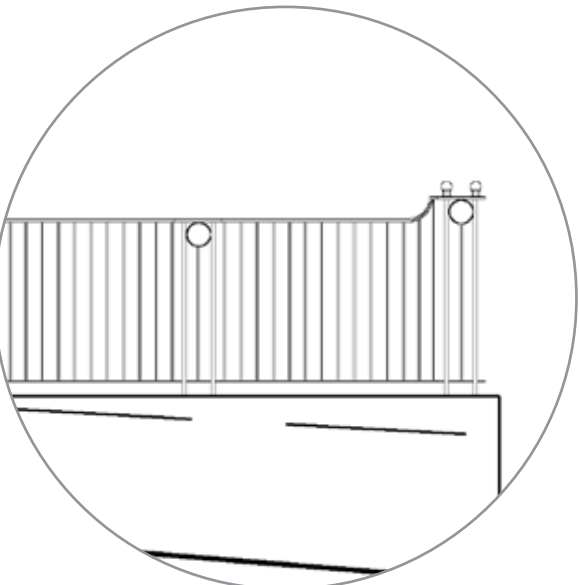
Railing concept to back garden, refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 014



Railing concept to Louise House entrance, refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 014



Railing concept to Library Terrace, refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 015



Railing concept to Library Terrace, refer to detail drawing HTA-A DR 015



2.4 Soft Landscape Strategy

Trees, Shrubs and Herbaceous Planting

Several significant trees currently exist on site, notably four mature lime trees which front both Louise House and Forest Hill Library. Two of these trees are proposed to be removed (one Category U) in order to open up the views to the front of the buildings and create better visual connection between the properties/ Dartmouth Road and allow for the rebuilding of the brick wall frontage. New blossoming trees will be planted within the garden, along with structural hedge planting to the front. Planting to Forest Hill Library is typified by a ‘sensory’ mix of fragrant species such as lavender and rosemary, while the Louise House planting transitions into grasses and perennials.

See Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Tamla Trees for further detail on tree retention/ removal

Existing Site Plan



Existing Trees on Site

Number of Category A Trees	0
Number of Category B Trees	3
Number of Category C Trees	4
Number of Category U Trees	1
Total Number of Trees	8

Existing Trees Removed

Number of Category A Trees Removed	0
Number of Category B Trees Removed	1
Number of Category C Trees Removed	3
Number of Category U Trees Removed	1
Total Number of Trees Removed	5

- Existing Tree to be removed
- Existing Tree to be retained, Tilia spp
- Existing Tree to be retained, Prunus spp.

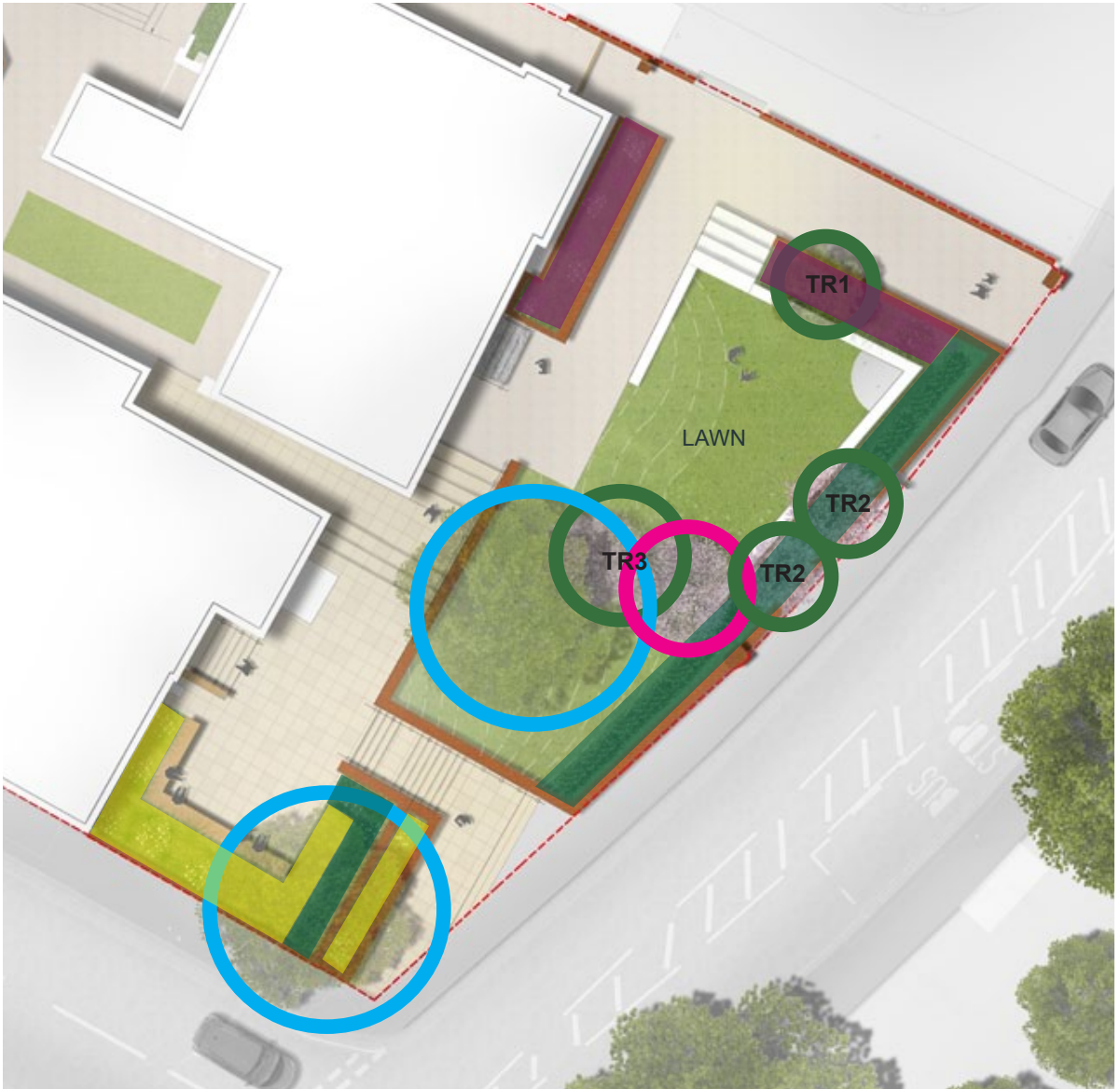
Indicative Tree Schedule

Ref	Botanical Name	Common Name	Height in cm	Min container size	No, proposed
TR1	Cornus contrevorsa 'varigata'	Wedding cake tree	500-700	RB	1
TR2	Malus 'Evereste'	Crab Apple	400-500	RB	2
TR3	Prunus avium 'Plena'	Wild Cherry	400-500	RB	1

Indicative Shrub/Herbaceous Schedule

Ref	Botanical Name	Common Name	Height in cm	Min container size	
-	Lavendula angustifolia 'Hidcote'	Lavender	20-30	2L	
-	Rosmarinus officinalis	Rosemary	30-40	2L	
-	Salvia x sylvestris 'Mainacht'	Sage	20-30	2L	
-	Artemisia	Wormwood	50-60	3L	
	Miscanthus sinensis	Eulalia	60-80	3L	
	Stipa tenuissima	Feather grass	50-60	3L	
	Verbena bonariensis	Verbena	30-40	3L	
	Gaura lindheimeri 'Siskiyou Pink'	Gaura	30-40	3L	
	Sanguisorba officinalis	Great burnet	30-40	3L	
	Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam hedge	50-70	3L	

Proposed Site Plan



2.4 Soft Landscape Strategy



Hedge Planting to Dartmouth Road



Planting typology Mix A to Louise House



Planting typology Mix B ‘Sensory’ to Forest Hill Library



Existing planting adjacent to Forest Hill Pools



Malus ‘Evereste’



Cornus contrevorsa 'varigata'

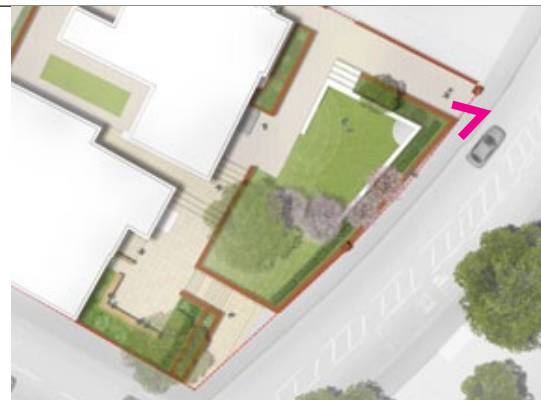


Prunus avium 'Plena'



Prunus avium 'Plena' - Autumn colour

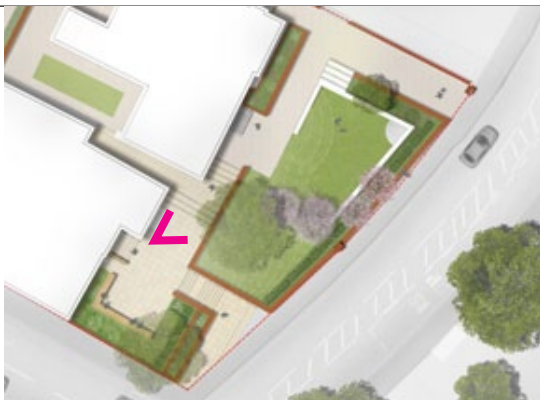




Location Plan



Indicative View toward Louise House from Dartmouth Road



Location Plan



Indicative View of Louise House Front Garden from proposed Forest Hill Library Terrace

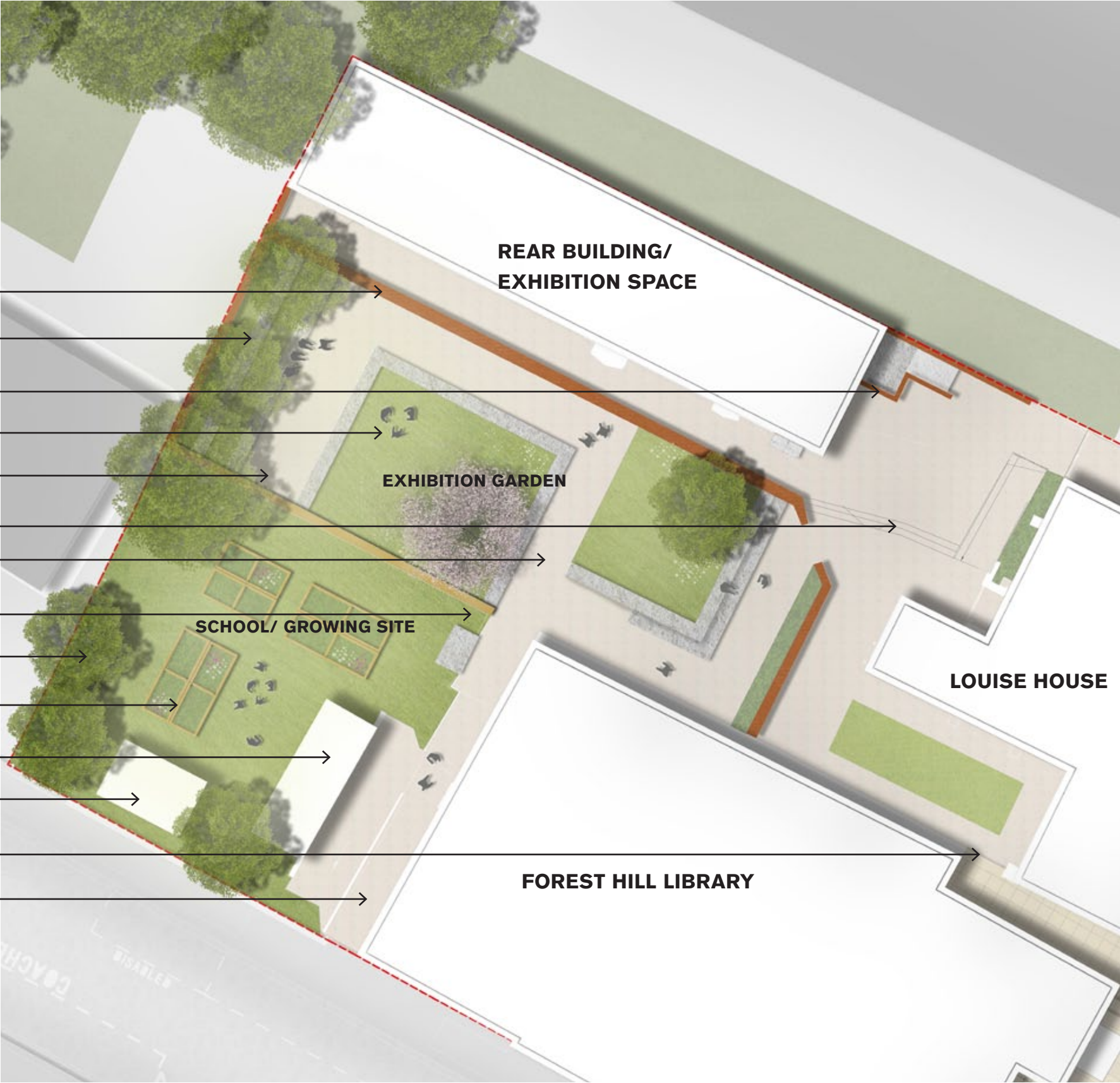


Louise House Rear Garden

This application forms phase 1 of V22's ambitions for the site. The proposals for the rear garden accompanying the planning application are for illustrative purposes as the rear garden design does not require planning permission. In the near future, plans will be developed to bring the basement of the laundry into use. V22 will also be completing general repair to the windows of the laundry and the front elevation of Louise House. Based on Lewisham's guidance repair work is considered maintenance and planning permission is not required in order to carry out these works. These works will be completed during the implementation of the landscape proposals

The landscape strategy for the Louise House rear garden seeks to create an exhibition garden which complements the adjacent artists exhibition building. The proposal circulates around two grass terraces which allow for flexible seating and gathers, with planted terraced gabions along the western wall providing a 'stage' at the focal point of the garden. Adjacent to the exhibition garden are proposed growing beds to be utilised by the local school, along with new tree planting along the Western boundary and a tool shed.

- Existing wall retained, historic railing refurbished
- Raised terraces
- Brick wall lowered, railing added
- Space for art/ sculpture
- Potential access between Exhibition Garden and Growing site
- Existing steps and ramp retained
- Circulation/ access paths in Resin Bonded Gravel to match rear garden
- Planted railing boundary
- New Tree planting
- Proposed planting beds
- Existing pram store
- Proposed tool shed
- Wall removed, proposed gate
- Ramped access to Library/ Back Garden resurfaced in Resin Bonded Gravel to match rear garden



Terraced walls/ seating edges



Gabion Walls



Herbaceous Planting



New tree planting



Resin Bonded Gravel to match Front Garden



School Garden Plots



New Flowering Tree Species





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