



SARUM ACADEMY LANDSCAPE DESIGN STRATEGY

JANUARY 2026

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1.0 Introduction

Overview

The Landmark Practice (TLP) has been appointed by Morgan Sindall to develop the landscape design around the proposed new expansion phases of Sarum Academy in Salisbury.

Sarum Academy, in north-west Salisbury. The academy is part of the Magna Learning Partnership Multi Academy Trust and offers mainstream secondary education for students aged 11–19. The school currently accommodates 900 pupils (6FE/180 PAN) and 250 sixth form places, though it operates as a 5FE school with 90 sixth form students. The sixth form will close, with no new intake from September 2025.

Due to planned city expansion outlined in the Local Plan, Wiltshire Council anticipates increased demand for places at Sarum Academy. To meet this, the school's capacity will be expanded from 6FE to 10FE over the next decade in multiple phases.

The phased expansion includes:

- Phase 1 | Target: Sept 2026 - Enabling works to support effective operation at 6FE.
- Phase 2A | Target: Jan 2028 - Expansion from 6FE to 8FE, adding 300 pupil places.
- Phase 2B | Target: Sept 2028 - Internal modifications to existing buildings after the new teaching block is completed.
- Phase 3 | Target: +10 years - Expansion from 8FE to 10FE, adding another 300 places.

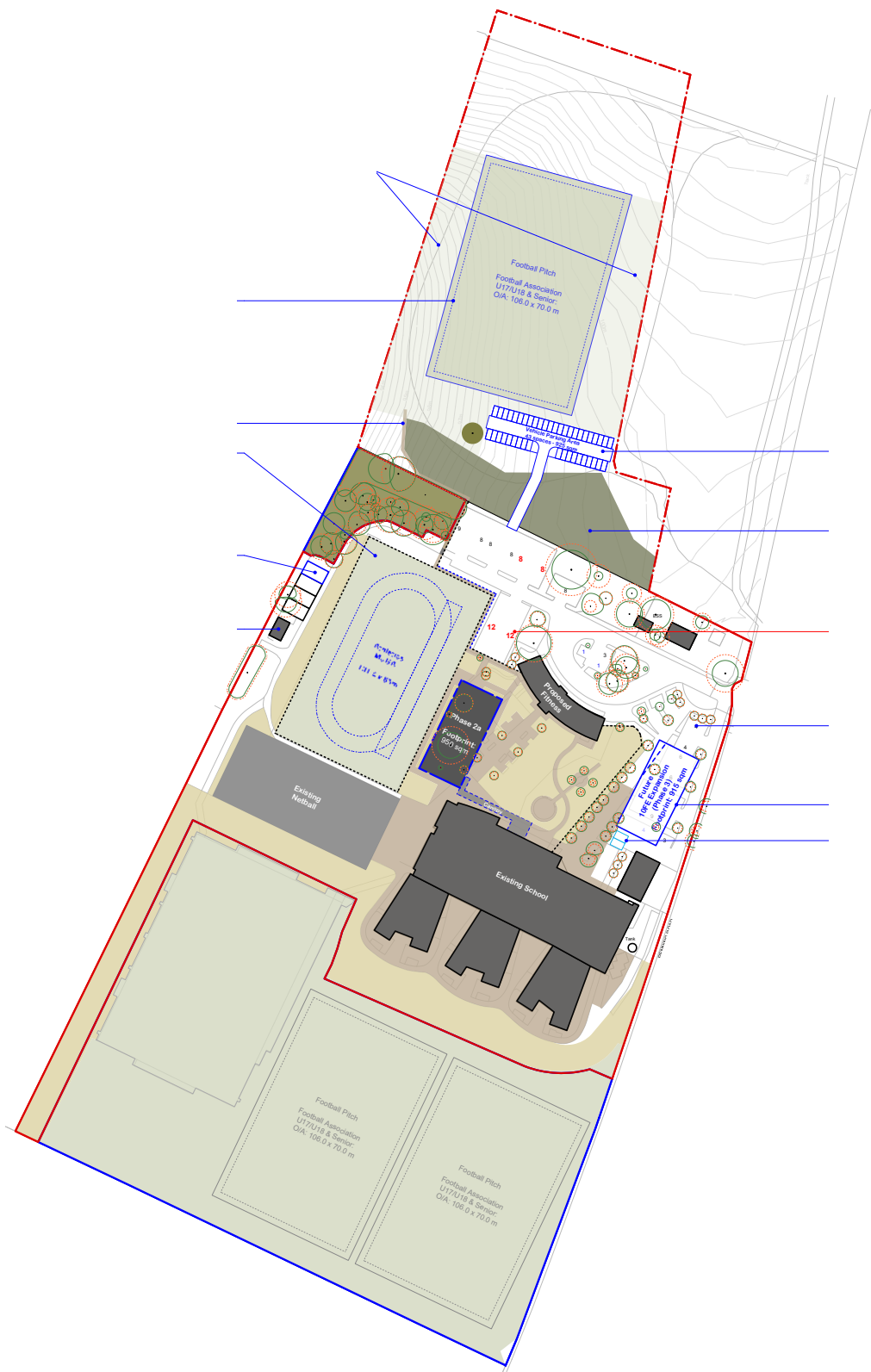
(Footprint Architects, 2025)

Purpose of the Document

This report documents the landscape design evolution of the project and supports the planning submission. The report explores in detail the site context and the landscape strategy, with a focus on function, access, user wellbeing, boundary treatment, education and connections to the wider site.

The report first provides a summary of the site and sets out the landscape design considerations, providing context to and informing the development of the detailed design proposals. It focuses on the central courtyard space with the remainder of the external space being developed in tandem with the wider site's BNG strategy, refer to supporting landscape drawings.

This design report should be read in conjunction with the full landscape suite of drawings and outline specification.



Emerging phase 1-3 plan- Footprint Architects

2.0 Historic Site Context



Old Sarum

Old Sarum is perched just 2 miles north of modern Salisbury, it began as an Iron Age hillfort (400 BC) and evolved into a Norman motte-and-bailey fortress and early cathedral site (*English Heritage, no date*).

Salisbury Cathedral

The Cathedral has an 800 year history, reflecting architectural styles from the 13th through to the 20th Century (*Experience Salisbury, no date*).

Converging of 5 Rivers

Salisbury is uniquely defined by the confluence of five rivers, the Avon, Nadder, Ebble, Wylde, and Bourne. These meet within and around the city to create a distinctive network of chalk streams and floodplain meadows.

Geological Context

Salisbury sits on the chalk plateau of Salisbury Plain, a porous bedrock that gives rise to chalk streams, river terraces, alluvial deposits, and flood-prone meadows (*British Geological Survey, 2020*).

Chalk Grassland

Salisbury Plain is one of the UK's best-known areas for chalk grassland, which has a very distinctive and ecologically rich plant community. It represents the largest area of chalk grassland in northwestern Europe (*Dong. Z et al, 2025*).

Design Considerations

- **Aligned features:** Incorporate avenues and linear features that reflect the ordered geometry of the cathedral.
- **Earthworks:** Subtle mounding echoing Old Sarum's defining banks, ditches, and ramparts.
- **Water management and SuDS:** Draw from the converging rivers to integrate sustainable drainage features, including rain gardens, rills, swales, and innovative elements such as channels and rain chains.
- **Materiality and geology:** Use materials to reflect the chalk geology, while potentially incorporating historic timelines through selected stonework.
- **Ecological richness:** Grassland planting and species-rich vegetation to enhance biodiversity.

3.0 Site Analysis

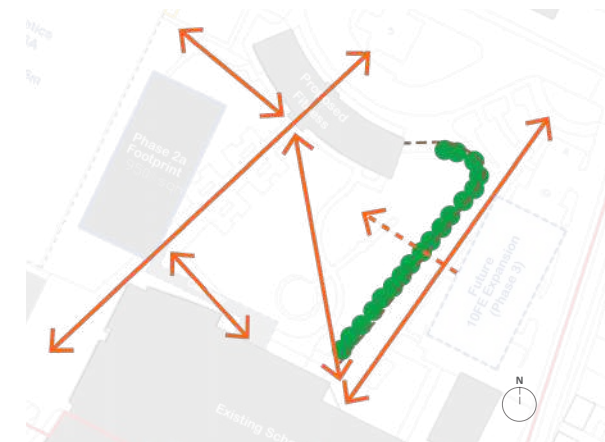
The proposed addition of the new building in phases 2 (and the future addition of further building in phase 3) create a courtyard space between the existing sixth form (proposed fitness centre) and the main school. This courtyard will provide connectivity between buildings for students and staff during school hours, and for community use outside of school hours.

Currently, the area offers limited leisure facilities, with existing benches and a table tennis table. The proposed development presents an opportunity to create a central open space for the school, informed by the surrounding landscape history and the school’s science initiatives.

There is opportunity to improve the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the wider site which has been explored and delivered via the BNG strategy.

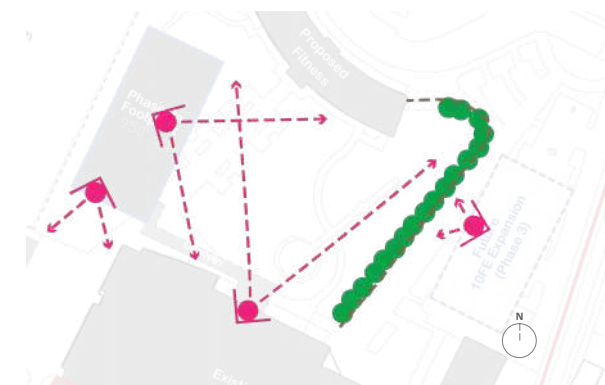
Desire Lines and Destinations

- The main axis between the car park and the main school runs along the western edge of the courtyard. Secondary connections link the existing school, the proposed western building, and the proposed fitness centre/ community entrance.
- At present, the western edge is enclosed by fencing. However, there is potential to create future access between the proposed eastern building and the courtyard through this boundary.
- In addition, a proposed covered walkway will establish a direct link between the main school and the western building.



Views and Teacher Observations

- Observational sight lines across the courtyard are an important consideration for staff.
- Passive surveillance will be provided across much of the site from the proposed eastern building and the existing school.
- Views from the proposed western building will be more limited, filtered through fencing and tree planting.



Sun Path

- Much of the site benefits from year-round sun.
- Some shade is cast by the existing school building along the southern edge.
- The two proposed buildings, due to their height and positioning along the western and eastern edges, will cast minimal shadow across the courtyard.



4.0 Existing Materials Palette



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark



Landmark

Existing Hard Materials Palette

The selected photos represent the existing finishes and materials on site. Overall, durability and function are the clear priority.

Design Response

The landscape design responds to these contextual influences. It draws upon the existing durable materials palette but also seeks to expand on these with spaces that celebrate science and respond to issues such as the climate emergency.

Existing Soft Materials Palette

The selected photographs illustrate the existing planting, which is predominantly composed of trees, open grassland, amenity grassland, scrub, and areas of amenity planting around the built form.

The site supports a diverse mix of trees, including both mature and young specimens of *Quercus robur* (English oak), *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam), and *Betula pendula* (silver birch), as well as a small row of orchard trees.

Design Response

The proposed landscape design responds to these contextual influences by introducing a mixed and varied planting and tree palette, including native species, with careful consideration of climate resilience. The scheme also creates opportunities for educational engagement through science-focused initiatives within the school grounds.

The wider site is further considered within the BNG strategy which includes a series of innovative planting features.

5.0 Precedent Spaces



Soft landscape mounding creates informal seating areas - oak sleepers may also be utilised to activate edges and create new seating opportunities.



Mounding creates opportunities to provide new habitats and native planting within the heart of the school grounds. Reflecting the mounding of Old Sarum.



Opportunities to introduce new habitats.



Seasonal and diverse planting designed to provide year-round interest, support educational opportunities, and enhance wellbeing for both staff, pupils and community.



Boulders with smooth edges could be used as seating and boundary treatments, relating to local context and geology.



Year round structure and colour in planting.



Playful elements encourage exploration of the outside spaces.

6.0 Precedents: Science-focus

Integrating sustainable drainage and landscape science features into a secondary school setting creates hands-on opportunities for students to learn about climate resilience, history, ecosystems, and water management. Elements such as rain gardens, permeable paving, varied planting, support cross-disciplinary learning.



Dry Sustainable Drainage System storage basin



Opportunities to incorporate rain gardens and marginal planting.



Dished channels offer a human connection to the flow of water.



Interpretation boards to show details on elements like the Sustainable Drainage System. Providing information for students and teachers.

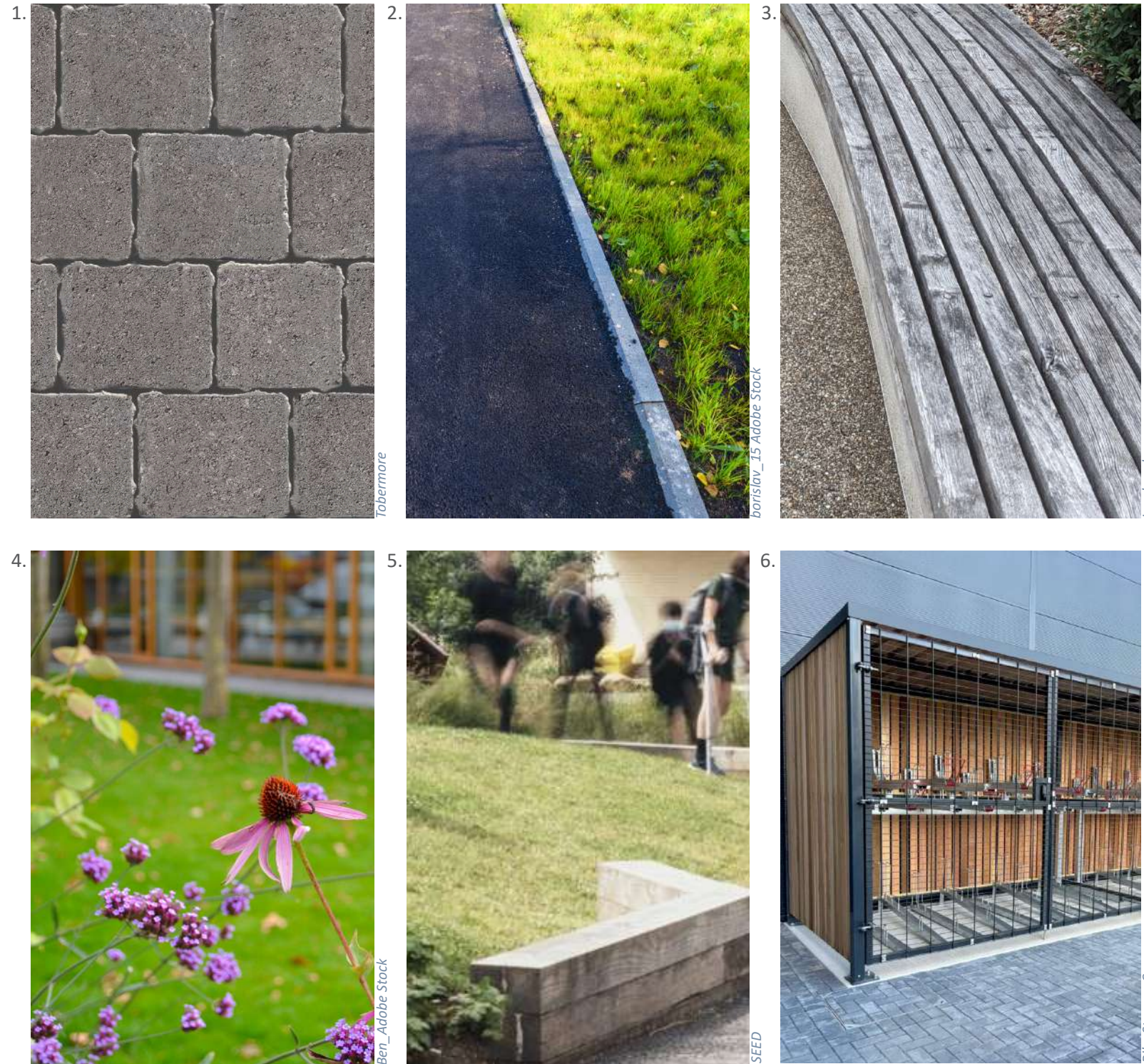


Simple species plaques placed on trees and within planting areas to support identification and learning



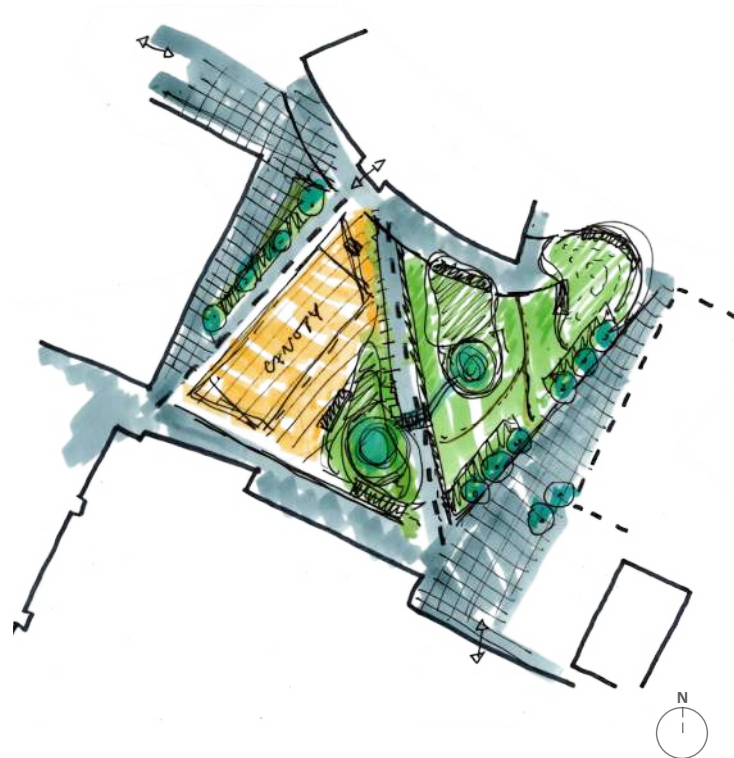
Vegetated swale

7.0 Proposed Materials Palette



1. Permeable paving to seating areas, delineating thoroughfares and seating area. Matching existing site finishes.
2. Concrete edging - to macadam path edges and surface changes, for durability, ease of maintenance and longevity.
3. Furniture - durable hardwood furniture to formal and informal spaces for social use. Seating edges may be included within the soft landscape to define the spaces.
4. Amenity Planting - hardy and low maintenance planting to define spaces and create soft landscape buffers. Planting provides interest for pollinators and seasonal variation in colour and texture.
5. Soft landscape mounding - creating informal spaces and reflecting the Wiltshire landscape such as Old Sarum and the Salisbury Plain. With local meadow grass species and seasonal interest.
6. Cycle Storage - timber clad storage shelter for bicycles. Located in the north east corner of the site.

8.0 Landscape Initial Thoughts



Overview

Initial design thinking centered on site connectivity, exploring the boundaries between hard and soft landscapes. Varied landform, routes, and spaces create a functional and engaging heart to the site, supporting outdoor learning, play, and socialising.

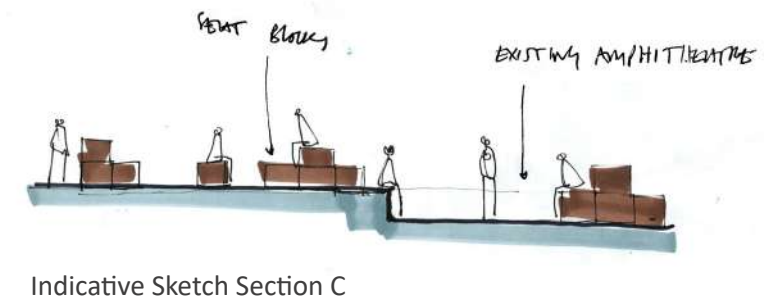
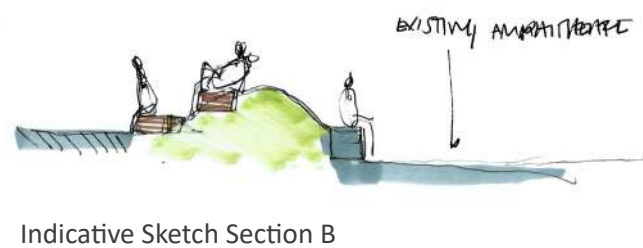
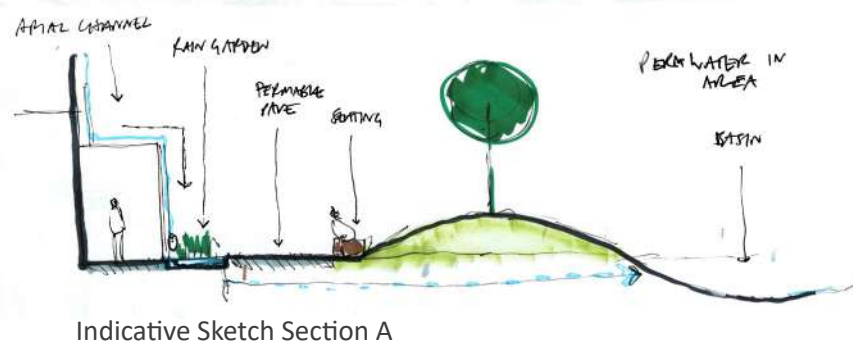
Key Features

- Multi-functional green spaces acting as play, drainage and garden areas, with views from all buildings.
- SuDS considered throughout with draining from builtform.
- Exploring how to use and intergrate the existing landscape features.
- Designs explored the spread of green spaces across the site, reducing emphasis on main routes.
- Soft mounds with benches create quiet areas; open spaces support larger groups and outdoor lessons.

9.0 Landscape Initial Concepts

Overview

Designs further explored the emerging themes of the site as well as being informed by the proposed drainage layout. Both linear and organic approaches were considered, highlighting science, site history, connectivity, play and rest. For each option the retention of existing features has been considered to focus expenditure on the new external spaces.



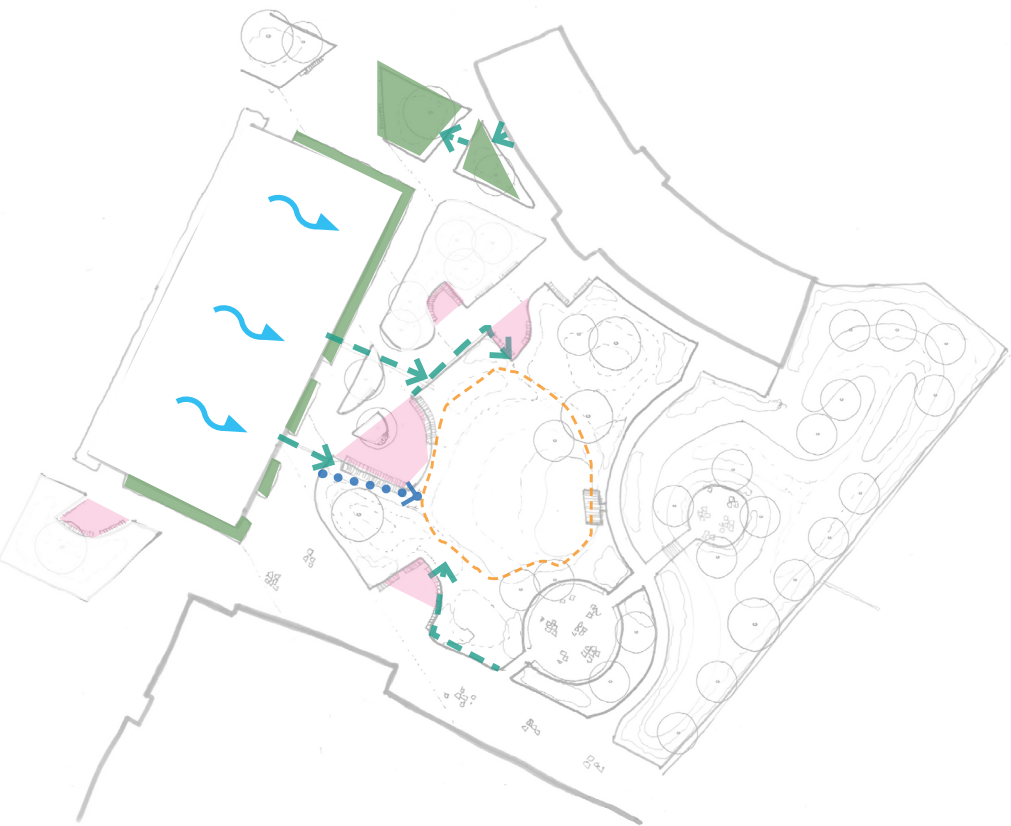
10.0 Landscape Sketch Plan



Location

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11.0 Strategic Layers

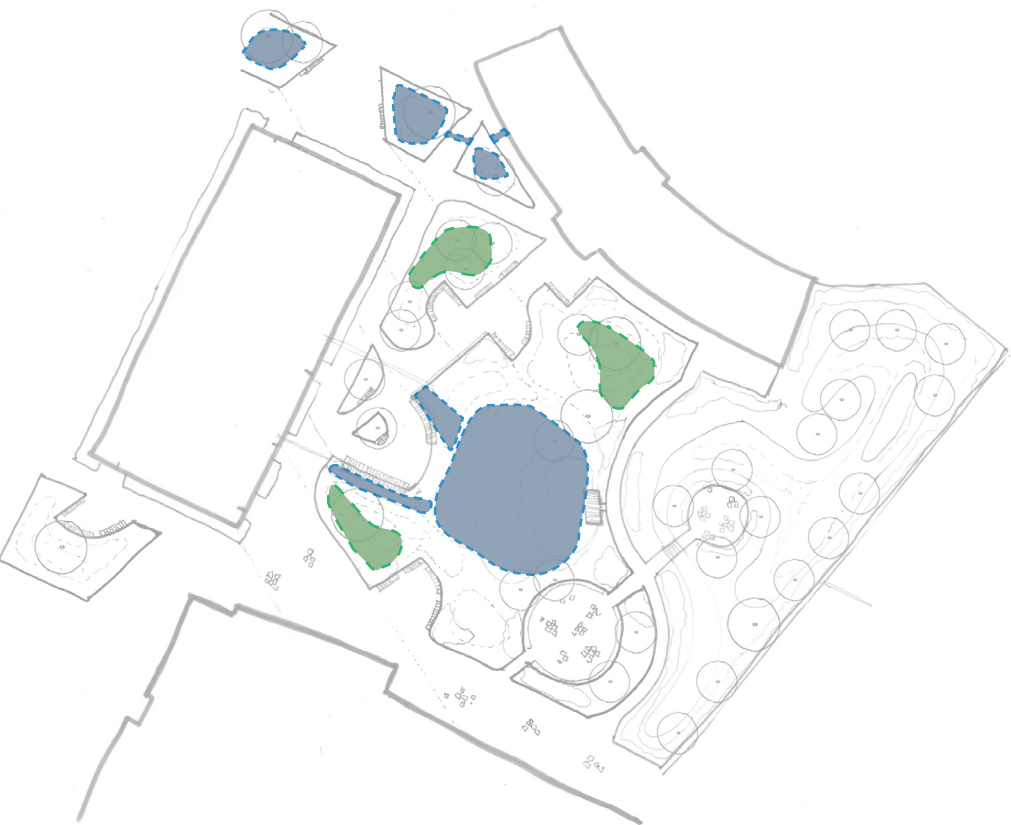


Hydrology Strategy

The design keeps water visible throughout the site, revealing its journey and the ways in which built form and climate change shape its movement. Interpretation boards along the route invite students and visitors to learn from and engage with this story.

Legend

- Surface channel
- Vegetated swale/ditch
- Rain garden
- Dry Sustainable Drainage Systems storage basin
- Permeable paving
- Run off direction



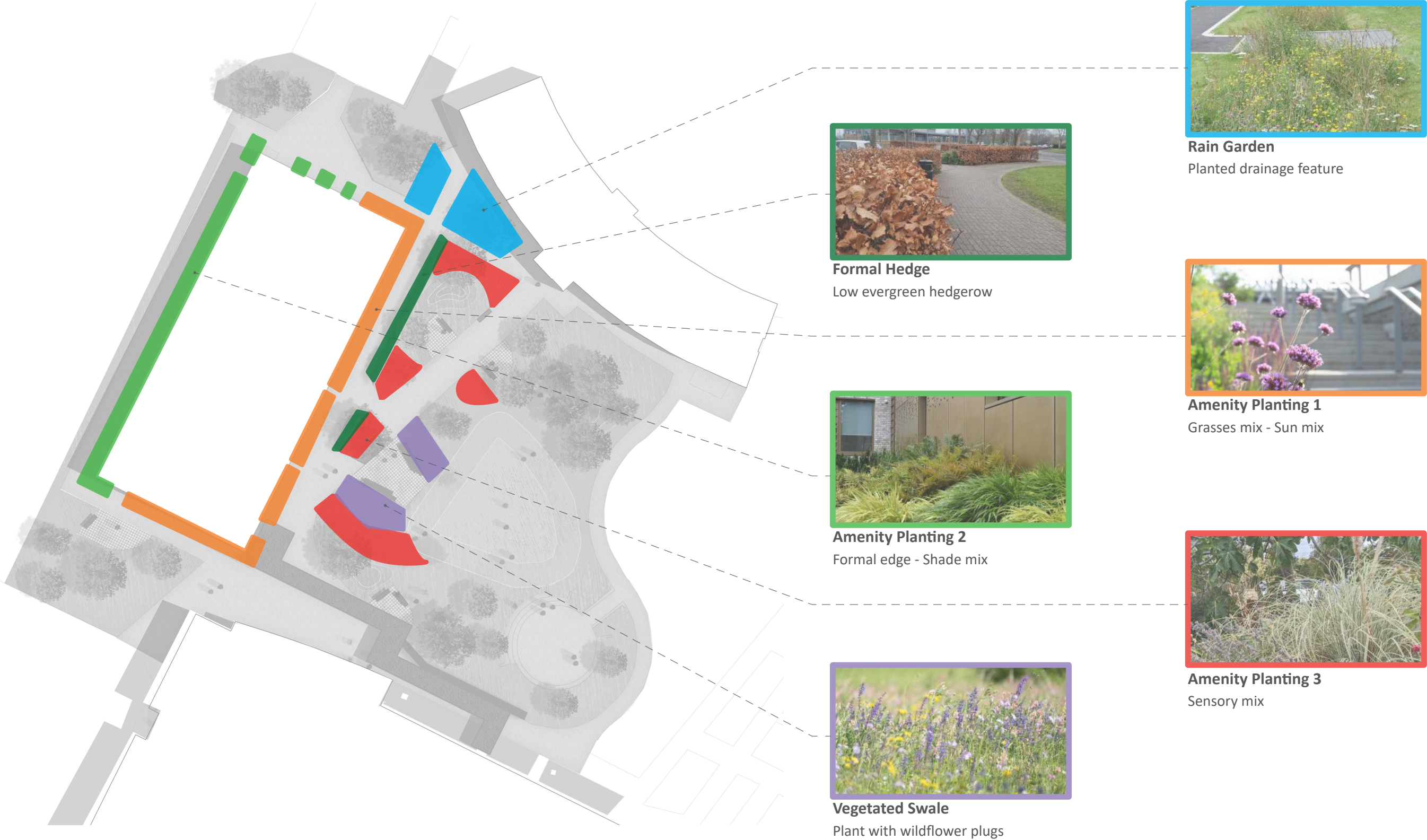
Topographic Strategy

The design aims to retain all cut and fill on site, reusing earthworks excavated from the swales and basin to create micro-topography inspired by the precedents shown in section five.

Legend

- Raised topography
- Sunken topography

12.0 Planting Strategy



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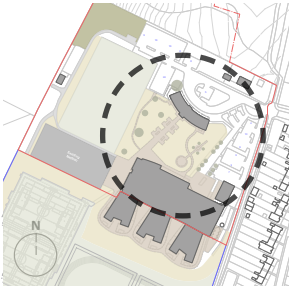
13.0 Illustrative Masterplan - Central Courtyard



14.0 Aerial Sketch



Location



Indicative Aerial Sketch of Courtyard