



ST PANCRAS GARDENS

DRAFT Strategic Masterplan 2016
Design Report



Camden

CONTENTS

Introduction and Site Description	3
Consultation Feedback and Priority Themes	4
Consultation Sheets and Concept Ideas	5
Entrances	7
Circulation and Legibility	9
Furniture and Additional Features	11
Planting and Biodiversity	11
Strategic Masterplan and Summary of Proposals	12
Conclusion and Next Steps	13

INTRODUCTION

St Pancras Gardens is located between Somers Town and the Kings Cross development area, and between St Pancras Station and St Pancras Hospital. It lies within the Kings Cross Conservation Area and surrounds one of the oldest places of Christian worship, St Pancras Old Church, which is a grade II* listed building. Being a former burial ground it contains a range of monuments and tombs and preserves a grand park atmosphere.

Groundwork London have been appointed with the development of a strategic overall proposal for improvements to St Pancras Gardens. Initial site analysis and concept ideas formed part of conversations at a local stakeholder 'Walk and Talk' session and were presented for discussion at a community engagement event.

From this, different priority themes have been developed, with a view to enhance existing values of the greenspace and to carefully renew it for future enjoyment of users. Our draft proposals were reviewed and discussed with a heritage consultant and recommendations were incorporated. We will be further taking these into account for the final proposals, together with feedback from the public consultation.

DRAFT

Consultation Feedback

A 'Walk and Talk' session held on 7th September 2015 yielded useful input from a wide range of stakeholders. The site is clearly highly valued by the local community, as a green, calm and tranquil open space.

Different themes were discussed during the walkabout with the aim to establish priorities for the improvements. These themes were:

Access and circulation

- Level entrance from the Camley Street side should be explored
- the potential for an additional entrance to the south of the church was discussed as a long term development option
- The church requires vehicle access for weddings and funerals
- Potential to upgrade the hospital entrance and create a wider access route

Usage

Staff and patients from the hospital use the Gardens for staff breaks and as an informal resting area. Recreational walks and access to church are also important.

Path arrangement

A review of the path layout would be welcomed, including mown grass paths for a more natural appearance.

Seating

Overall, due to the large number of trees the majority of the site is quite shady. It was felt that more seating could be installed in the southern part of the site,

which gets the most sun. The gardens are a popular place for people to sit and relax: office workers at lunch time, church goers on the weekends, visitors, passers-by and dog walkers throughout the day.

Planting and biodiversity

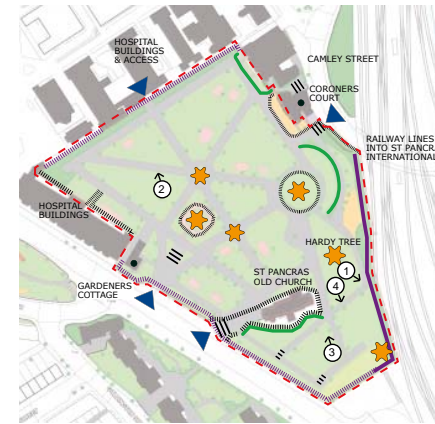
All were in favour of planting and biodiversity improvements, in keeping with the character of the site.

A **Community Engagement event** was held in the Gardens on 21st September 2015 and showed that local people value the space as a green oasis and do not want to see any fundamental changes to the site. People engaged recommended that the masterplan focuses on enhancing the natural environment and builds on what works well here.

Key themes emerged:

- Reviewing and rationalising the path layout
- enhancing accessibility
- improving planting, sensory planting and enhancing the biodiversity value of the site
- Crowns of trees could be lifted to let in more sun light.

Following our consultation at the stakeholder session and the community engagement event, priority elements were identified to be the focus for our design proposal and are listed here.



Priority Themes

Entrances:

Improved access at Camley Street

Circulation and legibility:

Footpath renewal

Path layout and hierarchies

Level pathway routes

Potential new entrance at south

Biodiversity and Planting:

Long grass areas

Meadow areas

Enhanced boundary planting

Ecological features

Tree works

Furniture and Additional Features:

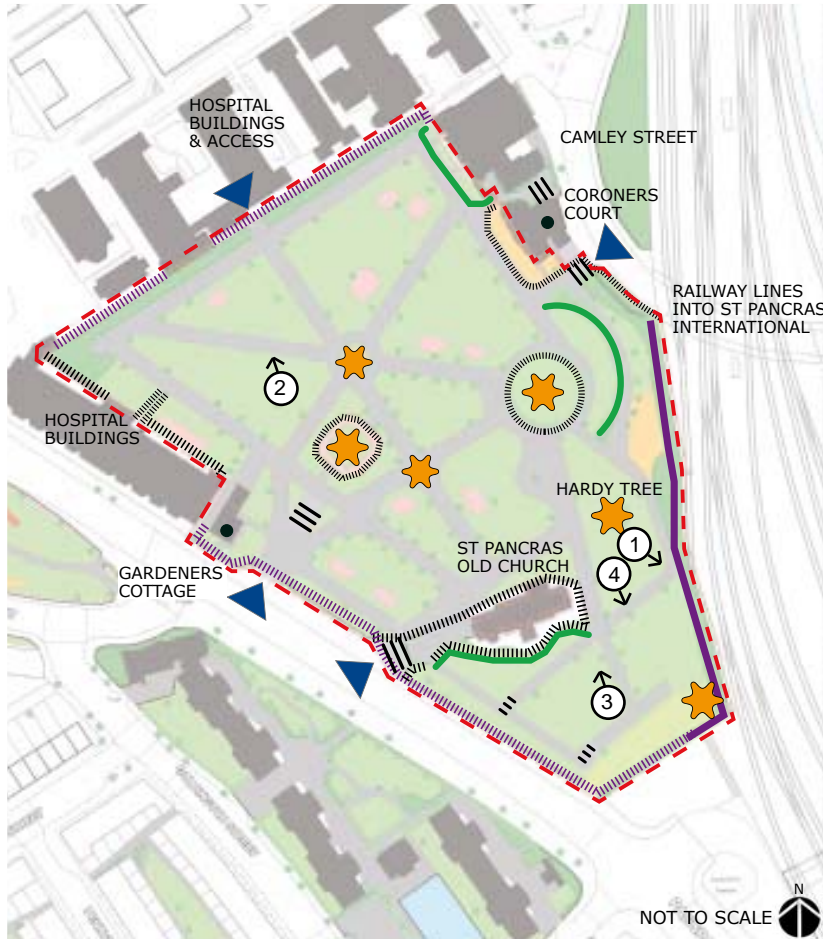
Wayfinding signage

Flexible hardstanding

Additional seating

Potential for sensory garden

Site plan



Key

- Brick wall & Railings
- Railing / fence
- Brick wall and railing
- Entrances to site
- Monuments / Features
- Hedge
- Shrub and ornamental planting
- Trees
- Steps
- Site boundary

Site photos



Scattered monuments



Deteriorating path edges



Poor and obsolete path layout



Obsolete vehicular road layout

- **Entrances:** access at Camley Street and St Pancras Road is problematic and challenging
- Multiple entrances through private or semi-private land from adjacent buildings (St Pancras hospital, Coroner's Court) create lack of clarity for visitors
- **Circulation and legibility:**
- Reduced visibility into the park - high walls, fences and low trees
- Layout of footpaths & monuments does not match the current desire lines and routes
- Footpaths are in need of repair, but require consideration of best layout to accommodate mature trees and current desire lines or access routes.
- **Large, mature trees** define the park and provide a unique character, but: large canopy sizes make the park quite dark, the root growth affects the condition of footpaths and affects considerations for new footpath construction and layout
- **Adjacent land-uses and surrounding large scale development** affect the park in various ways and require consideration

Key qualities

- Mature tree avenues and grand park atmosphere
- Historic value and grade II heritage listed
- Houses St Pancras Old Church - active church and open for events
- Elevated levels compared with surrounding roads
- Tranquil space nestled between major roads and a major train line
- Key connection between Somerstown and Kings Cross
- Footpath connection to Camley Street

Site photos - Key qualities



Camley Street access



Tree features



Tree avenues

Site concept plan



Ideas images



New path surfacing



Informal pathways



Paving feature



Change of materials

Key

- > major routes and circulation
- ...> minor pedestrian circulation
- ★ Monuments / Features
- ☺ Potential for new hardstanding
- ↔ Improve connection
- Views
- Hedge
- New planting
- ||| Steps
- - - Site boundary

Entrances:

- Create stronger connection to Camley Street
- Assess level access at both Camley St and Pancras Road
- Enhance entrance setting including formalised setting around church to cater for events

Circulation and legibility:

- Improve and simplify path layout
- Make monuments more readable and create contemporary settings
- Improve accessibility through the site so that it more effectively forms a connection between Somerstown to the east and Kings Cross to the west

Footpaths: Create a hierarchy and re-furbish/re-construct pathways.

Material options: Tar spray and chip, tarmac, coloured tarmac, hoggin or breedon gravel, paving, mown path

Seating: Introduction of additional simple, easily maintained, traditional park seating in key areas

Signage: Potential for subtle wayfinding and interpretation signage

Planting and Biodiversity:

- Enhance memorial features with soft landscaping
- Potentially introduce formal terracing and open pathways running lengthways along slope at Pancras Road.
- Develop a maintenance plan and tree management strategy
- Opportunities to enhance **biodiversity** of site

Prominent features to preserve



1. Burdett Coutts Memorial Sundial



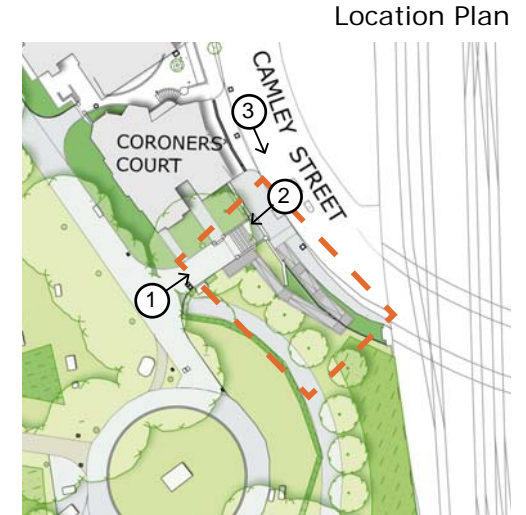
2. Sir John Soane's Mausoleum



3. Hardy Tree

Improved access option at Camley Street

Existing access



Potential ramped access design options

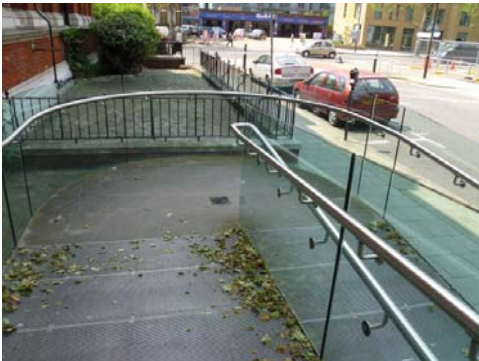
Steel balustrade and natural stone



Steel handrail and brick



Steel structure and glass balustrade



Glass balustrade on rendered wall



The existing entrance at Camley Street features a brick wall and piers with a total of 11 steps up into the Gardens.

A levels study for a potential option has been undertaken to assess the feasibility of a ramped or level access at this entrance. The aim is to improve accessibility into the Gardens for a range of user groups, as well as enhancing the pedestrian link between the gardens and the Camley Street development area north of Kings Cross.

The proposed option for a ramp is to follow the Disability Discrimination Act guidance (DDA) which state a minimum of 1.5m width and handrails to both sides. The landing for the ramp is aligned to meet the current entrance area at higher level.

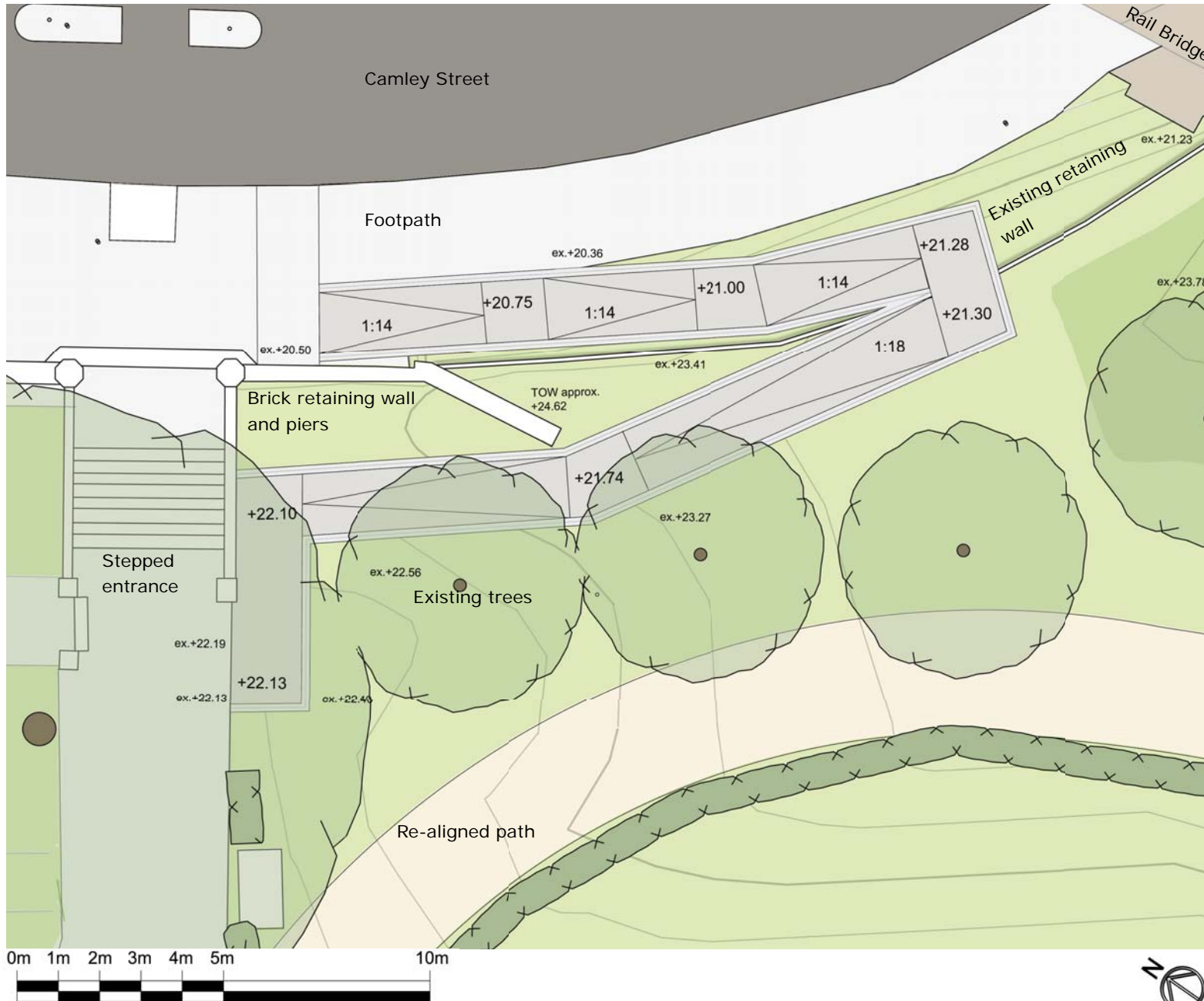
With guidance from a heritage consultant, we have given consideration to the character and importance of the historic setting and features, such as the brick piers and retaining wall.

Example images on the left illustrate options for potential arrangements and choice of materials.

The first two pictures show stainless steel railings and natural stone or brick walling. The second set shows a lightweight steel construction with a solid soffit where the ramps meets the footpath level. A glass balustrade with steel railings provide a light visual appearance.

This levels study has explored a potential option, however a detailed feasibility study needs to be carried out to fully assess all proposals. Other options may be considered and it is likely that planning permission will be required. Detailed considerations for construction will have to include measures to retain existing trees, works to the existing retaining walls, careful materials selection, as well as specific requirements for different types of users possibly including cyclists.

Levels Study for Ramped Access Option at Camley Street



- Start of the ramp to be set back from current entrance at Camley Street level
- Ramp to follow alignment of the existing retaining wall
- Alignment to protect historic entrance features and meet current entrance area
- Ramp design carefully looks at minimising the rootzone incursion of the existing trees
- Detailed arboricultural survey and further details of construction are needed to confirm retention of the trees or potential necessary removal
- Current landform within the gardens rises up towards the existing retaining wall
- The levels fall towards the stepped entrance
- A level difference of 1.6m has to be overcome from street level



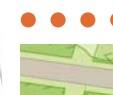
Path hierarchies

The footpaths and vehicular traffic routes at St Pancras Gardens are formed of tarmac surfacing and range between 2 and 5 metres wide. Due to the proximity of large mature trees to the pathways on site and roots lifting the paving, the majority of paths are in need of surface repair or renewal.

Proposals for the existing pathway system include:



Outer circulation: Reduce path widths next to mature line of trees to 3.5-4m to allow for access of wide vehicles. Re-install tarmac wearing courses



Inner path crossings: Reduce path widths next to mature line of trees to 2.3-3m and change of surfacing to permeable bonded material.



Install new path links



South of church circulation: create new path connection and a level access route
Use tarmac to match existing



Renew tarmac surfacing, against existing edging elsewhere



Introduce mown grass paths within long grass areas



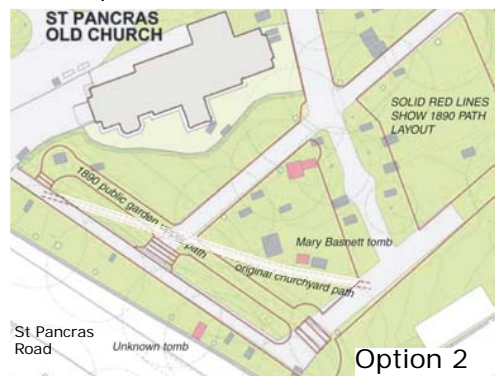
Options for level pathway route and potential for new entrance

Option 1 for level pathway route

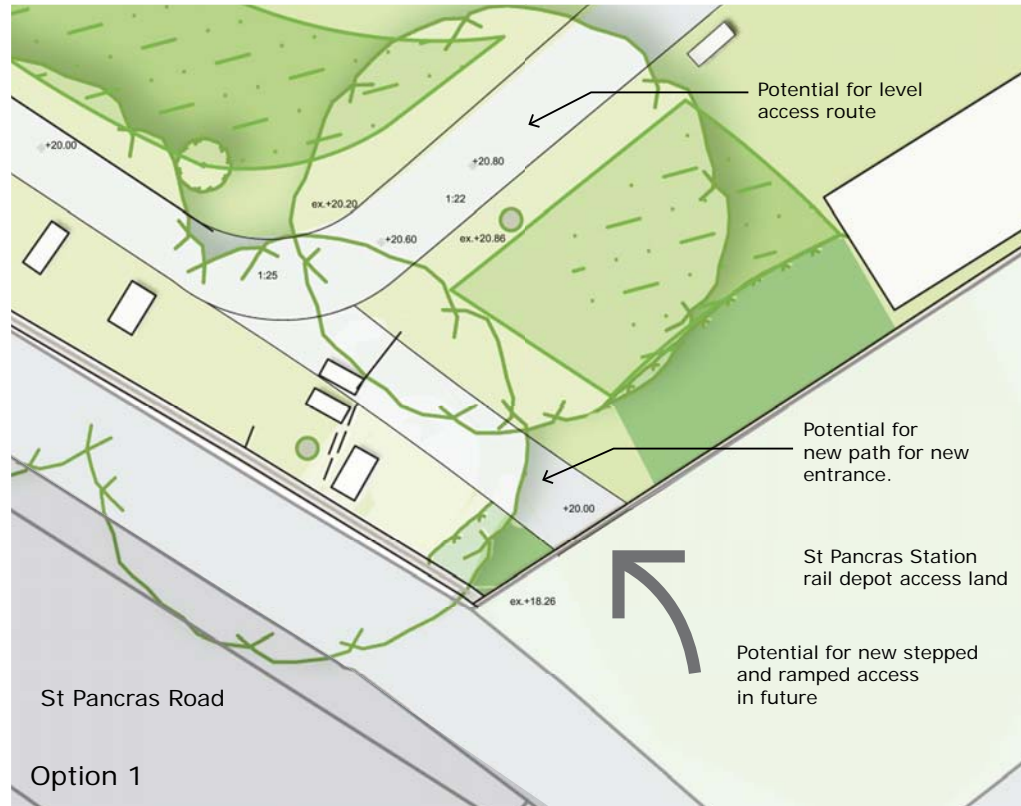
The pathways to the south of St Pancras Church currently include two stepped sections. Levels and site conditions have been assessed for creating a potential step-free access through the gardens. By raising levels locally and adjusting the path alignment it could be achieved to remove steps at the southern most path (see plan). This will create a direct and accessible pathway connection and opportunity for a circular walk. New tarmac surfacing is proposed for the new pathway link to match the existing. Careful consideration has to be given to the existing mature tree bordering the path and a row of gravestones.

Alternative route, option 2

In consultation with conservation architects AAB, below plan shows an alternative option for a level access path. This looks at the historic layout of the gardens. Proposals would include a diagonal route, which would be in alignment with the monuments and not intersect roots of the mature plane trees .



Existing site plan, with paths shown on 1870 and 1895 OS maps overlaid in red



Existing path with steps



New path alignment and surfacing



Examples of ramp and steps construction
Steel railing and natural stone



Glass balustrade and steel handrail



Potential for a new entrance

In order to maximise accessibility through the site, a new entrance could be considered at the southern edge of the gardens. This entrance, similar to the Camley Street entrance, would provide a connection between the Gardens, the Kings Cross development area to the north and Somerstown to the south. Furthermore a valuable pedestrian link to St Pancras Station with improvements to the public realm could be created, and the visibility of St Pancras Old Church greatly enhanced. Further feasibility work and engagement with key stakeholders will need to be carried out.

Furniture and additional features

Signage

There is currently no wayfinding signage within the Church Gardens. Directional fingerposts are proposed at key locations to enhance access and readability of the overall path network. This aims at improving the connection between Camley Street (Kings Cross), the hospital and St Pancras Road, and wider linking York Way to Somers Town. There are further opportunities for volunteers to create historical interpretation boards.



Signage to match historic setting

Sensory garden

There is potential to install an educational or therapeutic garden in the southern part of the gardens. Proposals would include seating and planting beds with seasonal aspect and sensory planting. This could allow for volunteering and maintenance by community groups.



In ground herbaceous garden with pathway

Flexible hardstanding

A new area of hard surfacing could be introduced to cater for a range of activities and external events. This could provide a platform for community events and external concerts. St Pancras Hospital have previously organised a well-attended community fun day and have plans to repeat this annually. A dedicated area would improve the event setting and allow for an increased number of people attending.

An area that offers flexible use could also cater for temporary kiosk or coffee van.



Example of high quality mix of natural stone

Seating

Additional seating is proposed in the sunnier southern part of the gardens. A number of simple steel benches will enhance the useability of the Gardens and cater for spill-out from Church events.

Lighting

We propose to further increase pathway legibility for pedestrians by introducing lighting to key routes. This will enhance safe access in hours of darkness, particularly in the winter months.

Biodiversity and planting

Enhanced planting and tree works

- Refurbish planting areas along railway,
- Enhance winter aspect and biodiversity with ornamental boundary planting
- Increase flowering species
- Include low level groundcover to avoid hiding corners
- Include wet meadow area and planting, where ground tends to get waterlogged
- Pollarding of mature lime trees
- General pruning for tree health and to better sustain path surfacing
- Reduction of crowns to allow more light to promote healthier growth of grass and meadow areas
- Mature and overgrown shrub removal to enhance visibility through the site

Ecological features

Introduction of elements that promote local wildlife and engage community volunteers in the ecological enhancement. Features could include bird or bat boxes, insect hotels, butterfly mounds or hibernaculums.



Meadow areas



Bird box



Insect hotel

Location Plan



Long grass areas

We propose the introduction of long grass areas that are mown 2-3 times per year. This increases the ecological value of the areas, whilst also reducing maintenance costs. Regularly mown grass verges will remain along the path edges and trees. Mown areas are also proposed to be kept around tombstones and memorials to increase legibility of the scattered arrangement and enhance their setting. New pedestrian links will be introduced in the form of mown grass paths.





Entrances

- Camley Street entrance: Levels study for potential ramped access

Circulation and legibility

- Introduction of path hierarchies and options for materials
- Reduced path widths and enhanced layout
- Potential for level access through the site south of the church
- Potential for new entrance south of the site at St Pancras station end

Biodiversity and Planting

- Areas of long grass with introduction of mown grass paths
- Lift crowns of trees to increase light and visibility through the site
- Enhanced biodiversity through additional boundary planting and meadow areas
- Potential to install ecological features

Furniture and Additional Features

- Potential for therapeutic/ sensory garden to SE of site
- External events area - flexible hardstanding
- Potential for additional seating and wayfinding signage

CONCLUSION

St Pancras Gardens is a valued space for informal recreation and tranquil enjoyment of the park by a range of users: residents, hospital staff and patients, visitors and passers-by. It is a site that combines current uses, historical features and biodiversity value. With our proposals we aim to have demonstrated that careful renewal can improve the usage of the Gardens, whilst conserving their unique character and historic setting.

Next steps:

- Review feedback from second stage consultation
- Finalise masterplan proposals
- Prepare proposals for planning and Church approvals.

Groundwork London 2016

References:

1. *Land Use Consultants: Tree Strategy, June 2003*
2. *Philip A Emery and Kevin Woolridge, St Pancras Burial Ground, 2011, Gifford Ramboll*
3. *Paths for all: Estimating price guide for path projects, © Paths for All Partnership 2014*
4. *Crystal Palace Park, Management and Maintenance Plan, Land Management Services Ltd on behalf of the London Development Agency, 2007*
5. *AAB architects, St Pancras Gardens Heritage Statement, April 2016*