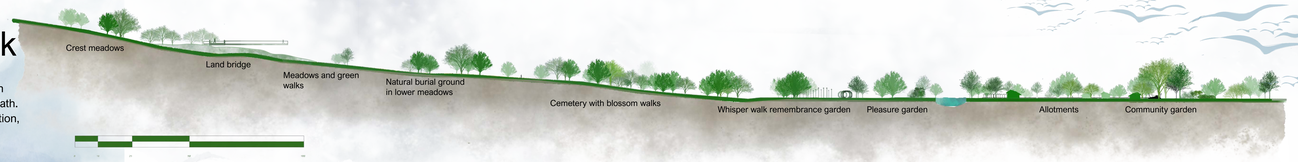
The Mindful Path

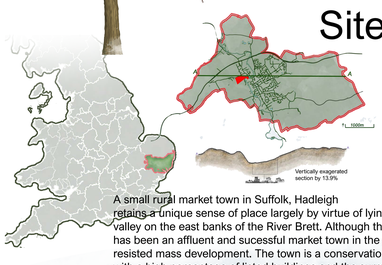
Bridge Street to Friars Hill: Hadleigh, Suffolk

A cemetery fragmented from the town, no dedicated remembrance garden and under-utilised green space has led to the conception of The Mindful Path. An emotive and inspiring journey though the landscape supporting recreation, contemplation and remembrance uniting the community to this unique environment through a series of elevating landscapes.



She tumbles freely
Without a care in the world;
Will you cleanse that within me
Will you soothe my cares too
Brave river carry me with you.

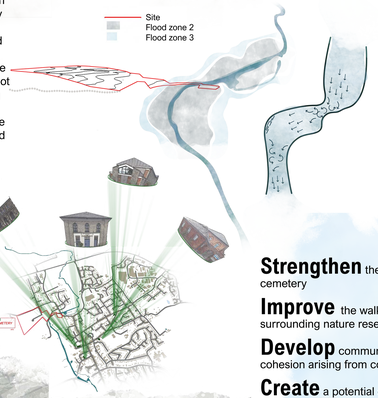
Site Analysis



A small rural market town in Suffolk, Hadleigh retains a unique sense of place largely by virtue of lying in a valley on the east banks of the River Brett. Although the town has been an affluent and sucessful market town in the past it has resisted mass development. The town is a conservation area with a high percentage of listed buildings and the surrounding countryside designated as special landscape character (Mid Suffolk Council, 2021).

A third of people in Hadleigh live alone (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Within the community of Hadleigh a third of the population live alone. This does not indicate that all these individuals are lonely but it can be an influencing factor and loneliness can severely impact mental health (Mind,2021).
The site lies to the north west of the town and at its heart lies the cemetery. Constructed circa 1885 it lies distant from the town and the churches. It can be reached but access on foot is unremarkable leaving the cemetery feeling disassociated .
Challenging topography is a feature of the site with a rise of 35 metres to the top. The reward is a fantastic view across the town and open landscape beyond. At the foot lies the River Brett so part of the site is within a flood zone.



Concept and Development

The River Brett is not tidal but levels flutuate regularly and the flow varies from sedate to rushing turbulence depending on where it is on its journey down valley. Deep still pools feature at points alongside riffles in the shallows with turbulence between bridges and at the weirs.
This journey is a parallel for the unpredictability of life and how external influences such as grief, loneliness and stress can create emotional unrest like the turbulent energy of the water.
The design for the site is driven by this and aims to create a series of highs and quieter moments reflecting the rivers energy.

Masterplan

Strengthen the relationship between Hadleigh, the site and cemetery

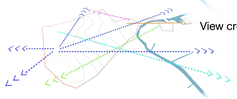
Improve the walkable connections between the site, cemetery and surrounding nature reserves encouraging beneficial physical activity

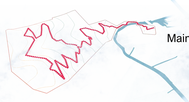
Develop community resilience and better mental health from social cohesion arising from communal events

Create a potential economic revenue stream through art, cultural and remembrance events

The landbridge is a structure to straddle the contours and provide an experience to cross the land forms that exist naturally and take in the views across the town, valley and the fields beyond.

We look before and after
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those
that tell of saddest thought
(Shelley, 1820, lines 90-95)



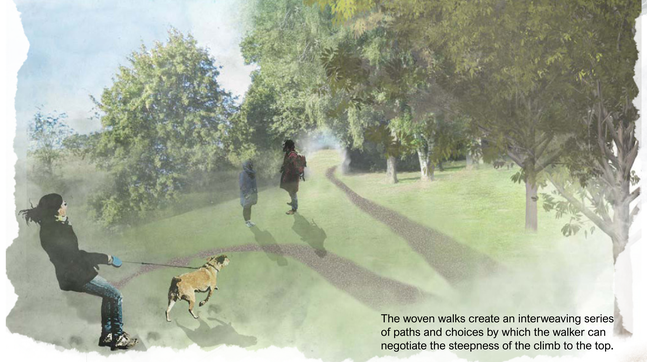


Contemplative Design

The aim of the site is to create spaces for connection, calm, contemplation and remembrance. In order to achieve this key design elements can facilitate this process:

- Layers within the landscape
- Strong landforms that flow
- Interaction with light, sound, texture and colours
- Preferably native planting schemes that are of the place
- Foci to absorb and fascinate
- Harmony and peace in repetition

(Kinnke and Treib, 2005)



The woven walks create an interweaving series of paths and choices by which the walker can negotiate the steepness of the climb to the top.

Bridge House at the start of the journey is a place to meet friends, have a coffee and enjoy company and activity.

The boardwalk is a transition zone from activity through to solitude and peace. The journey over the iron bridge and along the river create a series of different atmospheres. The swales create a dynamically changing landscape.

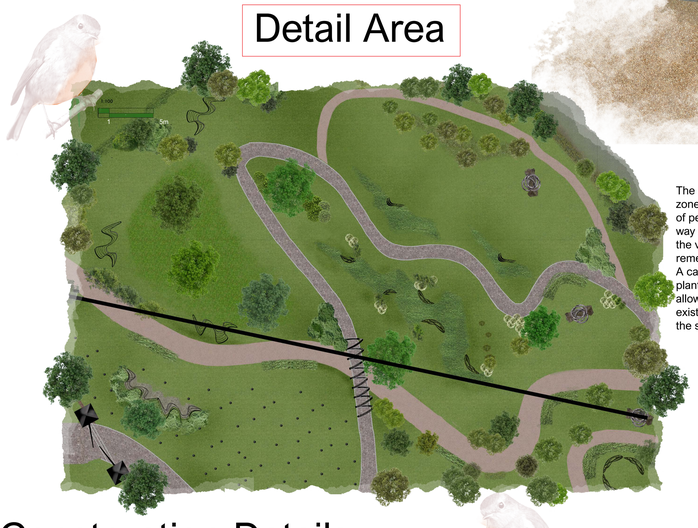
Planting strategy

Native Plant Selection The value of this selection will be supportive of the rural landscape typology and the rich biodiversity found in the land surrounding the site and in line with local planning policy (BDC-15). In addition an expansion of native species selection from those predominant on the site enhance the benefits (Hitchmough, 2011).

Connect To join fragmented small woodlands with wooded copses with stands of planting to create green patches and corridors to encourage ecological dispersal, shelter, recreation value and walkability (Gustafson and Harrison, 1997).

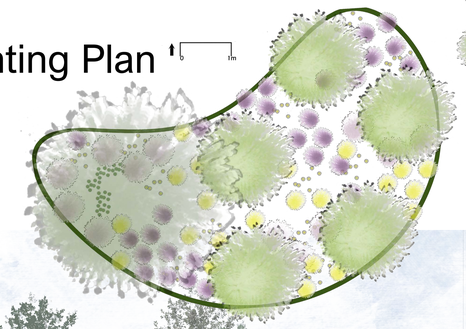
Phenomena To use planting selections to evoke and enhance the design intentions regarding contemplation and remembrance and mark transitions and thresholds to engender the sense of programme, progression and journey.

Detail Area



The central insightful contemplative zone is designed to first create a sense of peace and tranquility and then by way of a cast iron pergola of poetry take the visitor on a reverent walk through a remembrance garden.
A calming landscape with a restricted planting palette it is multi-functional allowing access to the dog walkers and existing footpaths without impinging on the seclusion of the quieter spaces.

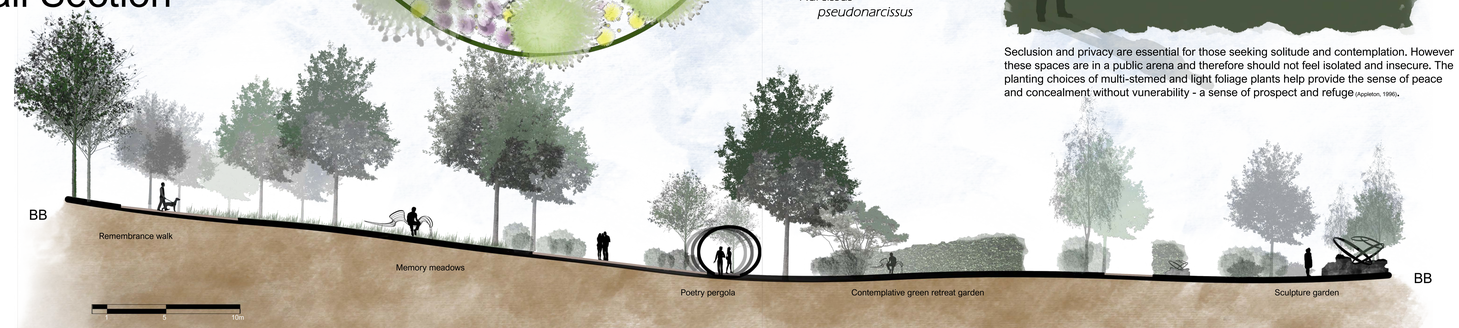
Planting Plan



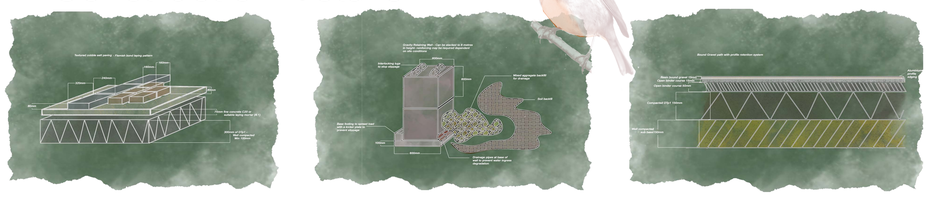
Amelanchier lamarckii
Cornus sanguinea
Anemone nemorosa
Pulsatilla vugaris
Primula vulgaris
Galanthus nivalis
Narcissus pseudonarcissus

Seclusion and privacy are essential for those seeking solitude and contemplation. However these spaces are in a public arena and therefore should not feel isolated and insecure. The planting choices of multi-stemed and light foliage plants help provide the sense of peace and concealment without vunerability - a sense of prospect and refuge (Appleton, 1996).

Detail Section



Construction Details



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