

14/11/12

ROYSSÉ COURT GARDENS

These notes and accompanying plans provide a summary of assessment, analysis and design study for the refurbishment and enhancement of the Royssé Court gardens, carried out following a preliminary meeting between Mike Habermehl of Adams Habermehl and Abingdon Town Council on the 3rd July. The Town Council subsequently commissioned Adams Habermehl to prepare landscape / urban design proposals, as well as instructing commission of a topographic survey as a basis for the proposals.

See Adams Habermehl plan 0466.1.1 to locate landscape the analysis references set out below and plan 0466.1.2 for the Landscape Framework proposals.

A topographic survey plan has been prepared by Michael Jennings Associates of Abingdon. As well as providing a basis for the current design study, the survey will be submitted to the Town Council as paper and electronic copy for ATC's records and future reference purposes.

Through reference to plan 0466.1.1, the following physical landscape matters need to be addressed:

- 1, 2 The purple plum and crab apple trees are in significant decline, with rot evidenced by fungal growth – fell before they become dangerous.
- 3 Crab apple tree mature / over-mature carrying deadwood. This tree has a limited future and should be replaced as part of the works.
- 4 A substantial proportion of the access area paving is broken and past paving repairs / replacements detract from the character of the wider space.
- 5 The existing boundary retaining wall is outdated, fussy and unattractive. Consider simplification / replacement.
- 6 The indent in the wall is no longer needed as the bus stop has been removed and the space now just attracts bins on collection day. the indent area brick wall is cracked.
- 7 The end wall of the Crown & Thistle is poorly painted and unattractive. The wing wall to the SE site boundary also unattractive.
- 8 The former fountain and planter doesn't make a positive contribution to the space, creating a false focus and, together with the surrounding paving, it detracts from more important routes and spatial functions.
- 9 The seats are becoming dilapidated.
- 10 The existing planting is poorly structured:
 - (10.1) the seasonal bedding appears secondary to the retaining wall;
 - (10.2) the raised display bed is visually defined by the support structures rather than the display itself;

(10.3) the cotoneaster (weeping standard form) seems a disconnected element and exacerbates the lack of coherence to the existing planting;

(10.4) the existing shrub planting to the southern Crown & Thistle garden area is relatively unstructured and does little to enhance the space.

- 11 Opportunity to repair the school motto keystone over the main Guildhall entrance arch.

Wider issues for the use and function of the Roysse Court space include:

- A The route to the main Guildhall building entrance and key building elevation are blocked by tree 1. Legibility of access to building through central arch is poorly defined.
- B The main Guildhall entrance is subject to anti-social uses.
- C The registry office entrance is simply defined by signage, with has no presence or celebratory space, and poor access routing.
- D The proposed location for the Tourist Information Centre access is poorly defined.
- E The court is poorly structured in landscape terms, functioning as a courtyard with planting and not as a garden. The space requires a different approach contribute to a garden character alongside other access uses.
- F The court does not provide positive opportunities for wedding photographs.

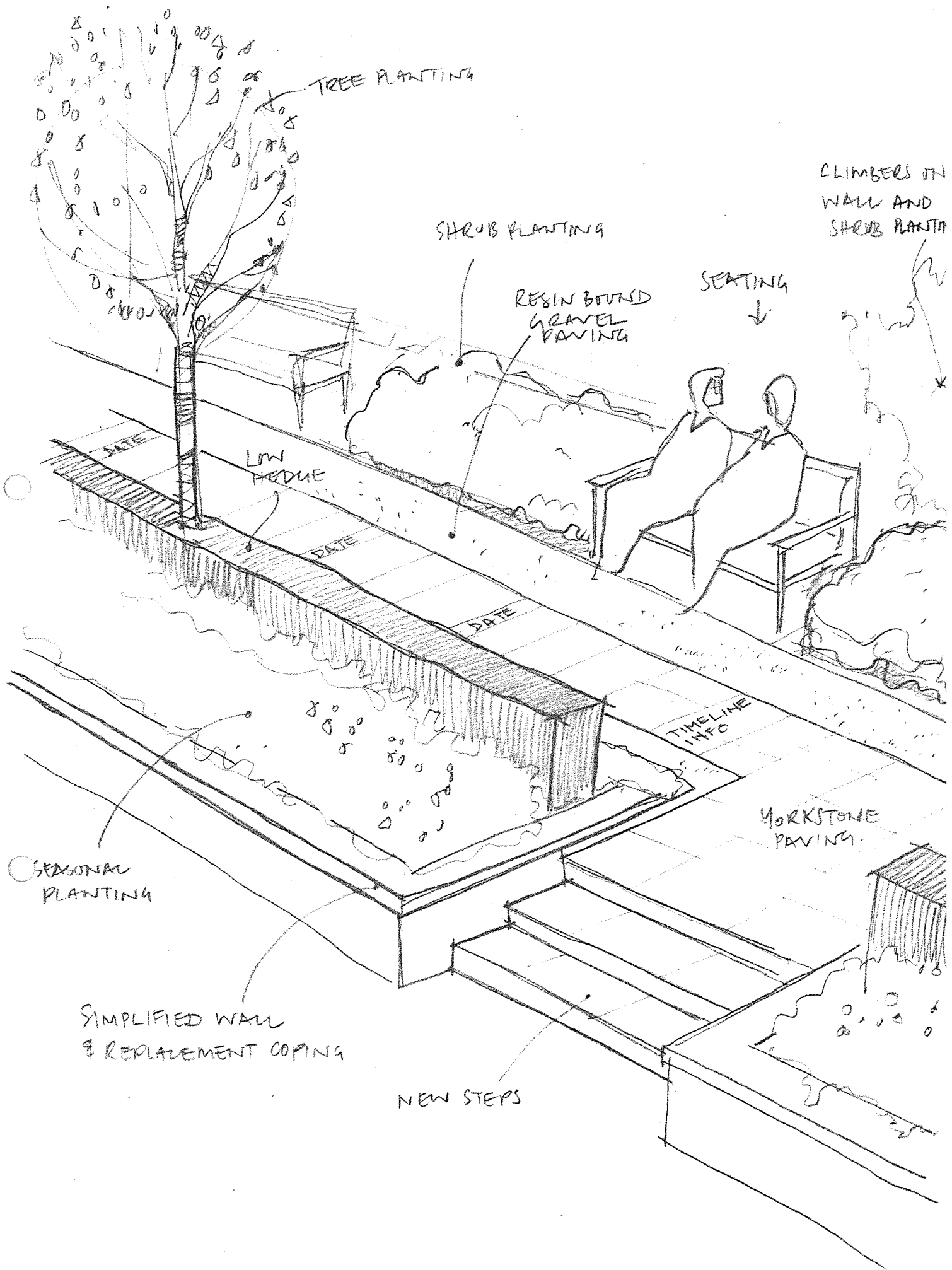
PROPOSALS

The proposed layout set out in plan 0466.1.2 includes:

- Re-defining the court as a garden, by lifting paving and planting shrub beds against the building so that planting softens the built form and frames the space. A low hedge defines the street aspect to the garden creating separation but also maintaining inter-visibility.
- The path network is made more direct. The main path provides a better connection from the street to the Guildhall entrance, with the path route, paving detail, deterrent paving etc directing pedestrians to the central archway entrance.
- A new paving layout creates improved entrance areas to the Registrars office and TIC. The registrar's office entrance includes improved seating for waiting wedding parties etc.
- As well as the repaved western steps, a better level / disabled paved access is provided to the Registrar's / TIC offices from the northern street access point.
- Replacement of the existing trees. The existing stock is diseased and in decline, and the proposals incorporate a coordinated tree planting for mid size clear stemmed standard trees to maintain views whilst providing landscape structure. Single street

frontage variety and second variety to courtyard lawn area with species chosen to provide landscape structure, scale and seasonal interest.

- The southern garden area adjacent to the Crown & Thistle is opened up and a new path is formed along the frontage, with new steps from the street. The path is envisaged as an 'Abingdon timeline' with key dates/ events from Abingdon's history recorded along the path route as engraved / acid etched paving flags or similar.
- The south of the timeline path incorporates seating facing the street and the northern section seating faces into the garden. A low yew / box hedge provides distinct evergreen landscape structure and division between garden and street. More exuberant seasonal planting can then be incorporated into adjacent beds to provide diversity and interest with structure maintained even when seasonal beds are empty.
- The site-edge retaining wall is simplified to just retain the outer line of brickwork with a simple linear stone coping to match the proposed Yorkstone paving. The remainder of the 'planting box' elements have upper brick courses removed so that any remaining elements are hidden below the finished bedding planting level.
- Paths are proposed to be in Yorkstone and resin bound gravel, as two materials that will stand the test of time and complement one-another, and are used in the Abbey Archway nearby. The combination also breaks the paving and allows proportional use of different materials to reflect budgets. Building entrance paved areas are visually reinforced through framing with matching setts, whilst tightly laid small cobbles provide a traditional deterrent paving at the Guildhall secondary arches. The Yorkstone is extended up to the Guildhall porch for continuity.
- Sensor activated lighting is proposed within the Guildhall arch entrance area to discourage anti-social behaviour. Traditional lighting is also proposed to provide a focus and security lighting at either end of the timeline path route, with the light type reflecting the existing traditional lanterns outside the Guildhall and the proposed TIC entrance.
- The existing Roysse's school information signboard is reinstated and the school motto keystone above the Guildhall entrance archway is repaired.
- Planting includes flowering trees, evergreen hedging, evergreen and deciduous shrubs, herbaceous planting, seasonal bedding, lawn areas and spring bulbs within the lawn.
- The registry office entrance is always in shade and the different paved and planted areas at the north of the courtyard, including opened building aspects, framed doorways etc. allow greater opportunity for wedding photographs to be taken on site.



SKETCH PLAN & SECTION - CROWN & THISTLE GARDEN.

