3

Site Strategy &
Urban Design Criteria

3.0 SITE STRATEGY & URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

3.1 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Green space in the city

A collection of civic forms

The plinth as viewed from Grand Parade aerial

The tower from South Main Street

1. A connected green urban block

- The diagram above indicates the walled core of the city and its overwhelmingly urban condition. It illustrates the significance of the Park as a vital counterpoint to the urban context, and its role as the central 'soft space' in the city centre.
- Our proposals seek to sustain and celebrate this condition, whilst remembering the prevailing urban/built character of the site until its change to a public park in 1985, and the demolition of the buildings that had until that point completed the city block.
- We propose to achieve this by inserting a plinth like object into the centre of the site, a new urban figure which shares a relationship with the other primary civic forms which populate the city centre, as indicated on the diagram above.

2. The plinth, a 'new ruin'

- We have placed a plinth within the site as an identifiable object – a 'new ruin', embedded into the topography of the park to define a continuous surface. It becomes gently raised towards the east as a result of the natural fall in topography towards Grand Parade, and to the west to accommodate the retention of the existing trees.
- The plinth is orientated to align with the Arches on Grand Parade - its plan profile staggered to define varying widths of surface in response to the site's shape, geometry, the restrictions defined by the site's archaeology and the Root Protection Zones of the existing trees to be retained.
- The plinth is embedded in the trees and soft landscaping – subsumed into the park. The plinth is set within the soft planted park, and flexibly adjusts to serve immediate context and function – seating, play, steps, ramps, sculpture etc.

3. Objects defining character & threshold

- Four distinct structures emerge from the plinth – thereby differentiating between each key threshold to the park.
- 1. Tower: The little Tower or campanile (redolent, perhaps, of the towers that once punctuated the city's walls, and the steeple that once adorned the adjacent Christchurch) overlooks the square to the west. It will have the flexibility to hold banners/lighting rigs for varying events throughout the year.
- 2. Pavilion: to the east, a low linear structure (with wild flowers growing on its roof) has horizontal qualities which relate to both the Medieval Wall and the lateral expanse of Grand Parade
- 3. Shelter: A smaller version of both the tower and pavilion, it offers a sheltered space to the north west corner of the park, addressing Christchurch Lane.
- 4. Bridge: Adjacent to the Pavilion lies a Bridge – spanning across the Medieval Wall from the park to Grand Parade. The Bridge underscores the shift of conditions across the Wall – moving between eras of Cork's history.

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3.1 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

0. Plinth
- a. To the west, the plinth accommodates a small public square or Piazza – designed to accommodate varying types of events/occupation. A Tower – a small campanile – overlooks the Piazza and provides an infrastructure to support events (lighting, hanging banners etc).
- b. Through the centre of the Park, the plinth is narrower – offering a generous pathway amongst the trees with sufficient width for seating.
- c. To the east, the plinth widens to address the Pavilion and the linear figure of the Medieval Wall.

1. Tower
- This has been designed so as to be visible along South Main Street, and to draw people to Bishop Lucey Park.

2. Pavilion
- This structure provides shelter from which to view the Medieval wall, a focus for events/congregation and creates a relationship with the existing arches on Grand Parade.

3. Shelter
- A modest structure acknowledging the more domestic/laneway character of Christchurch Lane, providing a sheltered area to the west of the park.

4. Bridge
- A fundamental part of the city of Cork is the experience of moving across water on bridges. We celebrate this phenomenon in our proposals, and offer an alternate vista from which to view the Medieval Wall.

5. Medieval Wall
- In order to communicate the significance of the park's location on the periphery of the Medieval city, we propose to increase the amount of City Wall exposed. Interpretative signage will also tell the story of the Medieval wall and the city's history.

6. Water feature
- A water feature will occupy this area, providing a reflection of the Medieval wall, and dealing with the natural tidal flooding at this depth.

7. Terraced seating
- By incorporating some terraced seating adjacent to the Medieval Wall, we create a focused area to allow small gatherings, or individual quiet moments. By excising the ground in this area, we also increase the visibility of the Medieval Wall from Grand Parade and allow the wall to take a more active role in the daily life of the city.

Proposed plan of park

8. Christchurch Lane
- As we've already mentioned in this document, the directness of Christchurch Lane in being able to navigate between Grand Parade and South Main Street is an enduring experience of this part of the city.

9. Bronze swan fountain
- We propose to refurbish the existing fountain and sculpture, whilst creating a bench that rests on top of its perimeter to provide some seating in this area.

10. Boxer's Wall
- We propose to retain and revitalise the Boxer's Wall, to bring it more directly into an engagement with the life of the park

11. Christchurch graveyard
- We propose to provide additional lighting and improve the planting within the graveyard, to provide an improved visual amenity when viewed from the park during the day and night.

3.0 SITE STRATEGY & URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

3.2 MOVEMENT, ACCESSIBILITY & SECURITY

Boundaries, security & permeability

- As noted earlier in the document, the existing park is bounded on all sides by low stone walls and metal railings, with all entrances gated. As part of our brief and subsequent proposals we will remove some of these existing walls/railings to create a more permeable boundary between the park and the city, whilst in other instances retaining the existing stone walls, but removing the railings.

- This will increase footfall and sight lines through the park. Coupled with the targeted removal and thinning of existing trees, the park with feel brighter, more open and therefore a safer environment encouraging a diverse range of people to pass through and linger in the park.

- The more people that occupy and enjoy the park, the more passive surveillance and the safer the park feels at all times of the day. An improved lighting strategy, as noted later in the document (and in the report which accompanies this application) also helps in this regard.

Movement

- We have retained the direct historic route through the site along Christchurch Lane.

- The plinth facilitates more informal routes across the park, which respond to pedestrian desire lines we have identified. Moments to pause and play are scattered throughout to enhance this experience.

- Whilst the edge of the park has become more permeable as part of our propsoals, there are a number of key entry points as indicated on the adjacent plan.
    - 1a. Grand Parade (Christchurch Lane)
    - 1b. Grand Parade (Over proposed bridge through existing arches)
    - 1c. Grand Parade (southern entrance)
    - 2a. South Main Street (Christchurch Lane)
    - 2b. South Main Street (Steps to north and sloped surface to south of tower)
    - 3. Tuckey Street (entrance through existing wall and gateposts, with railings removed)

Access

- Level access to the plinth is provided by shallow sloped surfaces (less than 1:20 gradient). The plinth has been raised above the surrounding ground in some areas as a response to the existing levels, and an acknowledgment of the Root Protection Areas of the existing trees. It also enhances the placemaking qualities of it as a defined space within the experience of the park.
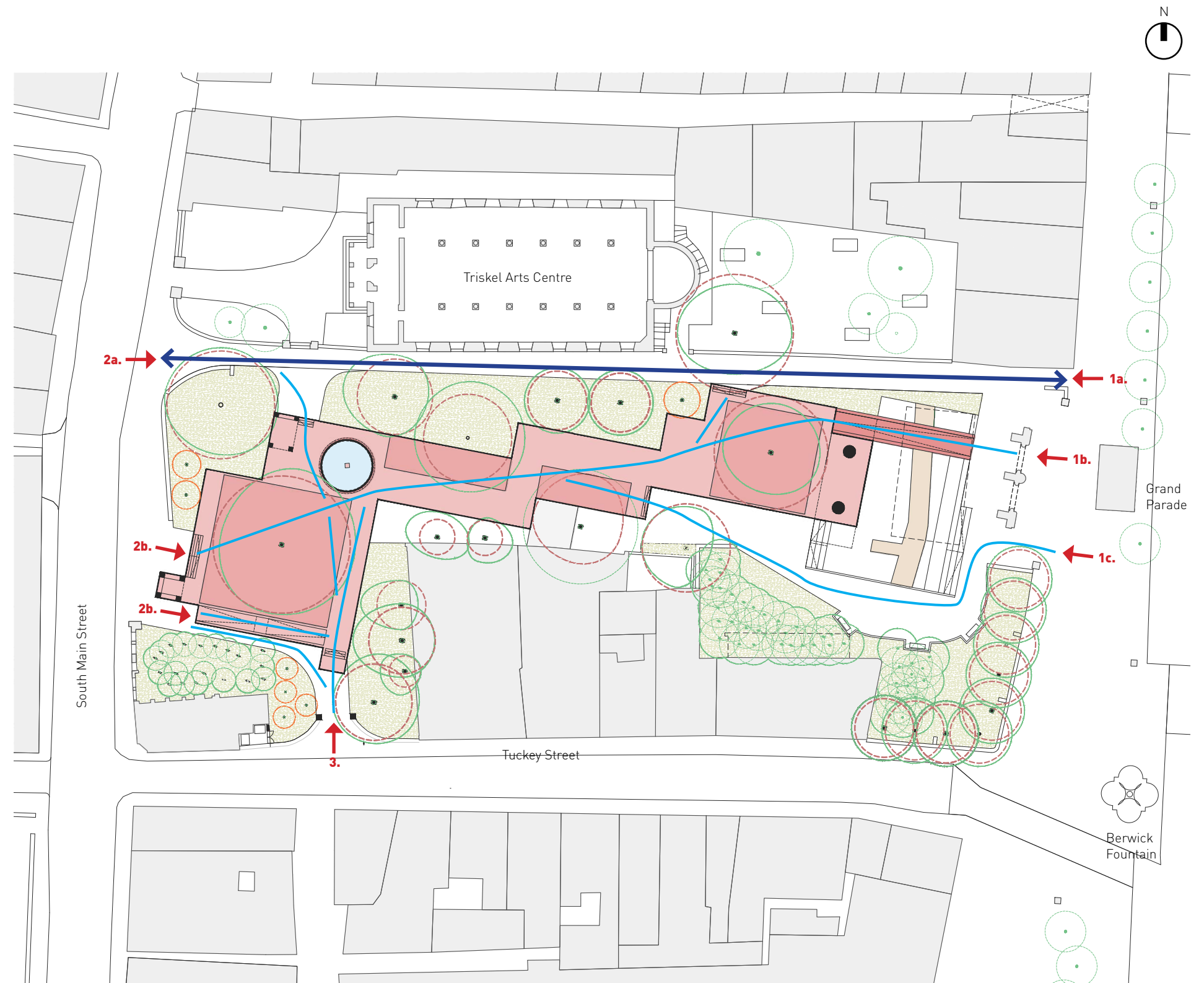
Existing desire lines through the park overlayed on our proposal

3.0 SITE STRATEGY & URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

3.3   EVENTS & PLAY

Events

- The tower at the west end of the park will allow the addition/removal of banners celebrating events/festivals taking place in the city. It will also allow the addition of temporary lighting in the case of a specific event/activity taking place in the park.
- We've designed the park to facilitate a number of different spatial experiences. With the area to the west having a piazza like space associated with the tower, shelter and existing sculpture/water feature, and the flexibility to facilitate events.
- The area to the east around the pavilion offers similar flexibility for events to take place, with the area in the centre of the park feeling more intimate.

Play

- Inspired by the public playgrounds designed by Van Eyck in the mid 20th century, we envisage children's play being supported by a collection of dispersed elements across the park - offering an exploratory character to play, and a degree of choice and differentiation in respect of varying ages and accessibility.
- These elements will be developed at detailed design stage.


Aldo Van Eyck play interventions
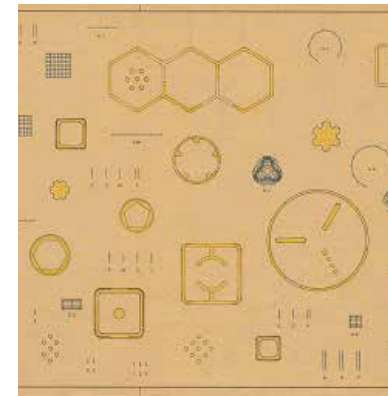
Informal objects as play. Tlalneplantla park, Mexico

3.4   SEATING

Seating

- The park will be populated with a variety of benches, responding to the language and materiality of their specific condition/location.
- As indicated in the image below, the red plinth will be populated with hardwearing/robust/low maintenance but bespoke benches.
- The perimeter of the park will have benches responding to the lighter more subtle tones which characterise our proposals for these areas.
- There will be variety of bench types which respond to the accessibility requirements noted in the building control guidance.
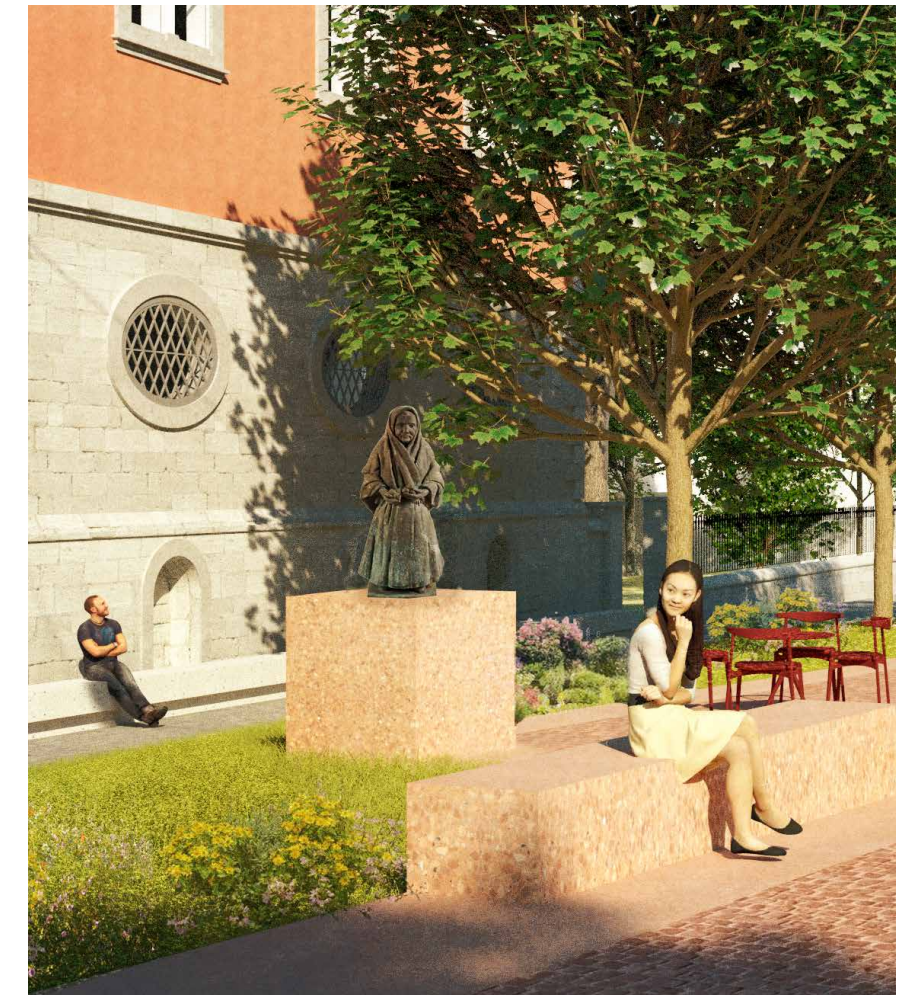
Internal view of park describing indicatively the proposed benches

3.0   SITE STRATEGY & URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

3.5   LIGHTING

3.6   WATER FEATURE

Lighting Strategy

The lighting strategy for Bishop Lucey Park will allow the space to be atmospheric in the evening, whilst meeting all relevant lighting level standards for the public realm. Catenary/pole mounted lighting will provide amenity lighting. This is elaborated on in the lighting layout and report which accompanies this Part 8 application. Feature lighting will be provided using the following strategies, which we have deployed successfully on a number of other completed public realm projects:

- Trees
  - *By uplighting the existing and proposed trees using discreet flush fittings embedded in the ground surface, the trees can provide ambient lighting whilst also celebrating their sculptural quality at night.*

- Existing buildings
  - *The perimeter of the site holds a number of richly articulated buildings and features, particularly the southern gable of Christchurch. By uplighting the buildings with a considered lighting strategy they can provide ambient lighting to the park. It is a strategy that we have successfully used on our public realm project in Ipswich, with the listed Town Hall and Post Office (images below).*

- Street furniture
  - *By lighting benches, the existing/refurbished water feature, the bridge, pavilion and cafe they can all provide points of focus and activation for the park at night.*

- Christchurch graveyard
  - *The existing graveyard to the north eastern extent of Christchurch Lane will be incorporated into the experience of the park by illuminating and thereby softening the northern edge of the site at night.*

Uplighting of trees and low level lighting of benches/features, whilst retaining an atmospheric quality to the public realm. (St Pancras Square, Stanton Williams)

Uplighting of trees

Shallow reflective pool. Cubitt Square, London
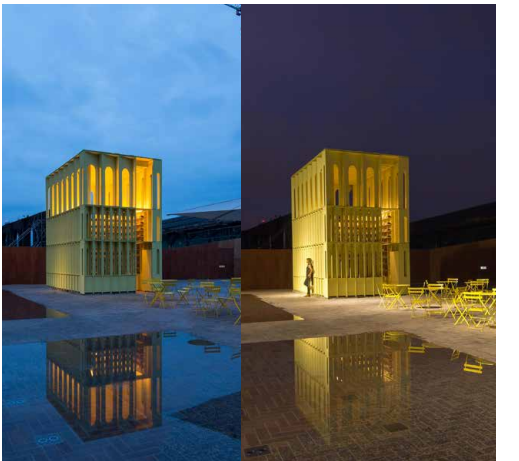
Water feature

We're proposing a water feature to the eastern side of the Medieval Wall. This feature will provide a focus to the eastern boundary of the site, and be activated by the terraced seating proposed to the south of the existing arches, with particular attention given to the archaeology of the Medieval Wall. It is hoped that it will provide a reflection of the Medieval Wall and draw people from Grand Parade to the park. Further detail for the water feature will be developed during the detailed design phase. The exact location and size of the underground plant room will be developed as part of the detailed design phase.

Ipswich Cornhill Town Hall lighting strategy

*Ipswich Cornhill Post Office with statues specifically illuminated*

Benches at Ipswich Cornhill

3.0 SITE STRATEGY & URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

3.7 PROPOSED DETAIL & MATERIALITY

Materials

- Whilst primarily being made from limestone, we observed that the Medieval Wall includes several 'erratic' instances of red-brown sandstone. At the scale of the city, we imagined our plinth as a distinct piece of red-brown masonry in the city, an embedded 'new ruin' with a distinctly rich colour to contrast with the historic walls.

Material variety & texture

- We've chosen a selection of high quality hard wearing materials that will age gracefully, and be enduring enough to exist comfortably within the public realm with a minimal maintenance requirement.
- They have a variety of textures and tones, and will help to distinguish between several distinct spatial experiences within the park.
- As indicated in image 3, a simple architectural language with varying textures/finishes to the hard surfaces and structures offers a pleasing counterpoint with the delicacy, intricacy and polychromy of the planting.

Red European Granite

- We're proposing to use a red granite for the top face of the plinth, (alongside a red compacted gravel around the base of the existing retained trees).
- This material is hardwearing, durable, easily cleaned and has been used successfully on another of our public realm projects in England.

Precast/insitu concrete

- The three images labeled '6' show precast concrete samples comparable with the colours we would be hoping to achieve based on the latest proposals. They indicate the variety of finish and colour that can be achieved within a similar palette by moderating the colour and size of aggregate, alongside the choice of pigment.
- Precast/insitu concrete provides a robust, hard wearing, durable material for the public realm, which we have used on a recently completed public realm project in England.

Compacted gravel / exposed aggregate concrete

- We're also exploring the use of these materials throughout the project, as a natural and durable backdrop to the experience of the park.

Key
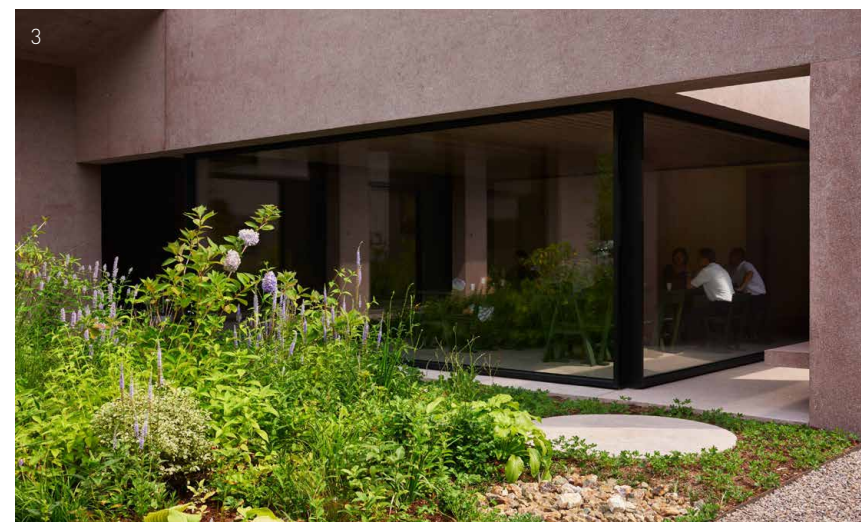
1.   David Chipperfield Architects, Kaufhaus Tyrol, Innsbruck
2/3.   David Chipperfield Architects, Inagawa Cemetery
4.   Medieval wall reference for materiality
5.   Character of proposed materiality
6.   Variety of finish/character available in precast concrete