

New Practice

The National Transgender Monument Design & Access Statement

Sparkle
Feb 2024
Rev B

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Introduction

In May 2023, New Practice entered the competition to design The National Transgender Monument in response to an artistic brief report coordinated by Arup. The artistic brief was the outcome from an extensive consultation with the trans community, ensuring their voices shaped the competition's direction. The panel responsible for selecting the winning design comprised representatives from the transgender community, Arup, and Manchester City Council.

Following the July 2023 announcement of New Practice's winning design, the team engaged with the community during Sparkle Weekend, gathering valuable feedback. Since then, New Practice, alongside an experienced project team, has been at the forefront of project delivery. Collaborating closely with Arup, they continue to consult the community and involve key stakeholders in shaping the monument's future in Sackville Gardens.

This document provides an overview of the design process, highlighting key decisions and outcomes that have led to the proposed design, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity, community input, and meaningful engagement.

Personal Statement within Initial Competition Entry:

When I thought about how I wanted to respond to the project brief, I began by reflecting on my journey to embracing my own transness and becoming authentically who I am today. I do not deny that there have been darker moments where grief and loss has felt like a tidal wave that has tried to strike me down – collective grief experienced by our whole community and my own personal grief of friends being taken away too soon. Today in the UK, across social media and the news we often witness reports where the narrative for living as transgender is painful and our existence is debated. I reject this narrative.

I celebrate my trans siblings and I thank them for inspiring me to live authentically even on the days where social media, new reports and aspects of society tell me I should not. This is why the narrative of trans identity should focus on trans joy and passing of light to one another.

When I accepted my identity and began to embrace the beauty in being trans, I felt a weight lift. It opened a door to a new existence where I felt seen, loved and supported amongst my peers. Every day I am thankful for reaching acceptance of my identity which was achieved through support from my community and the love they have given me. I hope that living as openly and freely as I do now will allow me to pass my light on to any trans person who needs to hear that it is enough to just exist as they are.

1.2 Project Team

Client

Sparkle – The National Transgender Charity

Sparkle – The National Transgender Charity began as the organisers of the annual Sparkle Weekend, hosted in Sackville Gardens in the heart of Manchester's Gay Village.

Since becoming a registered charity in 2011, the Sparkle Weekend has grown exponentially, and is now the largest free-to-attend celebration of gender diversity in the world, held over the second weekend in July every year.

The Charity also organises Manchester's Transgender Day of Remembrance service, one of the largest events of its kind in the UK, and offers guidance and training to businesses, public sector organisations, and educational institutions on how to support gender variant colleagues, customers, service users, students, and other stakeholders.

Run by a team of passionate and dedicated volunteers, the Charity also undertakes projects throughout the year to further its aims of promoting a positive representation of the trans*, non-binary/gender-fluid and intersex community.

Design Team

Arup – Project Lead, Community Engagement, Planning Consultant & Structural Engineer

Arup is a member owned professional services firm providing design, engineering, architecture, planning and advisory services across every aspect of the built environment.

Arup Community Engagement collaborates with community partners to provide expertise and skills, investing a portion of income in Community Engagement work. Arup has been supporting Sparkle on the National Transgender Monument re-design. Creating a bespoke, person centred and experience-led consultation process to capture the needs and wishes of trans communities.

Consultants

RSK Group (Central Alliance, SCP and Envirolab) –
Ground Surveys (Topographic, Conditions and Drainage)

AECOM – Heritage Consultant

New Practice – Design Lead & Architects

New Practice is a women and LGBTQ+ led architecture practice which exists to develop the community, creative and cultural capacity of cities and to connect people with the decision making processes that underpin their lived experience. We work at the forefront of place-based practice, ensuring that community-led briefs and shared decision making shape the future of our built environment.

At New Practice we work with our clients to encourage and support individual, social, civic and intercultural participation. Through positive stewardship and active collaboration with every part of the community we draw out local knowledge, strengthen networks, create new links and enhance what already exists.

We build confidence in public and private settings and enable shared participation through public consultation, creative engagement, temporary intervention, research, studies and strategic long-term design across the built environment.



ARUP

New
Practice

AECOM

RSK

S|C|P
Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design

2.0 Site

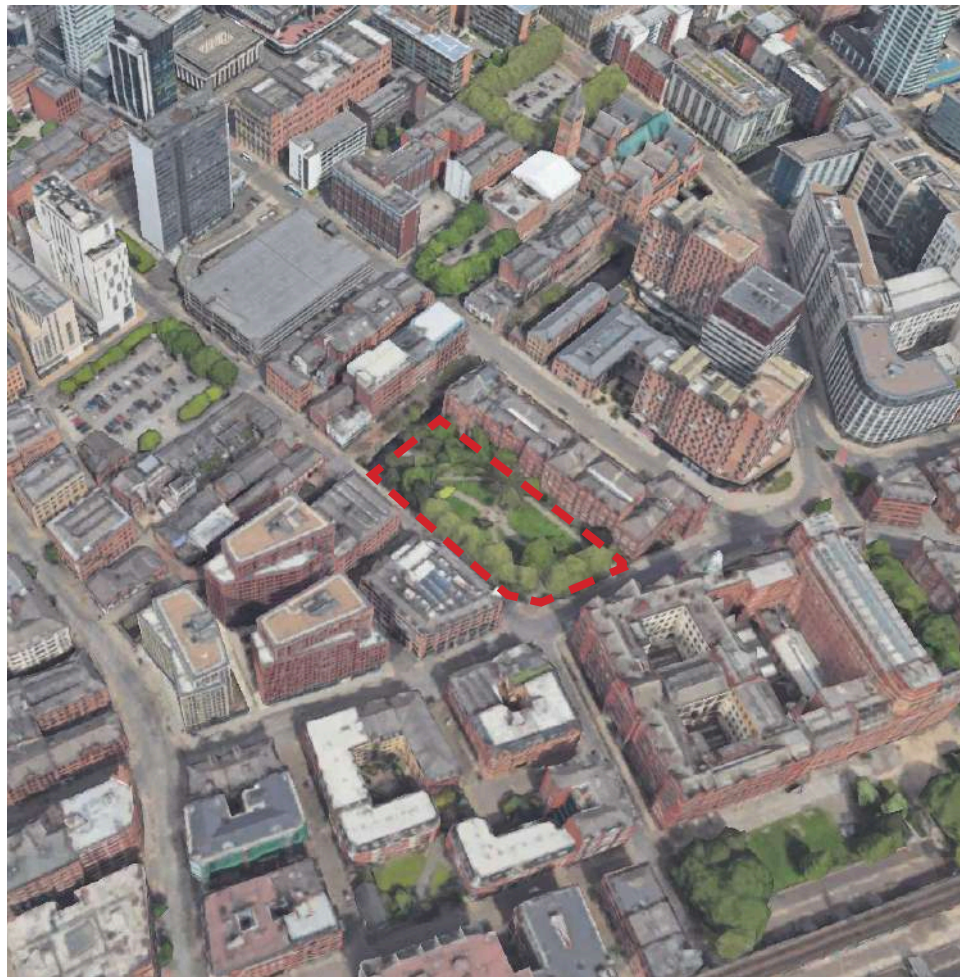
2.1 Site Location

Wider Context

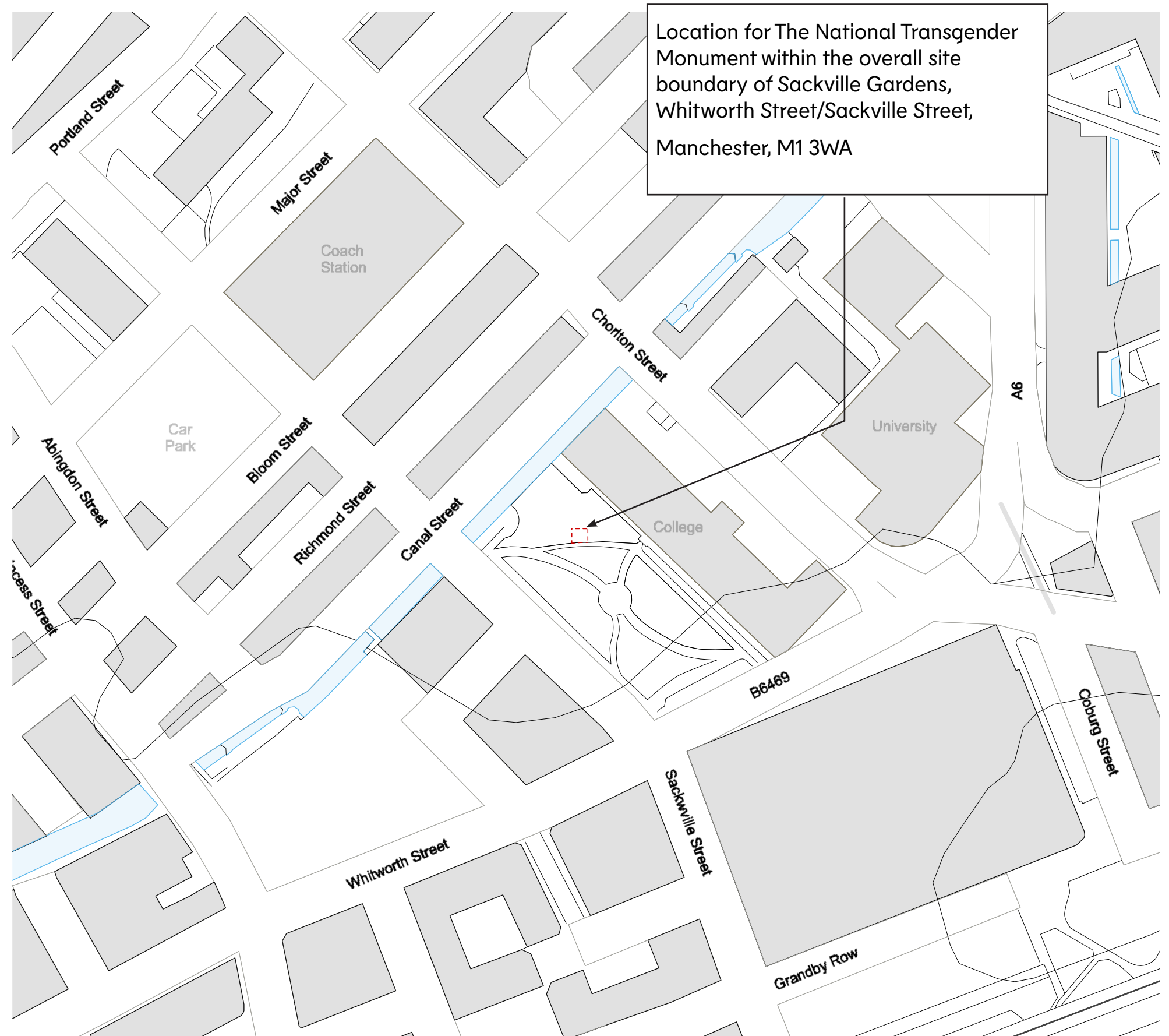
Sackville Gardens is an important public greenspace in Manchester, sited centrally within the city's established LGBT district. It is bounded by Manchester College's Shena Simon Campus on one side and Whitworth Street, Sackville Street, the Rochdale Canal and Canal Street on the others.

The park is rich in history and offers both residents and visitors a central green space within the urban cityscape, close to the vibrant and diverse mix of cultural, retail and lifestyle amenities for which Manchester is well-known.

The gardens form an important piece within the wider offering of green spaces in inner-city Manchester.



Google Street View of Sackville Gardens



Site Location Plan

2.2 Local Context

Contributing to the local context by providing a green respite amidst the urban landscape. Surrounded by a mix of historical and modern architecture, the park complements the nearby LGBTQ+ district, known for its diverse culture and community spirit.

Adjacent to the Village, Sackville Gardens plays a significant role in Manchester's LGBTQ+ history, hosting events and commemorating influential figures like Alan Turing. Its location is also the starting point of Manchester's free walking tour. The gardens fosters a sense of inclusivity, acting as a focal point for various celebrations and community gatherings.



Image: Manchester Pride – Photography: Gemma Parker



Image: Sparkle Weekend



Image: Canal Street, LGBTQ+ District



Image: Manchester's Free Walking Tour

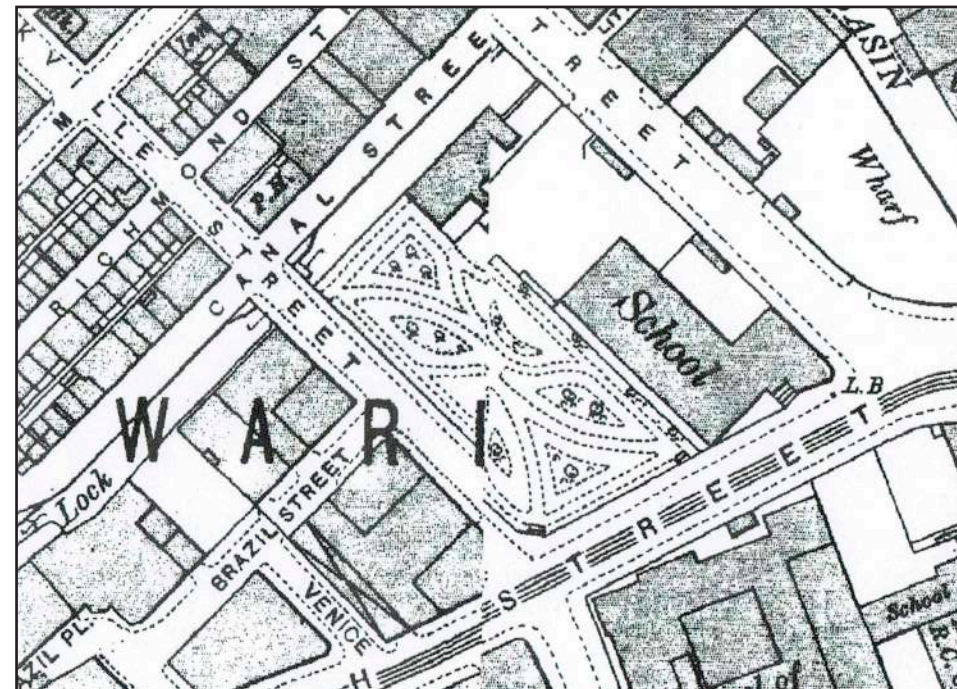
2.3 Site History and Heritage

Historic Maps

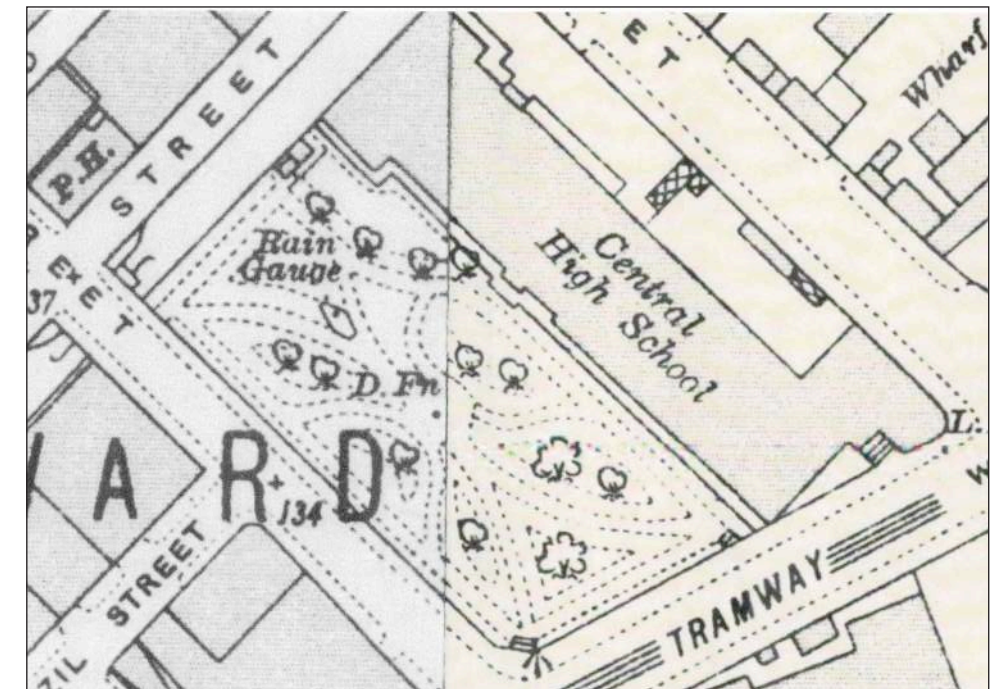
The land was undeveloped until 1900, when Manchester Corporation purchased the site. The historic maps illustrate a small city garden that was created with pattern of pathways, lawns and flower beds.

Sackville Gardens, once a more intricate network of pathways in the early 1900s, has witnessed a subtle shift over time. Many routes have vanished, leaving only a few original paths. The remaining pathways now hold a balance between past and present, offering visitors an experience which considers cultural and green heritage within the evolving narrative of the urban environment.

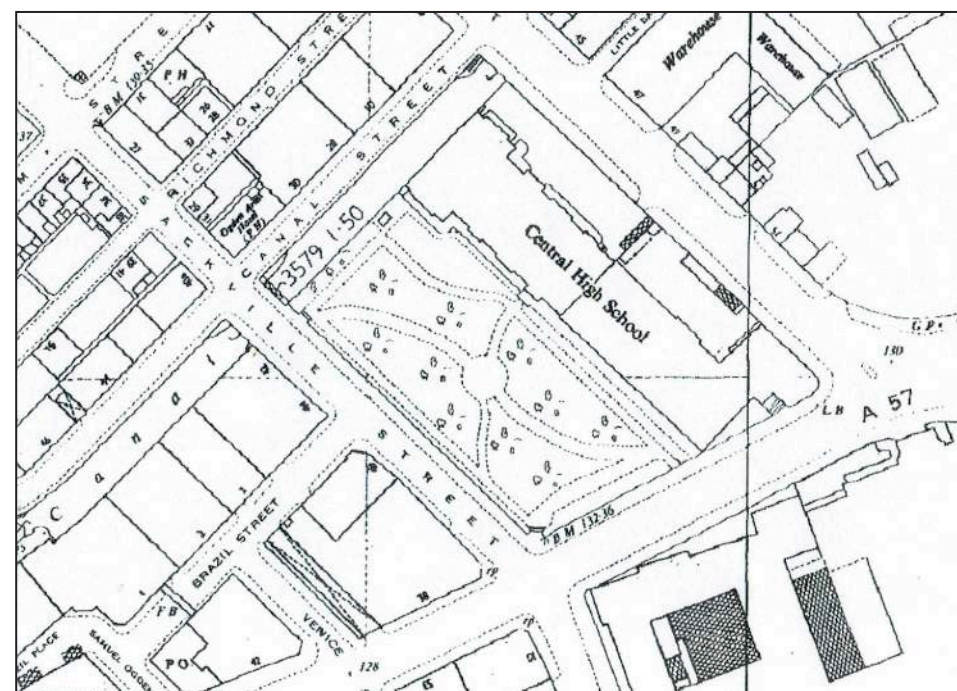
In shaping the design of The National Transgender Monument, we conscientiously paid homage to Sackville Gardens' rich history and heritage. Mindful of historically important pathways and the evolving urban realm, our approach sought to seamlessly integrate with the garden.



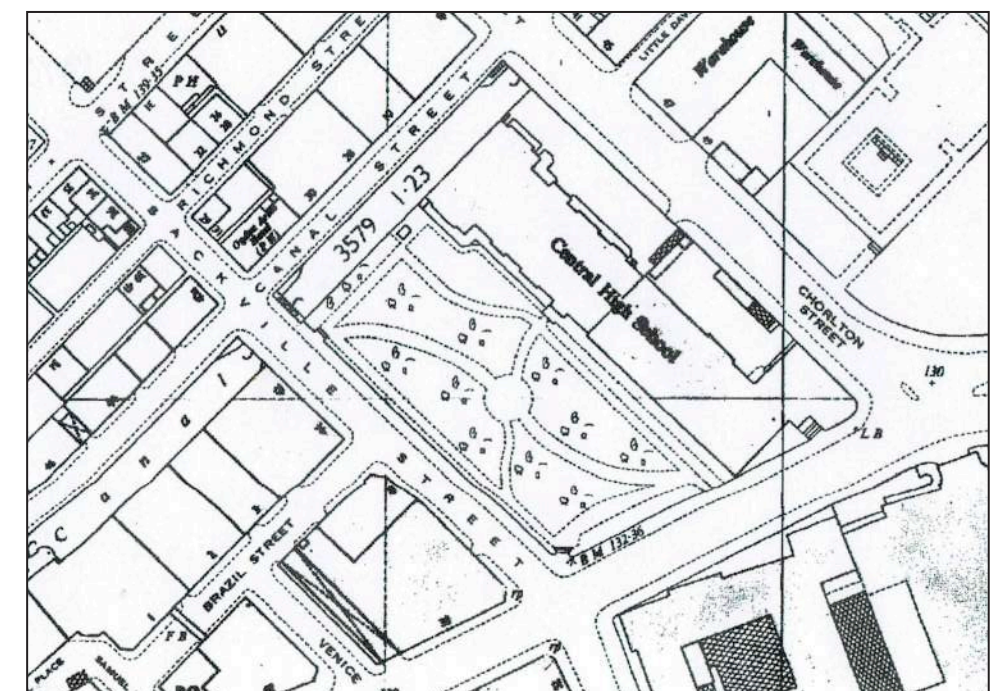
1908



1934-5



1964

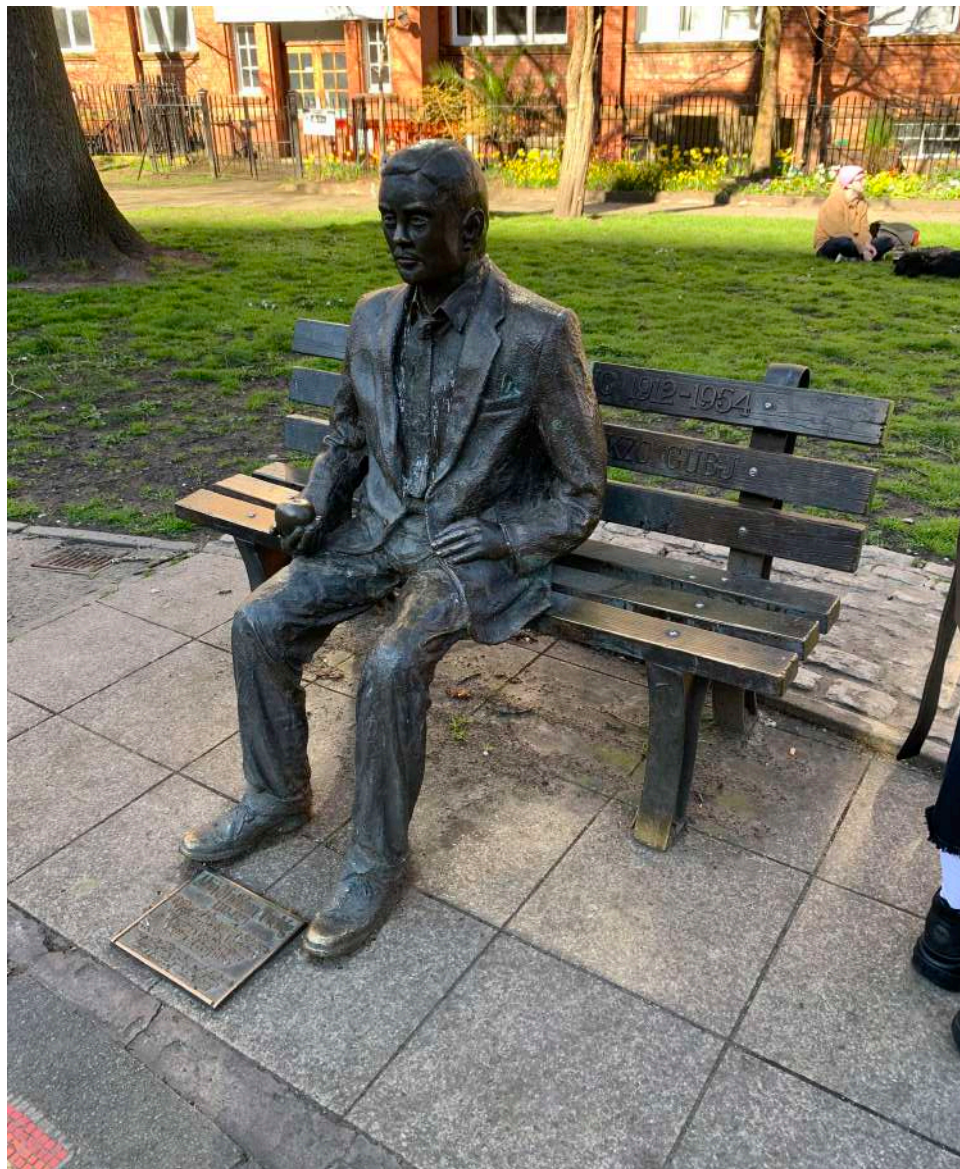


1970

2.4 Notable Features of the Gardens

Alan Turing Memorial

The Alan Turing statue, unveiled on June 23, 2001, in Sackville Park near the University of Manchester, honours the mathematician known for his World War II code-breaking at Bletchley Park. Regarded as the father of modern computer science, Turing's ground-breaking work extended to the Manchester Mark 1, one of the earliest true computers. Despite his exceptional contributions, Turing faced persecution for his homosexuality, leading to a tragic end in 1954. The statue in Sackville Park portrays Turing holding an apple, symbolizing the speculated method of his suicide.



Photograph of Alan Turing Memorial

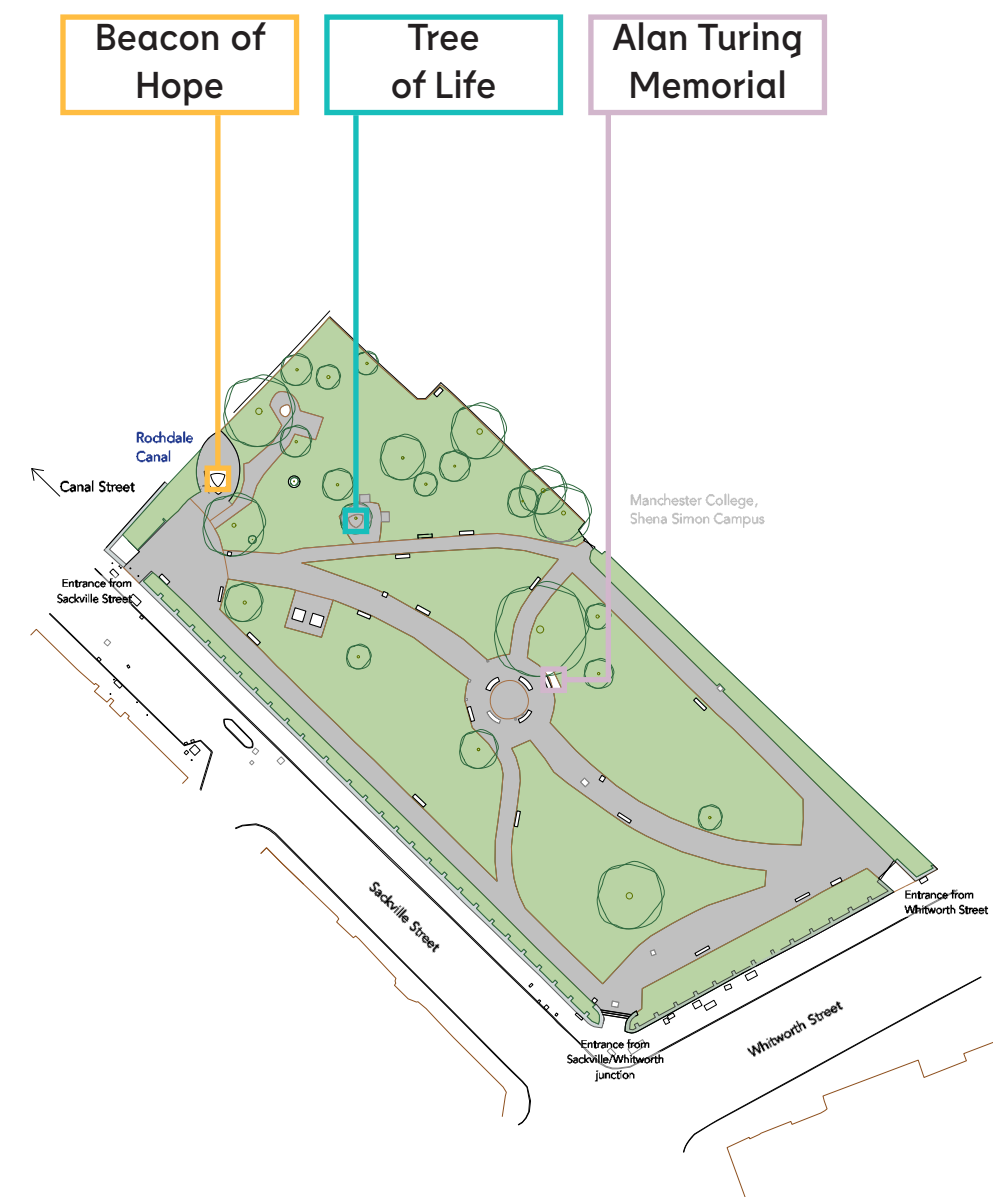
Beacon of Hope and The Tree of Life

Conceived in 1997 as a response to the HIV threat in Manchester, the Beacon of Hope, designed by Warren Chapman and Jess Byrne-Daniels, amalgamates the existing 'Tree of Life' planted in 1993 and the 'Beacon of Hope' light sculpture erected in 2000. Symbolizing a metaphorical life journey, it offers a space for reflection, celebration, and remembrance of those lost to HIV, as well as solidarity with those living with the virus today.



Photograph of The Beacon of Hope

Three plinths between the Tree of Life and the Beacon create a visual and metaphorical link, representing stages of life: youth, maturity, and senescence. The mosaic-covered podium of the beacon symbolizes the diverse communities affected by HIV, and within it resides a time capsule holding messages to those impacted. These messages are updated annually during ceremonies associated with World AIDS Day.



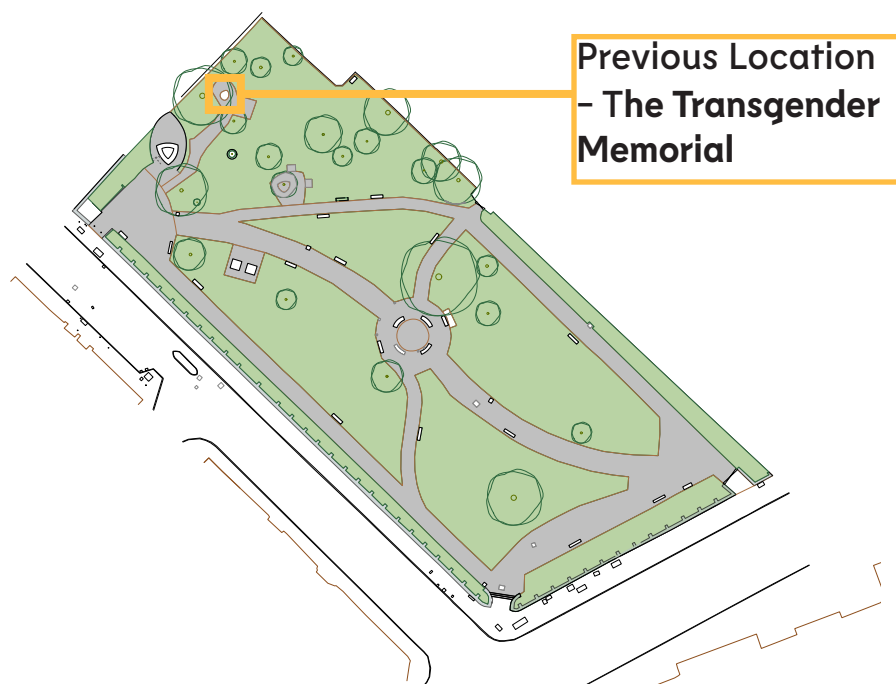
2.5 The Transgender Memorial

History

The original National Transgender Memorial, first named the Transgender Remembrance Memorial Project (Manchester), stood approximately 3.65m high and was carved in situ by artist Shane Green from a solid piece of sycamore tree. It was decorated with plaques remembering those from the trans+ community who have lost their lives.

A project initially intended to serve Manchester alone, it was quickly apparent the memorial was the first constructed nationally and by default became the National Transgender Remembrance Memorial. It remained until 2022 the only significant memorial for the trans+ community in the UK.

The Memorial, and the small garden surrounding it, was built to provide a focal point for the events marking the Transgender Day of Remembrance and was unveiled in August 2013. Shortly after this it was damaged by vandalism and required restoration. The Memorial was finally restored by March 2014 and became a central focus for that year's Sparkle Weekend, and subsequent community events since.



Issues and Criticism

Concerns regarding the structural integrity of the Memorial have been raised in the last few years. These concerns have been emphasised since the Memorial was subject to substantial fire damage in 2022. The Memorial was subsequently cordoned off from the public by Manchester City Council for safety concerns.

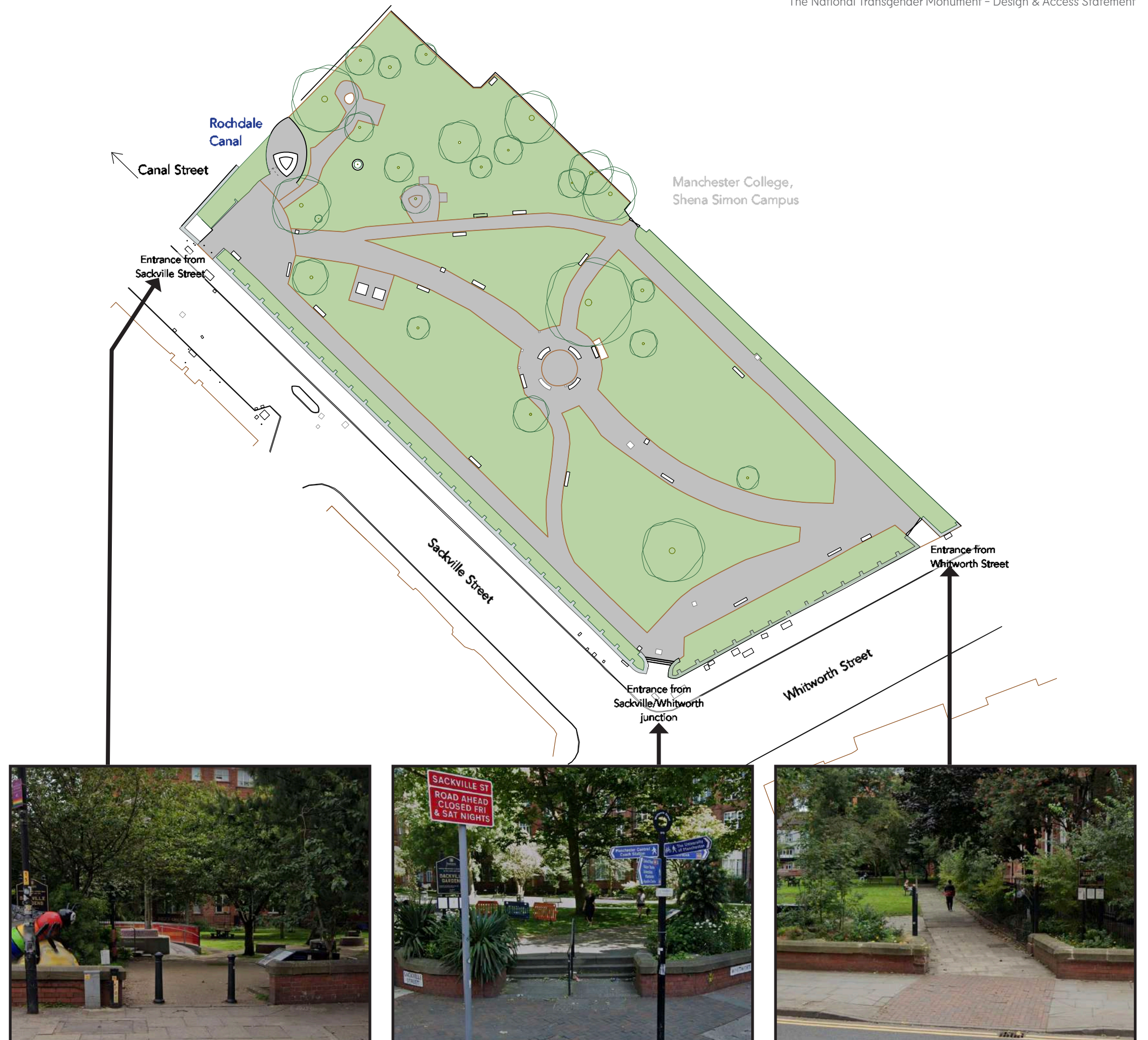
The Memorial has also been questioned for its imagery of butterflies as this is not an accurate metaphor for the full scope of transgender lives and experiences. Due to both of these considerations, Sparkle, as community custodians, are commissioning the new design.



2.6 Access to Gardens

Site Entrances/Exits

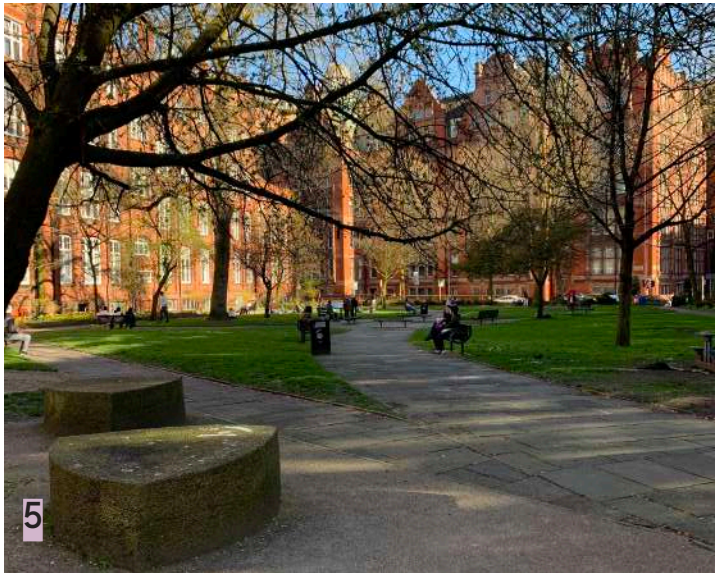
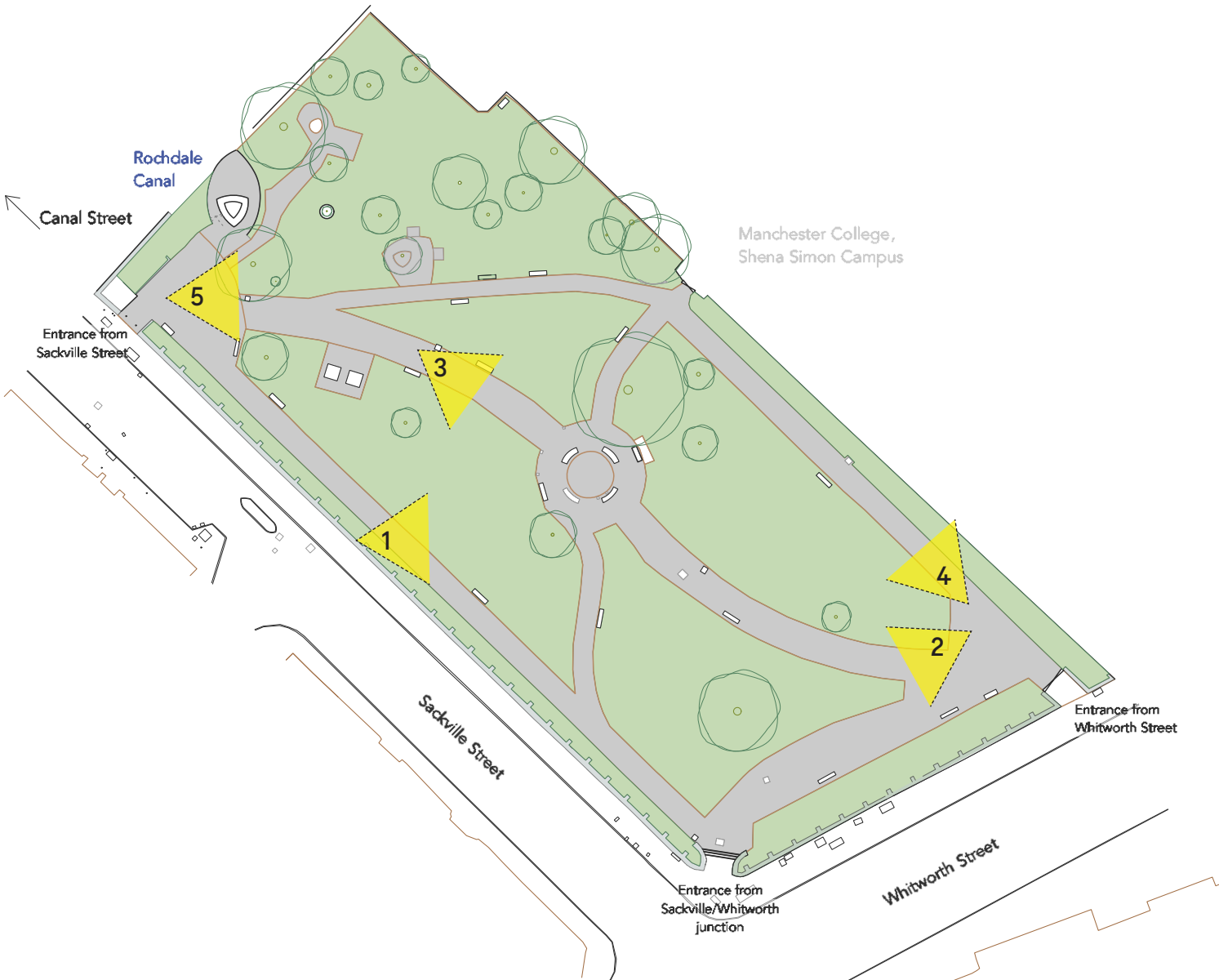
Sackville Gardens welcomes visitors through three distinct entrances: one from Sackville Street to the North-West, another at the Sackville/Whitworth Junction to the South, and a third from Whitworth Street to the South-East. These entry points strategically integrate the garden with its urban context, offering varied approaches for visitors to pass through on their daily commute, stop for lunch, or relax on a day off within the well-kept green space.



2.7 Site Visits

Site Photographs

Sackville Gardens features grey stone paths, expansive grassy areas, and a multitude of trees. The immediate surroundings are dominated by large scale red sandstone and red brick buildings, a hallmark of Manchester’s architectural identity.



3.0 Consultation

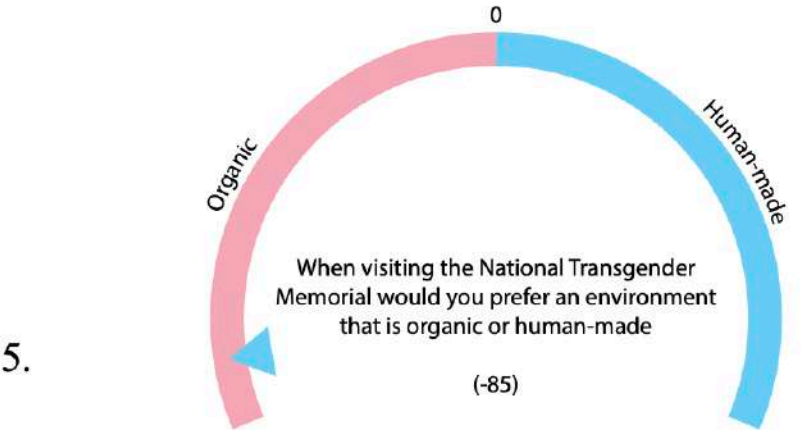
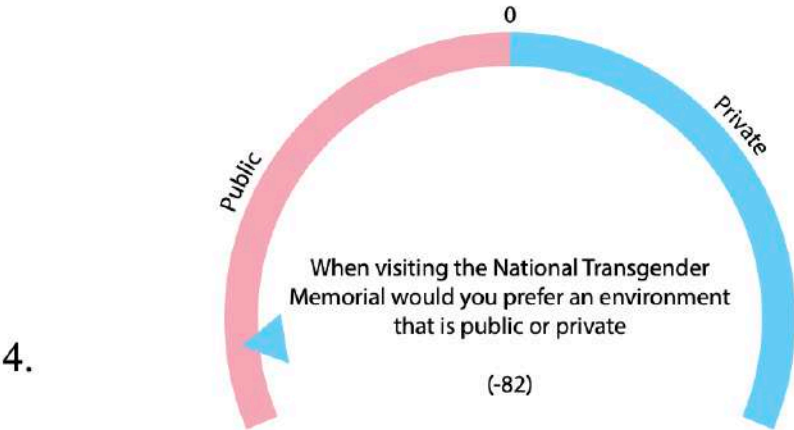
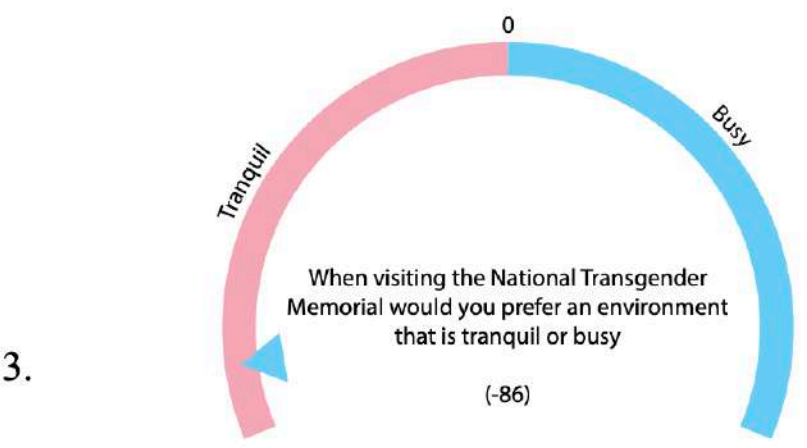
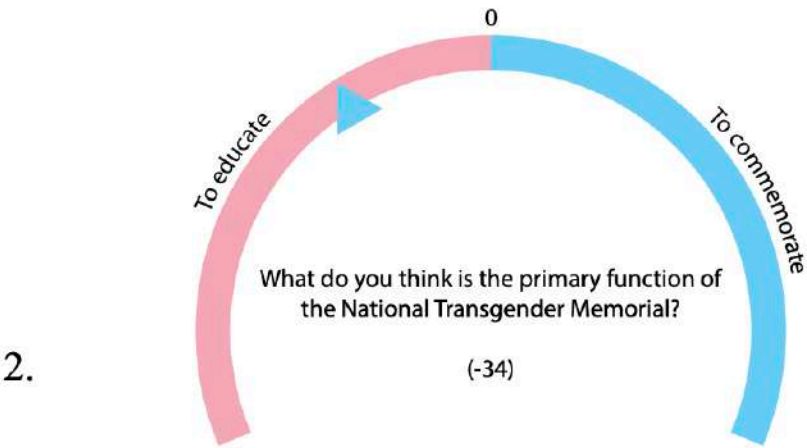
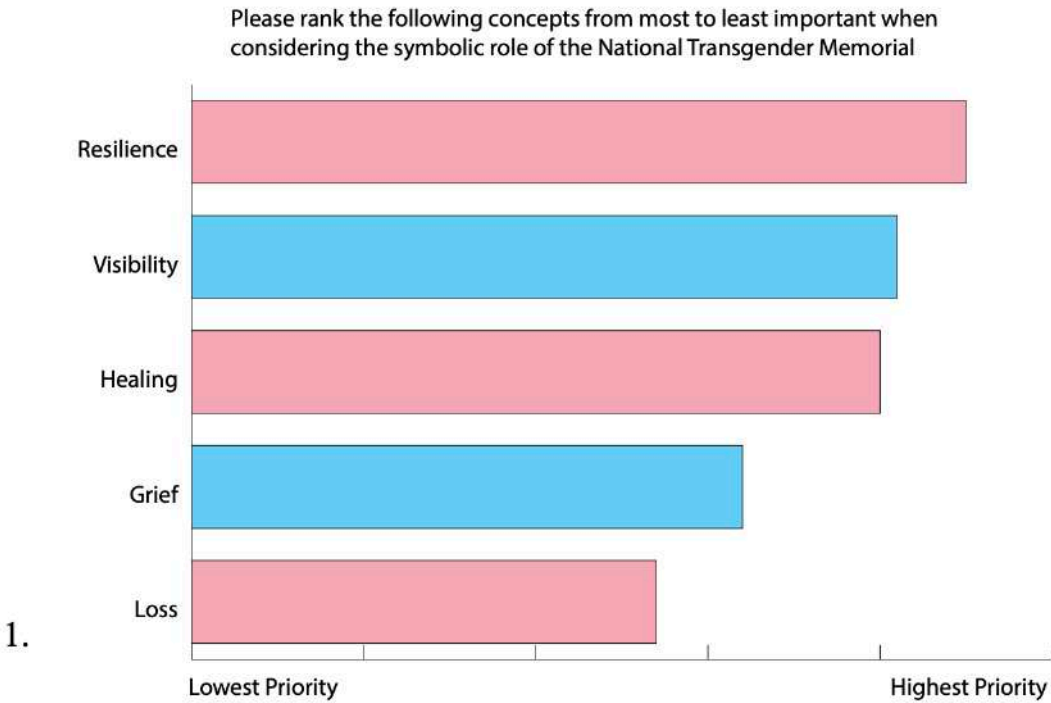
3.1 Public Engagement Strategy

Consultation Process

The brief was informed by a detailed consultation process that took place between October 2022 and January 2023. The consultation took the form of an online survey, public drop in sessions, group round tables, 1:1 sessions and independent worksheets. The demographic data of respondents was considered holistically and the consultation adapted to ensure responses were considered from intersectional perspectives. This included interviews and group sessions from demographic groups less represented in the online survey and public drop in sessions.

The initial consultation aimed to design a replacement for the National Transgender Memorial, but feedback revealed that many in the transgender community preferred a Monument over a Memorial. This shift stemmed from a desire to celebrate transgender resilience and community, rather than focusing solely on tragedy. Participants emphasized the importance of visibility and permanence for transgender communities. However, it's crucial to ensure that the new monument still serves as a commemorative space for reflection and remembrance, striking a balance that honours diverse transgender experiences and needs.

The diagrams to the right numbered 1-5 represent survey responses from Arup's engagement.



3.2 Sparkle Weekend

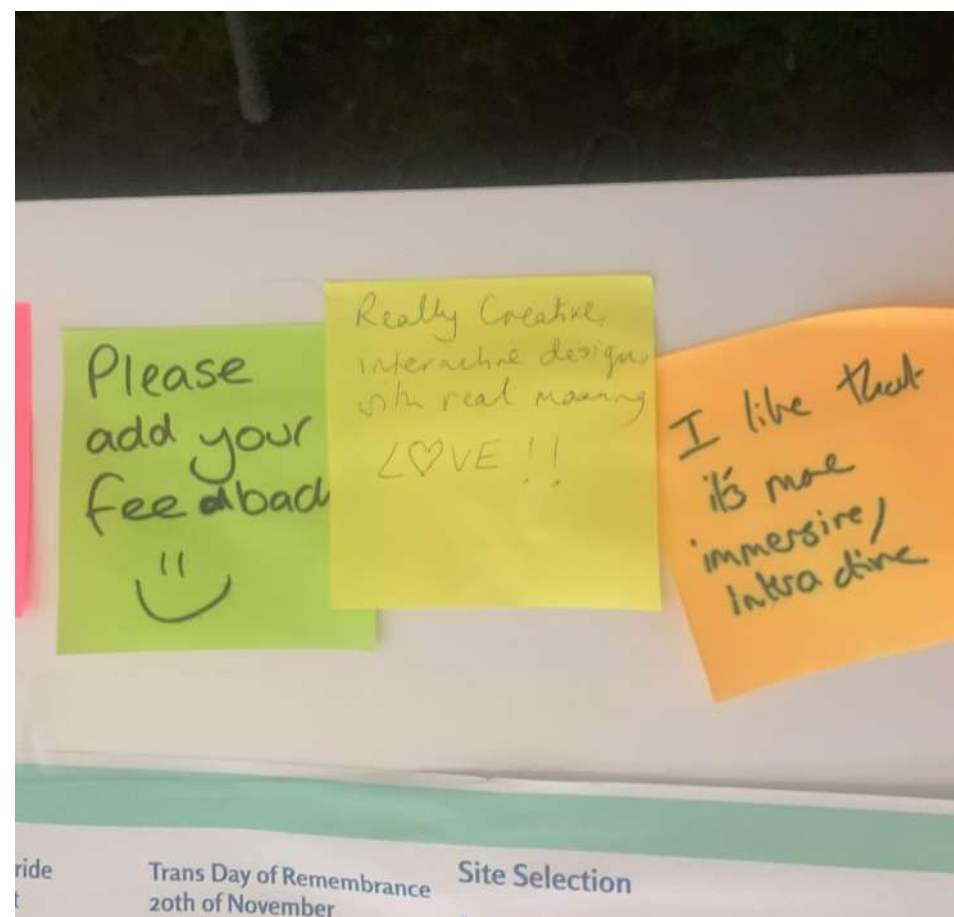
Summary

New Practice, along with facilitation support by Arup, undertook community consultation at Sparkle Weekend, held across 8th and 9th July, 2023.

During Sparkle Weekend, community feedback on the design of the National Transgender Monument was predominantly positive. Arup, present on both Saturday and Sunday, along with New Practice, who attended on Sunday, engaged in discussions about the design. Various avenues were provided for feedback, including a digital survey, a board where people could attach post-it notes, and informal conversational feedback.

Overall, attendees expressed satisfaction with the decision to relocate the monument from its previous corner location. The majority of participants appreciated the design, particularly highlighting the reflective quality of the polished steel. However, a small minority of individuals who were less enthusiastic about the new design expressed their attachment to the previous monument. Their hesitation stemmed from a desire to preserve the memory of the individuals commemorated in the old memorial, and in nearly all cases stemmed from directly personal attachments to specific memorial aspects (i.e. the plaques) of the previous monument. In response to those comments, the intention is for a digital archive to preserve/record all plaques.

A notable suggestion from the community was the inclusion of a plaque with an explanation alongside the monument. Respondents felt that this addition would significantly contribute to better understanding the significance and purpose of the monument. While the overall sentiment was positive, the feedback process also revealed the importance of addressing concerns from those who were attached to the previous memorial, which we ensured to incorporate into the conceptual foundation of memory and respect inherent to the design.



Feedback on the day:

"A much more intentional and grounded design – 100% support!"

"I think it's wonderful."

"Amazing energy. Great company."

"Brilliant"

"Stunning!"

"Really good, looks cool!"

"Lovely use of mirrors for light"

"I like that it's more immersive, interactive."

"Opening ceremony?"

"Coloured stone. Everything is better with a splash of colour."

"I love how interactive it is!"

"Really creative interactive design with real meaning – love!"

3.3 Friends of Sackville Gardens (FoSG)

Meeting 1 Summary (08/12/23)

New Practice travelled to Manchester to meet in person with FoSG, alongside Sparkle and wider design team members from Arup, to introduce and discuss the monument design. The meeting was positive and well-received, initially addressing questions about the programme of the project, and the purpose of waiting until a more considered design was in place before seeking feedback, in an effort to avoid an abortive or exhaustive process for both parties.

FoSG were receptive of the design, and understood its need in the Gardens, however discussed their own intentions and custodianship of the Gardens as its key community stakeholder. Of particular note were questions regarding the location of the monument, concerning:

- events;
- impact on trees;
- accessibility;
- relation to other monuments; and
- reinstatement of historical routes within the Gardens.

New Practice confirmed that we would undertake an appraisal of the design to consider the location in relation to these topics, and re-present any updated design.

Meeting 2 Summary (24/01/24)

The appraisal of the original design considered the points raised by FoSG, alongside wider design considerations, particularly focussing on accessibility to the monument. Due to this appraisal, it was decided that the possible locations suggested by the FoSG in the first meeting and in their own plans for the Gardens would not be appropriate. This was primarily due to accessibility concerns, access to natural light for the monument's artistic concept, and security and natural surveillance. As such, the final location was decided and designed for planning. This final location was presented back to the FoSG, and positively received with thanks for the consideration of their own desires for the Gardens.

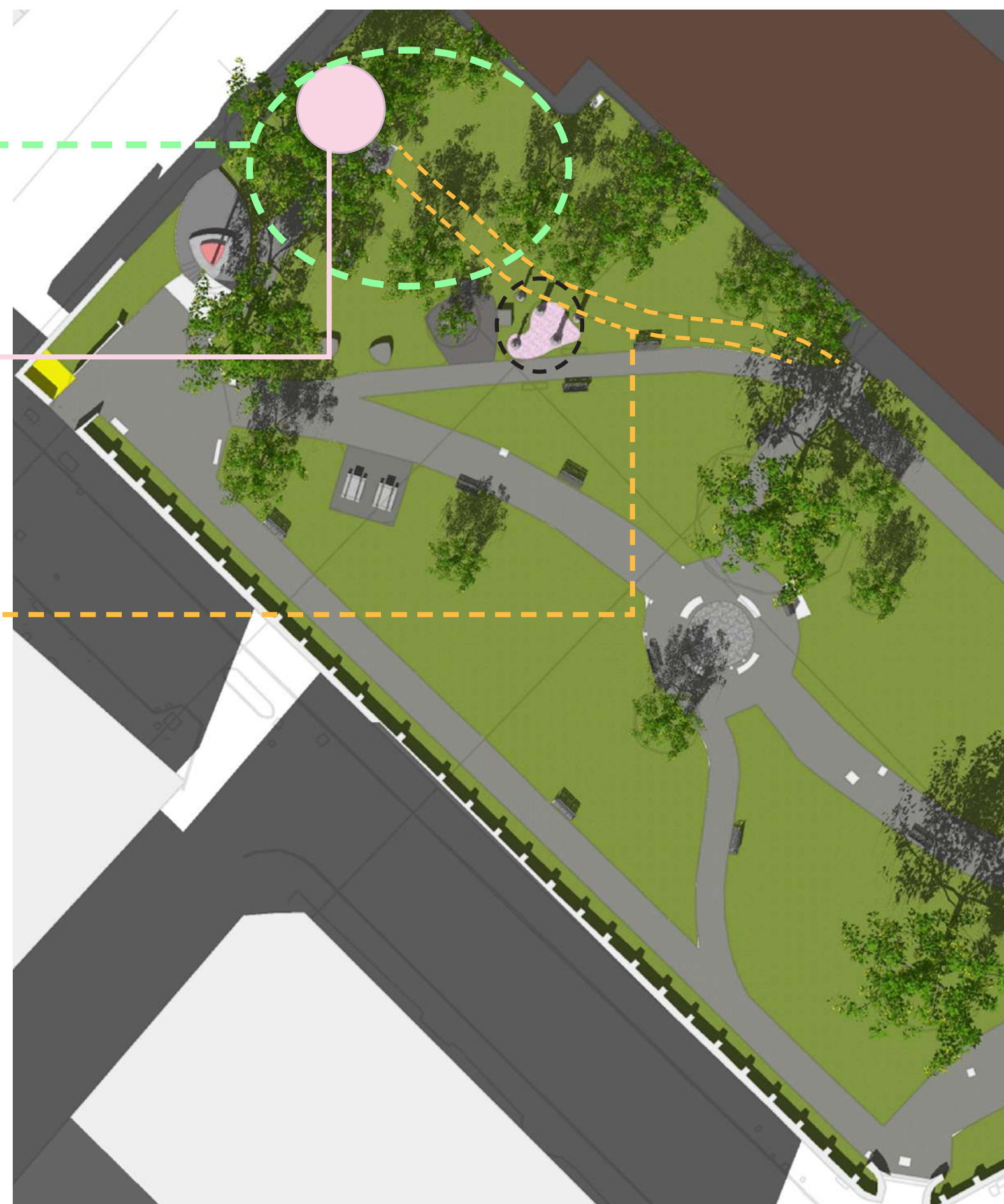
“The designers’ response to the December site visit discussions, and to the physical context of the Gardens now and going forward, has been so helpful and imaginative. The Friends group is very happy to have been involved at this crucial stage and can feel very positive about the next steps.”

– Comment from Friends of Sackville Gardens (24th January, 2024)

General area of discussion for location of the monument during first stakeholder engagement meeting.

Proposed location of monument annotated with FoSG masterplan.

Proposal for new path as per FoSG masterplan.



3.4 Manchester City Council (MCC)

Summary of Correspondence (12/09/23)

After an online meeting with MCC representatives, New Practice presented the concept design of the monument. At this phase of the design stage, New Practice suggested placing the monument at spot 4. Subsequent to our initial meeting, the Parks and Events Management Team reviewed the locations that were explored as part of the initial brief and provided the following feedback:

- Placements 1 & 4 would interfere with event viewing areas, complicating event management and safety.
- Placement 2 would obstruct the site's only vehicle entrance, affecting load-in and park maintenance.
- Placement 3, near a pedestrian entrance/exit, could limit emergency egress capacity.
- Placement 5 is suggested as the best option, minimizing impact on park maintenance, event management, and emergency access.

It was advised that the design team revisit the proposed location and explore solutions to mitigate the monument



3.5 Optioneering Study

Outcomes

Following discussions with FoSG and MCC, New Practice conducted an optioneering study. The team sought to explore the strengths of weaknesses of potential locations with Sackville Gardens and take into consideration the feedback received during the consultation process.

Through this process, a new location was proposed, which considers the wider context and offers significant improvements in comparison to the previous location. It was concluded that the strengths of the proposed location were:

- Integrated with the overall garden layout.
- The selected location responds strategically to established routes, when moving between the existing monuments.
- Adjacency to hard surfaces not only facilitates accessibility but also mirrors the successful model implemented for other fully accessible monuments in the garden.
- Offers a more cohesive curation with the wider monuments to the North of the Gardens, with better standards of access and opportunities for joined-up wayfinding.

FoSG Suggested Location:

- The surrounded trees limit south-facing light, compromising visual impact.
- Excavation risks damaging tree roots.
- The secluded spot, lacking surveillance, raises concerns about potential vandalism.

MCC Suggested Location:

- The surrounded trees limit south-facing light, compromising visual impact.
- Excavation risks damaging tree roots.
- The secluded spot, lacking surveillance, raises concerns about potential vandalism.
- Location clashes with FoSG proposal to introduce a new path to the gardens.



4.0 Design Development

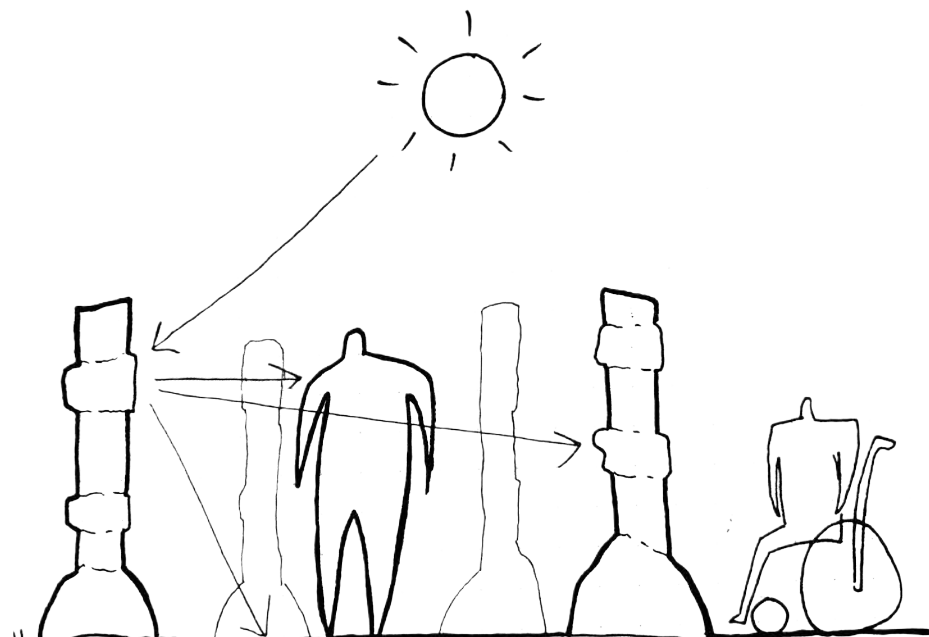
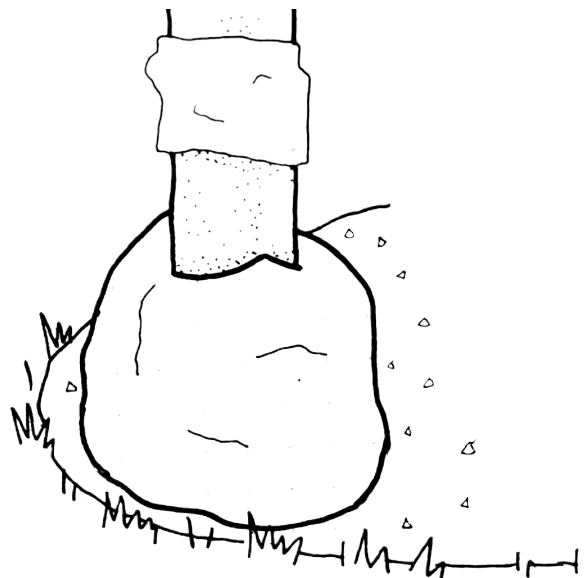
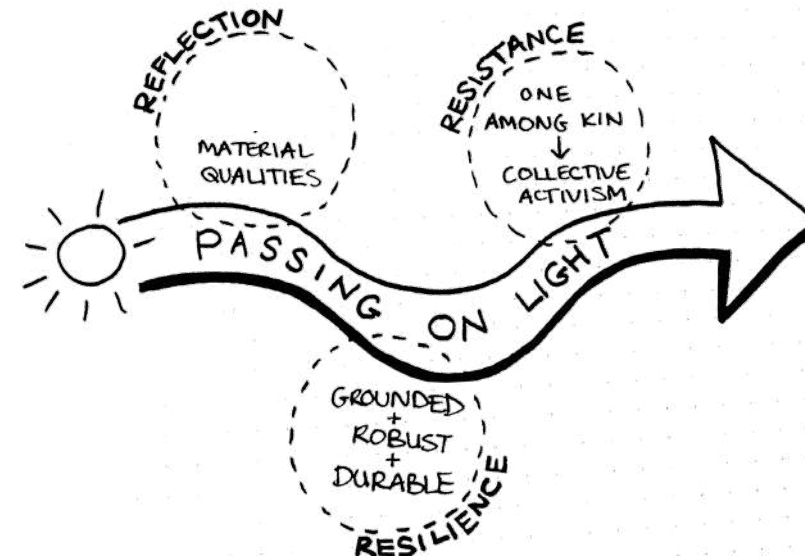
4.1 Concept Development

Summary

This opportunity to work on the design for the monument presents an exciting mix of the personal and professional for the New Practice team. The experience of being trans* (as represented within our team) has been described as one of 'passing on light.' While the themes of remembrance and resistance are seen as imperative to any work commemorating and celebrating the lives of trans* peoples, we seek to approach these more sobering themes with this notion of 'passing on light,' with a desire to foreground the elation and joy in being trans*.

This notion comes from a narrative that living as oneself embodies a sense of inner light; this act then creates a light that passes on to others, encouraging and empowering them to follow. These feelings of 'inner light' and 'light passed on' filter through all facets of our proposal, uniting the themes of Resistance, Resilience and Reflection as presented in the brief.

Human-scale 'figures' rise from the ground in the design. This series of objects celebrate notions of collectivity, diversity and humanity. Each has a subtly unique form yet together they offer a sense of 'being within a group of bodies' – the arrangement is both supportive and convivial. Each figure has bands of reflective material which reflect the other figures around the viewer, encouraging new perspectives and 'passing on their light'. These figures are replicable, either as copy or with minor difference in form – a growing group of bodies.



Reflection

Reflection is presented in the design both as a human act, and a physical phenomenon. The convivial nature of the monument aims to provide a comfortable, human atmosphere which invites reflection, both on trans* lives themselves and on the potential metaphors of the monument itself. This occurs within the physical phenomena of reflecting light from elements of polished metal, which subtly reflect the subject, the gardens, the city and the sky.

Resilience

Each figure is grounded with a stone base. From these rise a corten steel post. Both of these materials are robust and designed to weather. From a practical point of view this helps with maintenance, but it also speaks to the notion of resilience through strength and self-resolve. They feel 'of' the ground and surrounding landscape.

Resistance

The figures are both unique and kin. They each stand strong and tall in their own accord, but together they take on a collective strength of public presence. The reflective bands of steel on each figure refract and reflect light between them, onto the viewer and onto the surrounding landscape. The power of collective activism is publicly conveyed in these features.

4.2 Site Opportunities and Constraints

Monument Location

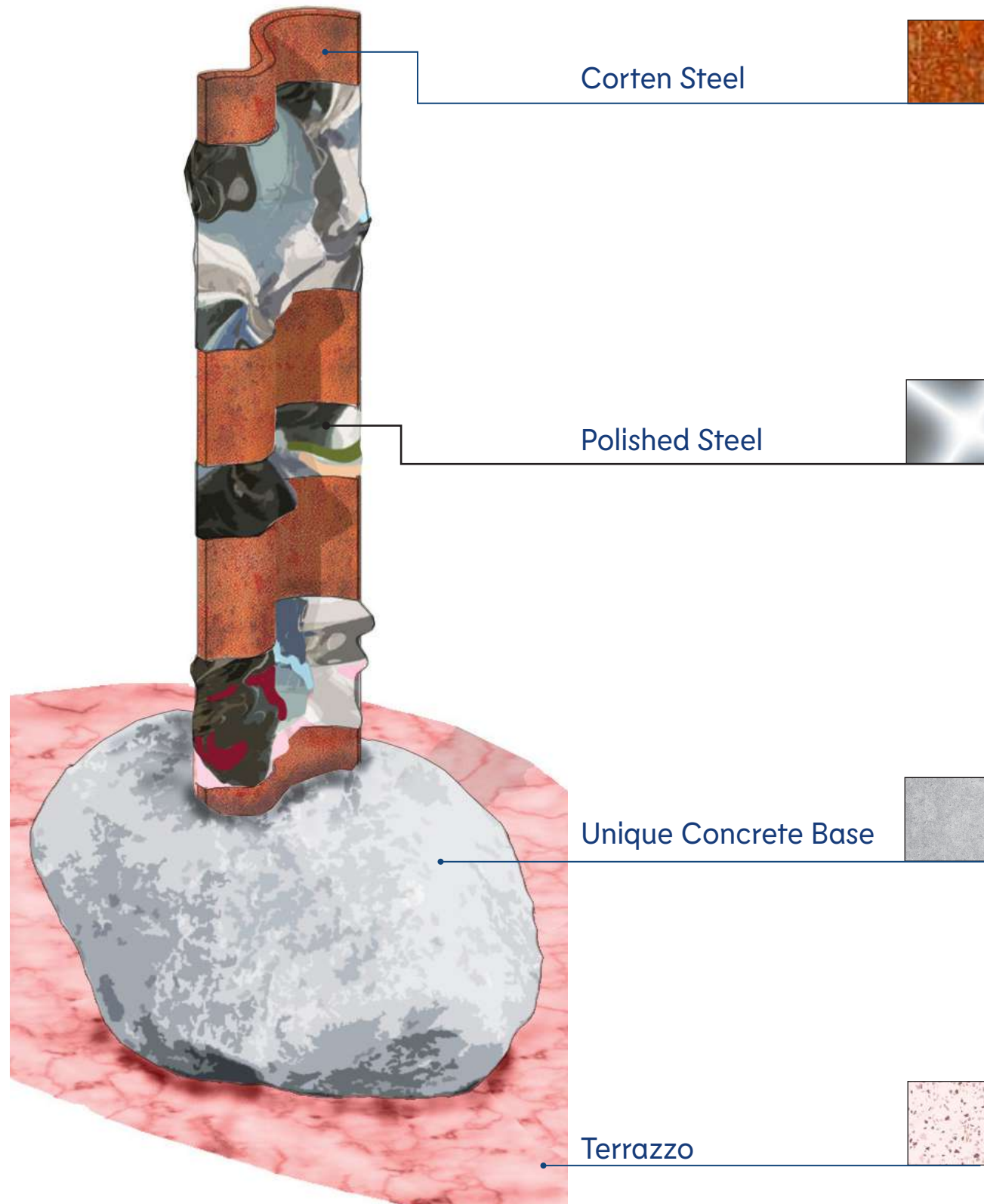
The proposed monument design exhibits notable strengths, including its direct responsiveness and integration with the surrounding environment. Accessibility is ensured through a responsive sitting adjacent to existing paths, and nearby seating areas enhance the viewer experience and provide spaces for rest.

The location takes into consideration, and encompasses, the feedback gained through engagement with both Manchester City Council and key stakeholder Friends of Sackville Gardens, with reference to the appraisal undertaken during the consultation stage. The design harmonizes with other objects within the garden, reducing the risk of future relocation requests. Its visibility and exposure to south-facing light contribute to its prominence. However, a potential weakness lies in closer proximity to trees, requiring careful consideration for impact and maintenance.

Proposed Location



4.3 Materiality



Corten Steel



Corten steel is a robust material also known as a “weathering” steel due to the layer of protection it develops under the influence of weather. This material would be difficult to damage. This material has been specifically selected as part of the maintenance strategy but also to convey the idea of longevity, resistance and timelessness. Exploring the use of re-claimed corten is also a favourable cost-efficient and sustainable method.

Polished Steel



Polished steel was selected for its durable and reflective attributes. This metal will be uniquely formed by a sculptor. The warped organic shape protruding from the monument is to describe notions of transness being a fluid experience which transcends rigid definitions of bodies. No one body can be the definition of a trans body.

Unique Concrete Base



Unique bases formed from concrete, at the bottom of the figure will act as a weighted foundation. As part of the maintenance strategy, this provides durable qualities and removes requirements for excessive large excavation of the site for foundations.

Terrazzo

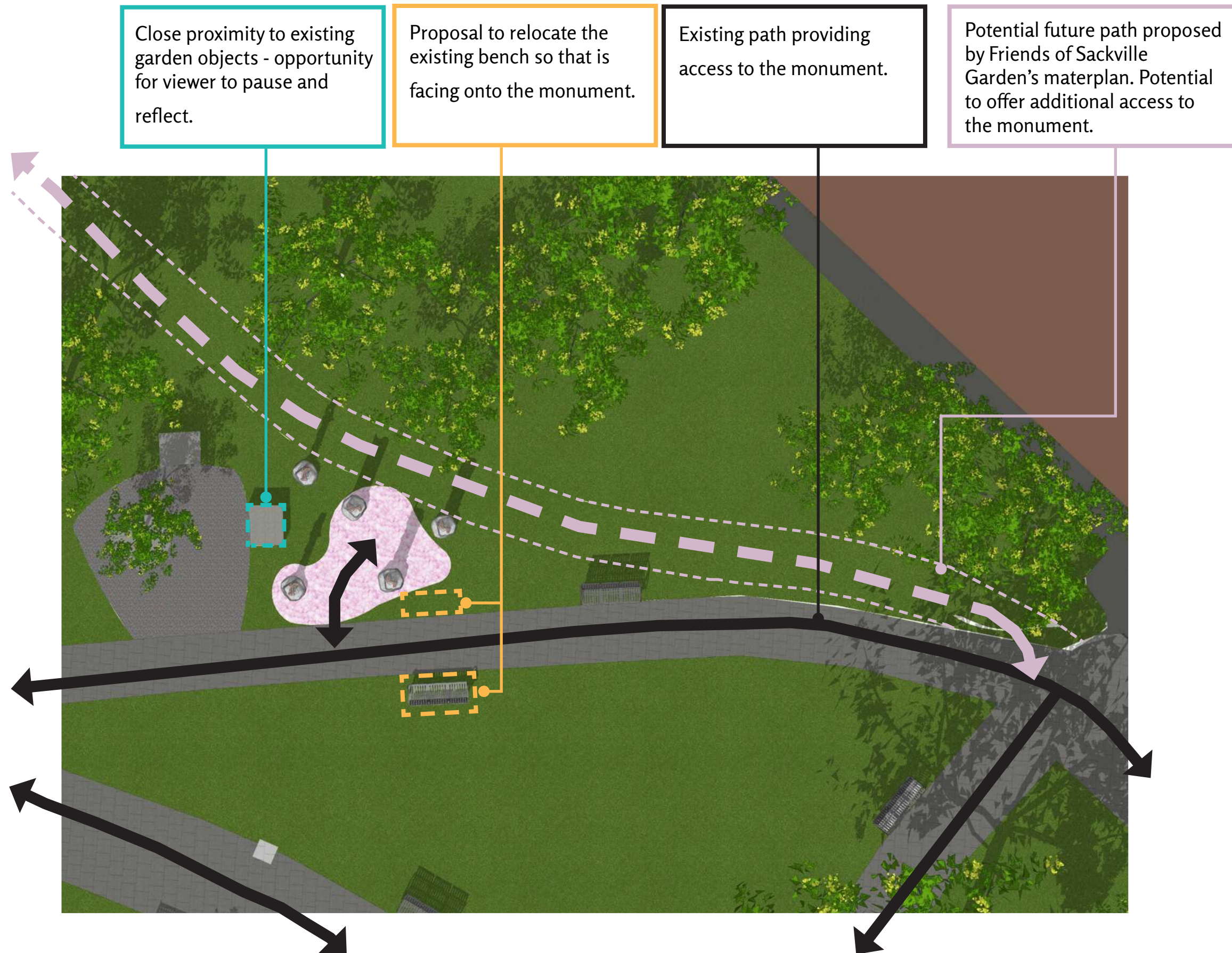


Soft pink terrazzo was selected for the ground surface. It is a durable and flexible with low maintenance requirements, which can incorporate recycled materials as aggregate.

4.4 Desire Lines & Accessibility

Design Considerations

Careful consideration has been given to the existing pathways and routes, ensuring that individuals of all abilities can easily navigate the monument. The location of the monument has been chosen as it offers designated areas for reflection. Existing objects will encourage visitors to engage with the monument in a variety of ways.



4.5 Sculptural Uprights

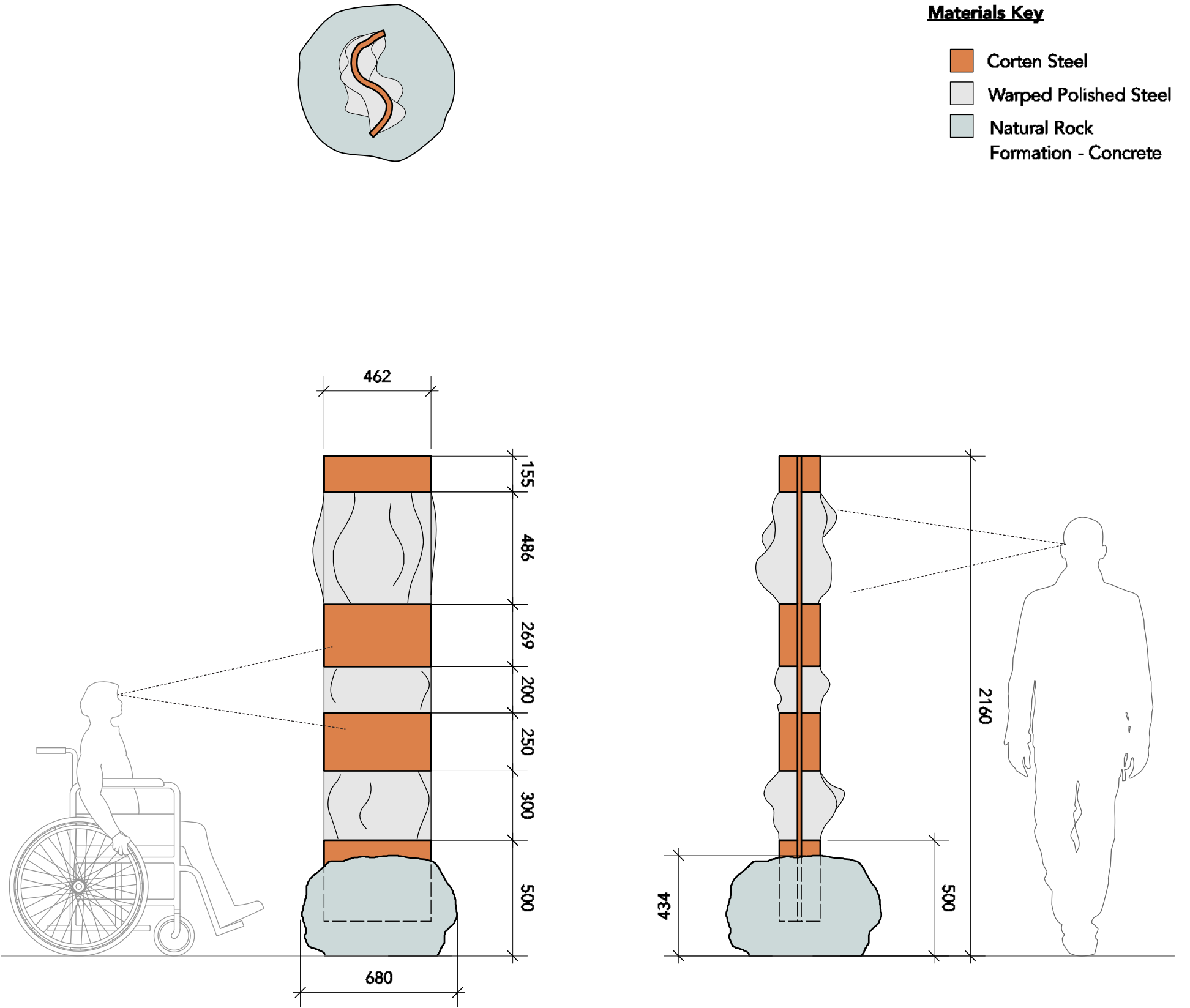
Design Considerations

The sculptural upright design takes a holistic approach, prioritising accessibility and inclusivity as fundamental principles. The incorporation of reflective bands at specific heights is a thoughtful consideration that caters to a diverse audience, encompassing children, wheelchair users, and individuals standing or sitting. This deliberate arrangement ensures that the visual impact and engagement with the monument remain consistent, irrespective of the viewer’s height or position.

The use of concrete as the base serves a dual purpose, contributing both to structural stability and symbolic grounding. This material not only provides a robust foundation for the sculpture but also establishes a connection to the earth, enhancing the monument’s presence within its environment. The intentional choice of corten steel further reinforces the commitment to durability and longevity. This weather-resistant material not only withstands the test of time but also adds a distinctive aesthetic quality with its rich patina, creating a harmonious integration with historic surroundings.

Maintaining a human-like scale for each sculpture ensures a relatable and intimate experience for viewers, fostering a sense of connection. While slight variations in height are permissible, adherence to the established rules for the reflective band heights guarantees that accessibility remains a constant priority. In essence, the sculptural uprights design exemplifies a fusion of artistic expression and practicality.

Please refer to DE(S)-100 – Detail Section – Sculptural Uprights for more information.



4.6 Landscape and Groundworks

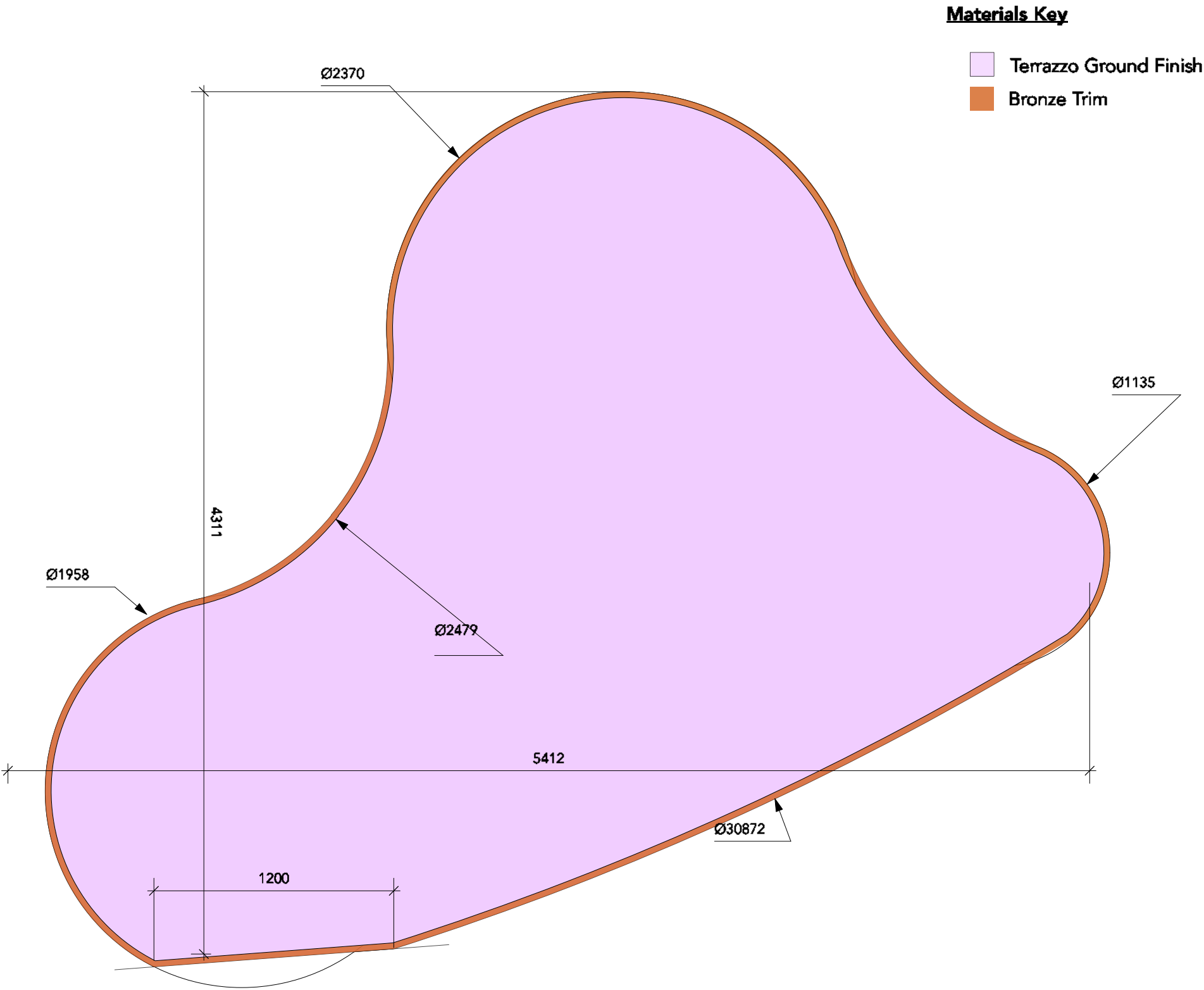
Design Considerations

The ground surface of the Transgender Monument in Sackville Gardens is designed with a central attention to accessibility and aesthetics. Measuring a minimum of 1200mm in width, the surface integrates seamlessly with the existing path at level grade to ensure wheelchair access. Crafted from a light-hued pink terrazzo-like finish, the vibrant and unique ground surface adds a subtle burst of colour to the garden, creating a visually appealing and tactile experience for visitors.

For cohesion, a bronze trim is incorporated into the surface, referencing the textures on the sculptural uprights and tying together different elements of the monument. This intentional design choice fosters unity and harmony throughout the structure. The careful consideration given to the shape and placement of the monument within the garden underscores its compatibility with the wider context, ensuring that it complements the surroundings while making a distinctive statement.

Functionally, the ground surface serves not only as an aesthetic choice but also as a foundation, providing practical structural stability to the monument. The threefold integration of accessibility, aesthetics, and functionality demonstrates a thoughtful and intentional design approach.

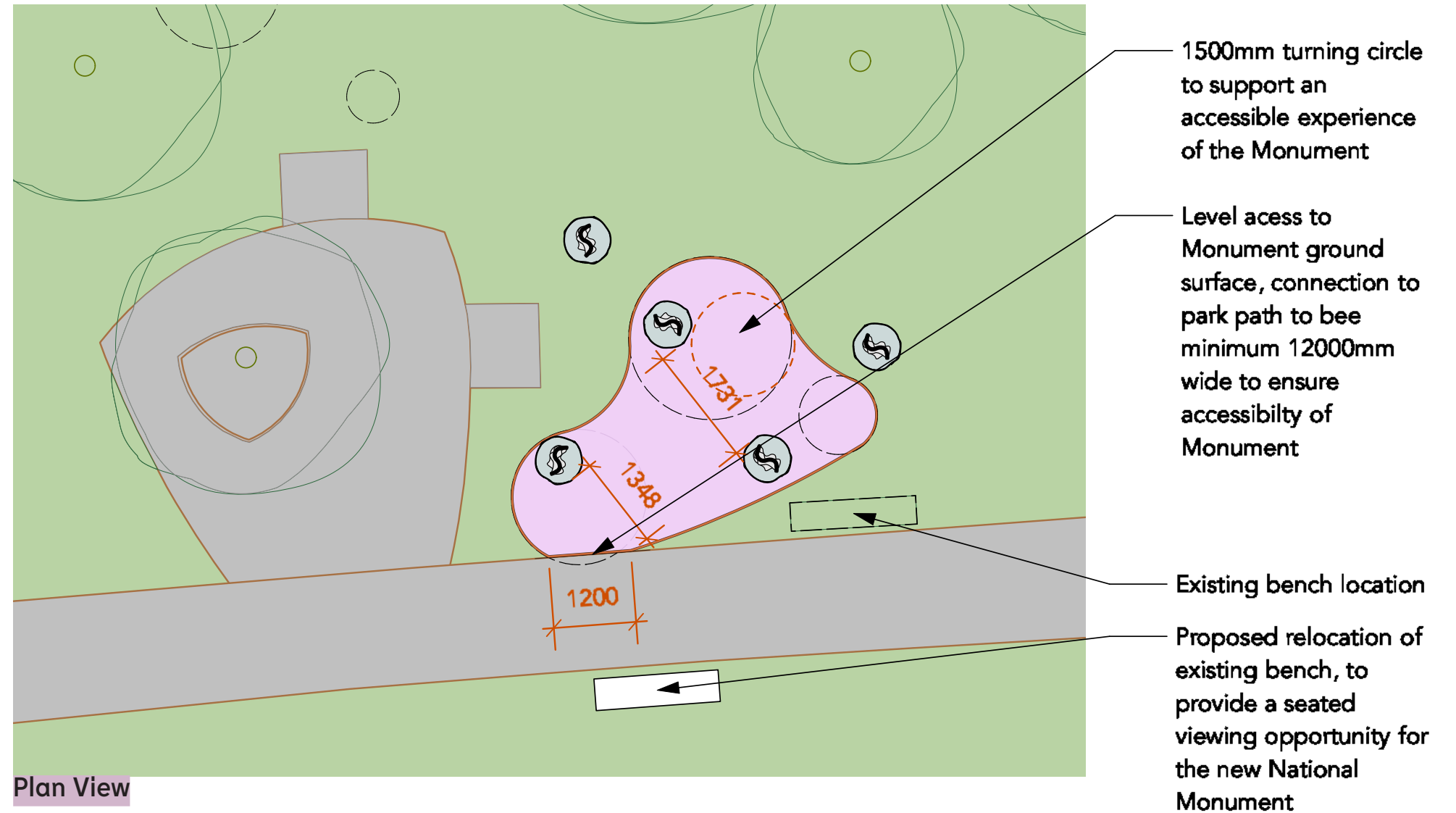
Please refer to DE(P)-101 - Detail Plan - Groundworks and structural engineer drawings for more details.



4.7 Monument Plan View

Design Considerations

The garden features five monuments strategically positioned to create a sense of cohesion and community. Some of the monuments are placed on the grass while others sit on the terrazo ground surface, creating a diverse and inviting landscape. The spacial arrangement was designed with access in mind - a 1500mm turning circle and ample space between the uprights to accommodate wheelchair users. This approach extends to level access from the path, ensuring everyone can enjoy and interact with the space. Ultimately, this arrangement aims to provide a gathering spot for the community or a tranquil retreat for individuals seeking a moment of respite.



Plan View

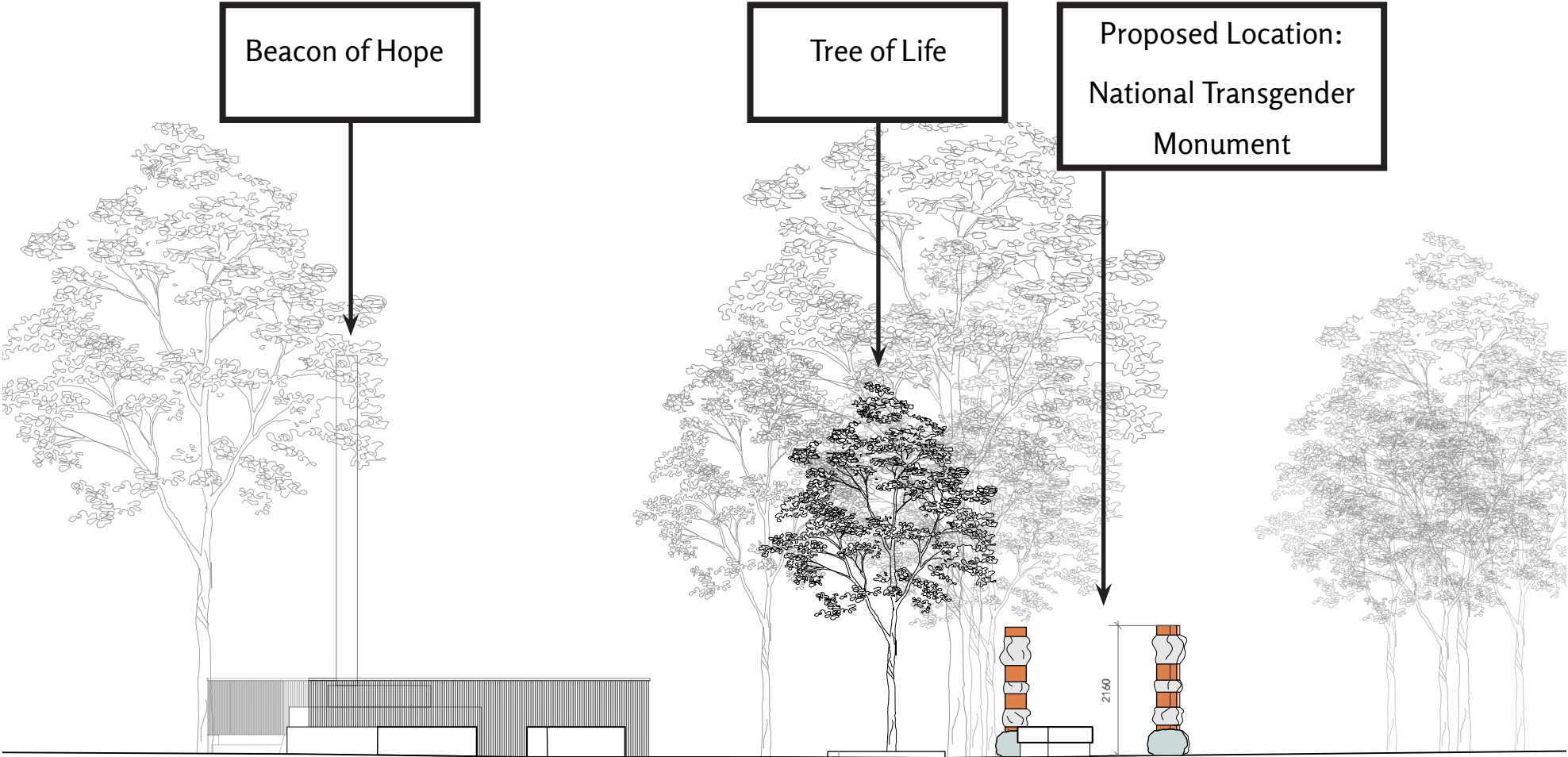
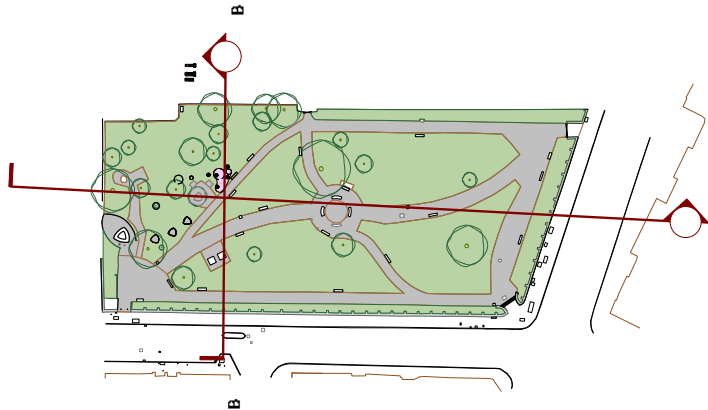


Isometric View

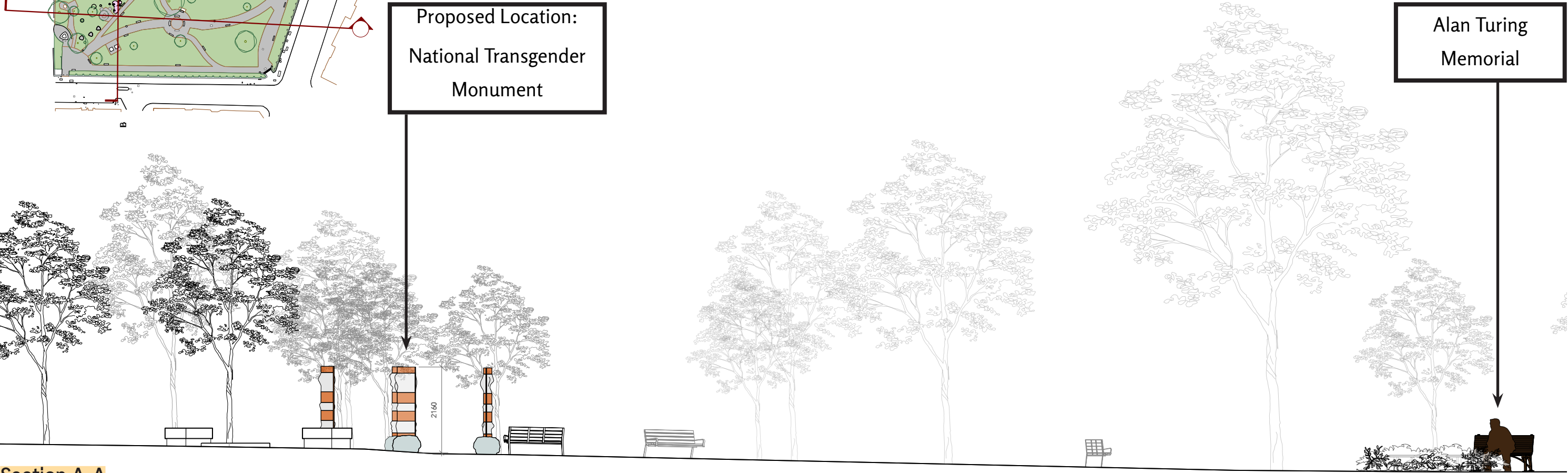
4.8 Monument Sections

Design Considerations

The arrangement of monuments within the garden is carefully curated to harmonize with the broader context. Strategically positioned, the monuments create a seamless experience for visitors entering from any of the garden entrances. Existing pathways connects these entrances, facilitating a fluid transition for viewers as they move from one monument to the next. This intentional layout enhances offers a meaningful journey for those visiting to view each monument. Please refer to GA(S)-100 - Proposed Section A & B for more information.



Section B-B



Section A-A

4.9 Designer's Impressions

The monument passing on light before or after a public trans* event, among daily park users.



The monument passing on light and providing strength on a more tranquil and collective occasion, such as a memorial or vigil.

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