



EF Academy Cotuit Hall, Oxford
Landscape Statement

PLANNING

July 2016

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Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Design Ltd (TLG) were appointed by the client to work closely with Tony Fretton Architects and the design team to develop the landscape proposals for the Education First Academy, Cotuit Hall This landscape report has been prepared to accompany and support the planning application for academic and residential college development and associated landscape works.

The existing grounds at the Education First Academy, Cotuit Hall possess the characteristics of a Victorian residential suburb landscape with rural charm. The following proposals complement and build upon this character.
Landscape aims

Our approach to the landscape is as follows:

- Create a sense of address and approach to the main entrance of Cotuit Hall.
- To create a new landscape for the proposed Refectory, Teaching and accommodation blocks which complements and enhances the ecological diversity and aesthetic value of the setting
- To enhance the quality, structure and ecological diversity of the neighbouring mixed woodland through new tree and understorey planting.
- To strengthen the visual and physical connections between the new buildings and Cotuit Hall through a cohesive landscape.
- To encourage pedestrian priority throughout the site area by reducing existing road widths and removing car parking

Introduction

The site of Cotuit Hall and the surrounding landscape have evolved from agricultural land to a mix of large private houses and gardens and nonresidential academic buildings.

Pullen’s Lane was created in 1836 to assist the sale of the Headington Manor Estate, dividing the existing fields into parcels of agricultural land. Cuckoo Lane established a second division of the land running in a northeast to west direction to the south of Pullen’s Lane. Along with the creation The new lanes dissecting the site can be seen in the Ordnance Survey Map of 1876.

By 1892 a series of new villas set in landscaped gardens were built, first along the east side of Pullens Lane and later along the west side. Nearly all of these were occupied by prominent academics of the University and other wealthy residents who could enjoy the a taste of the countryside with spectacular views over Oxford. Several houses included coach houses, gate lodges and gardener’s cottages to accommodates servants, all whom could tend to these large occupancies and extravagant gardens.

Napier House (now Cotuit Hall) was commissioned by Arthur Sampson Napier, a fellow of Merton College and professor of English language and literature. The house was completed in 1892, (as shown on the Ordnance Survey Map from 1900) and Napier lived there with his family until his death in 1916.

To the south of Napier House is High Wall whose extensive grounds which were completed in 1910 (the beginnings of which can be seen in 1900 map). The architecture for the large manor house is inspired by the Tudor Revival, and is set amongst extensive ‘Italianate’ style gardens designed by Harold Peto. The garden at High Wall is Grade II Listed, and has been designated as a Registered Garden of Special Historic and Horticultural Interest

- Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Woodland
- Mature Trees
- Orchard
- Private farm land

Ordinance Survey c.1876



- Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Woodland
- Mature Trees
- Orchard
- Private Estates & Gardens
- Private farm land

Ordinance Survey c.1900



Analysis of the Landscape Evolution

The development of the site at Napier House (Cotuit Hall) and surrounding landscape undergoes significant changes during the mid 20th Century.

Academic and educational uses were introduced early in the area's history; Napier House was bought at auction in 1917 by Headington School, was used to house their junior department. In 1930, the senior school moved into new buildings, and the junior section moved into its current location on the south side of London Road (where the senior school had previously been). The name of Napier House moved with the school. The residence now known as Cotuit Hall returned to residential use for a short period between 1930-40, with the gardens showing distinctive patterns of use, including a formal lawn adjacent to the house, a Kitchen garden and Orchard with remnants of a wooded enclosure to the far west of the site. Following this Cotuit Hall went through several changes of use including the City of Oxford's Children's Home (1940 – 1958) and, from 1962, a hostel of the College of Technology, which later became part of the Polytechnic and Oxford Brookes University. The Ordnance Survey from 1970 clearly shows new development and extensions to Cotuit Hall.

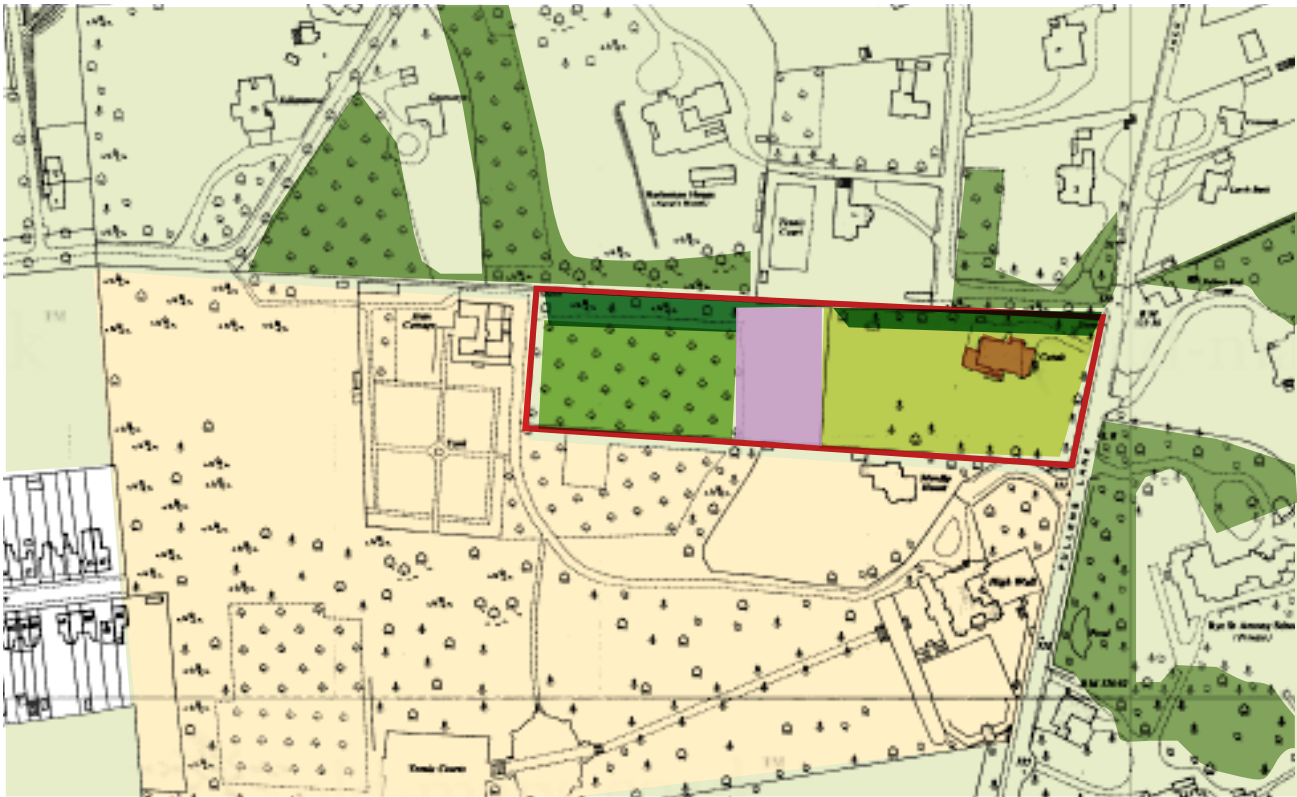
Other large houses within the area were also converted for educational use, including The Croft, which was bought by Rye St. Antony School in 1939, and later Langham Lodge in 1945. The United Oxford Hospitals bought The Vines in 1948 to use as a nurses training school and, later, as a night nurses home. It was later part of Oxford Brookes University and is now occupied by Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford.

In the mid 1970's a former paddock to the east of Cotuit Hall was developed as a small cul-de-sac of medium sized houses running down the slope of the hill to the west of Pullen's Lane.

In 2011 Cotuit Hall was purchased from Oxford Brookes University by the Education First International Academy, the house and adjacent accommodation blocks are presently being used as a residential college for overseas students of 16-18 years in age.

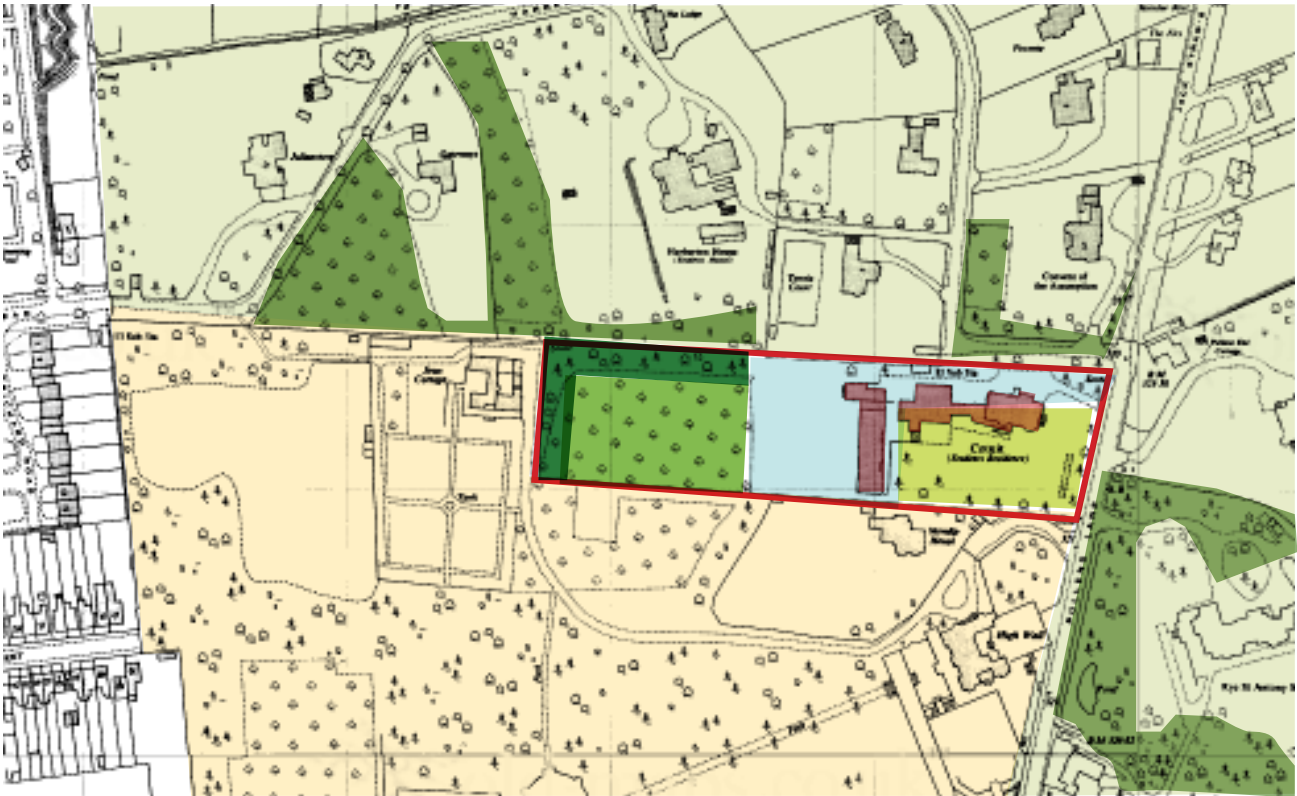
- Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Coduit Hall and Formal Lawn
- Woodland
- Mature Trees
- Kitchen/ Walled Garden
- Orchard
- High Wall Estate
- Private Estates & Gardens

Ordnance Survey c.1958



- Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Coduit Hall and Formal Lawn
- Woodland
- Mature Trees
- Orchard
- High Wall Estate
- Institutional buildings & grounds
- Private Estates & Gardens

Ordnance Survey c.1970



Analysis of the Landscape Evolution

The site of Cotuit Hall and its grounds is situated within the Headington Hill Conservation Area.

This former exclusive Victorian suburb of Oxford is characterised by its mature tree-lined lanes, villa style houses and private gardens, which show-case historical planting schemes and exotic species that were introduced during the Victorian era. The abundance of landscaped grounds and mature trees contribute to the ecological value of this area, creating an essential part of the wildlife corridor that runs through the conservation area into Oxford City centre.

The Pullen’s Lane Character Area retains a sense of tranquillity and rural character through the dominance of rough verges, hedgerows and mature tree-lined enclosures. The lack of road kerbs and restricted street lighting also contributes to the woodland character of the area.

Key views are channelled along the lane by the mature tree lines and some remaining high boundary walls, creating a strong delineation between public and private spaces.

Within the private gardens, evidence of this area’s historic development as a wealthy suburb can be seen by the survival of mature boundary planting and large exotic trees. Some trees date to original developments of the 1870s and 1880s (and later notably at High Wall) and may reflect tree collecting tastes of that period, as well as forming a mature element of the area’s designed landscapes. In other areas, orchard trees may provide evidence of traditionally grown fruit varieties. Cotuit Hall is known to have had a well established orchard, with potential for survival of historic fruit trees identified in 2012.

Legend:

- Headington Hill Conservation Area Boundary
- Street Character Assessment Areas (Oxford City Council)
- EF Academy Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Historic Private Gardens and Parks
- Public Green open Space
- Hedgerow
- Significant View Lines



Plan NTS
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Landscape Designations and Protected Features

Our aim is to further enhance the sense of enclosure offered by the mature boundary planting to the grounds of Cotuit Hall and to reinstate the three distinctive landscape characters that once resided here, notably;

- a) A formal south-facing lawn (as seen in the panorama image)
- b) A tranquil enclosed garden with notes of an orchard.
- c) A woodland

Top left to right:

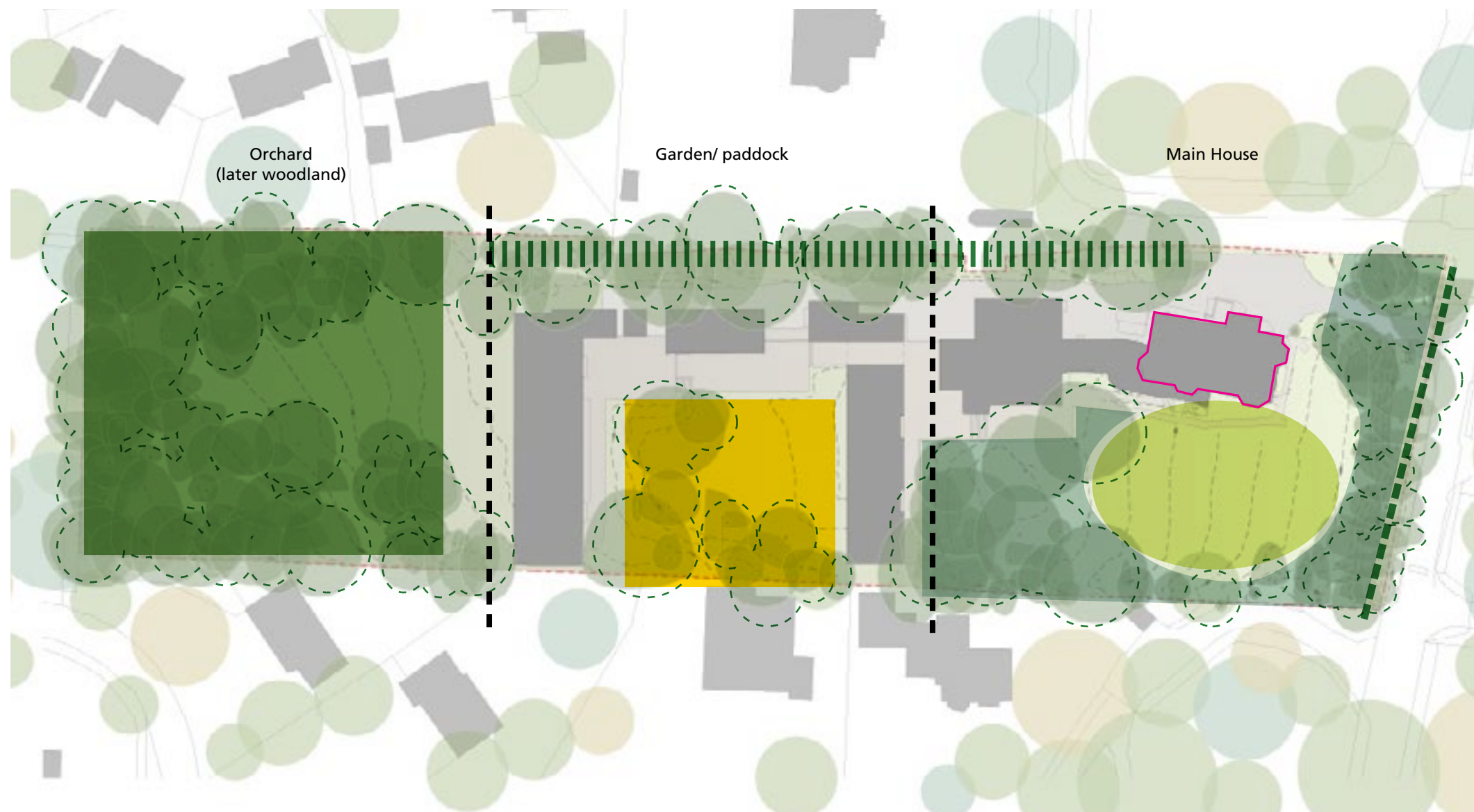
- 1. Panoramic photo of the lawn looking east towards Cotuit Hall

Bottom left to right:

- 1. A view looking south of the existing garden space to the Brewer Building.
- 2. The stepped level changes between the Brewer building and the Marcus Lower Building.
- 3. The woodland edge to the west of the Marcus Lower Building.
- 4. A view looking west of the dense understorey to the woodland area.



Existing Condition

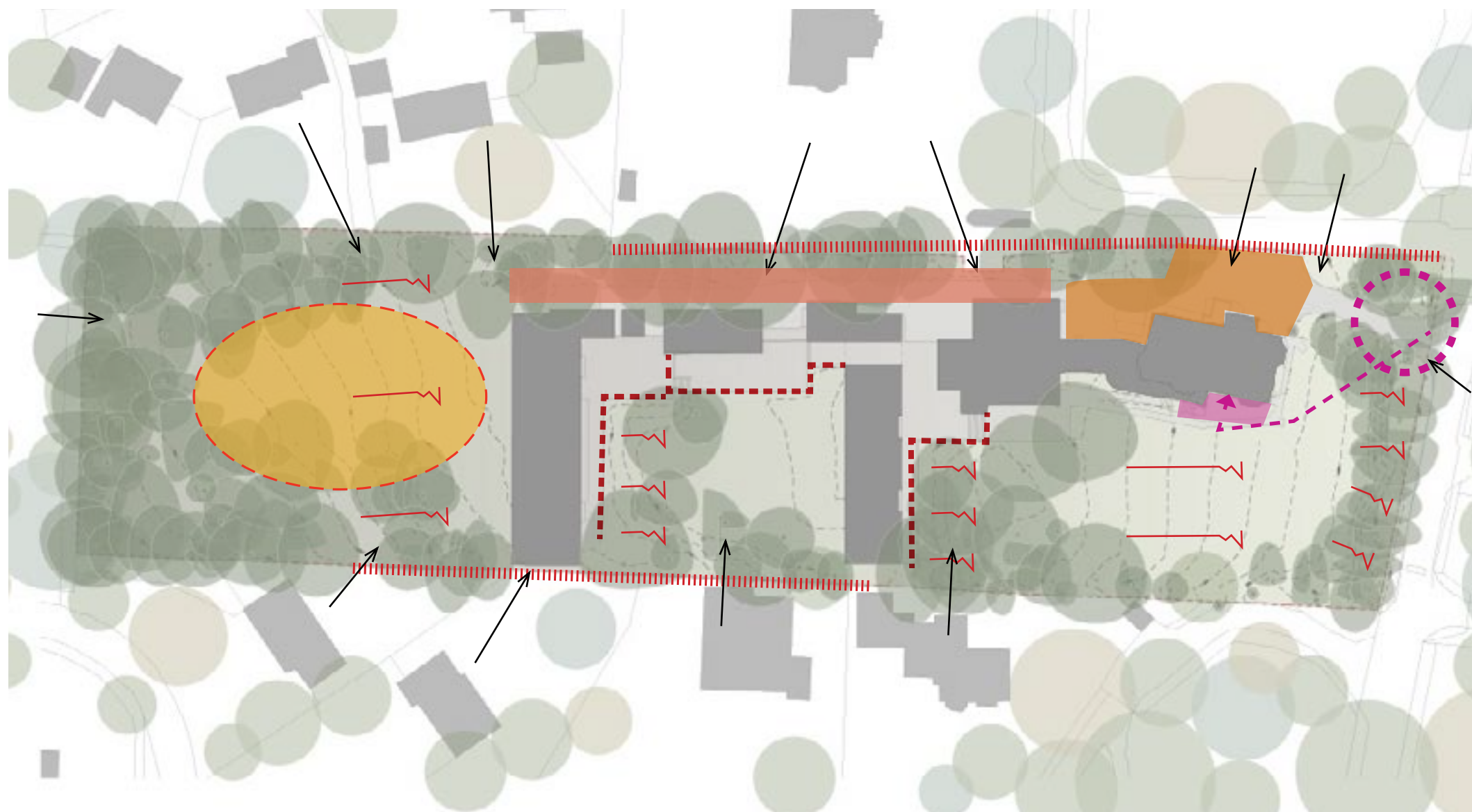


Legend:

- EF Academy Coduit Hall Site Boundary
- Cotuit Hall
- Existing Tree Canopy Cover
- Existing Hedgerow
- | | | | Tree-lined boundary
- Mixed coniferous and broad leaf trees
- South Facing Lawn
- Garden space
- Broadleaf wooded area with dense native understorey planting
- Tripartite division of the grounds since at least 1900

Plan NTS
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Analysis of Existing Landscape Features

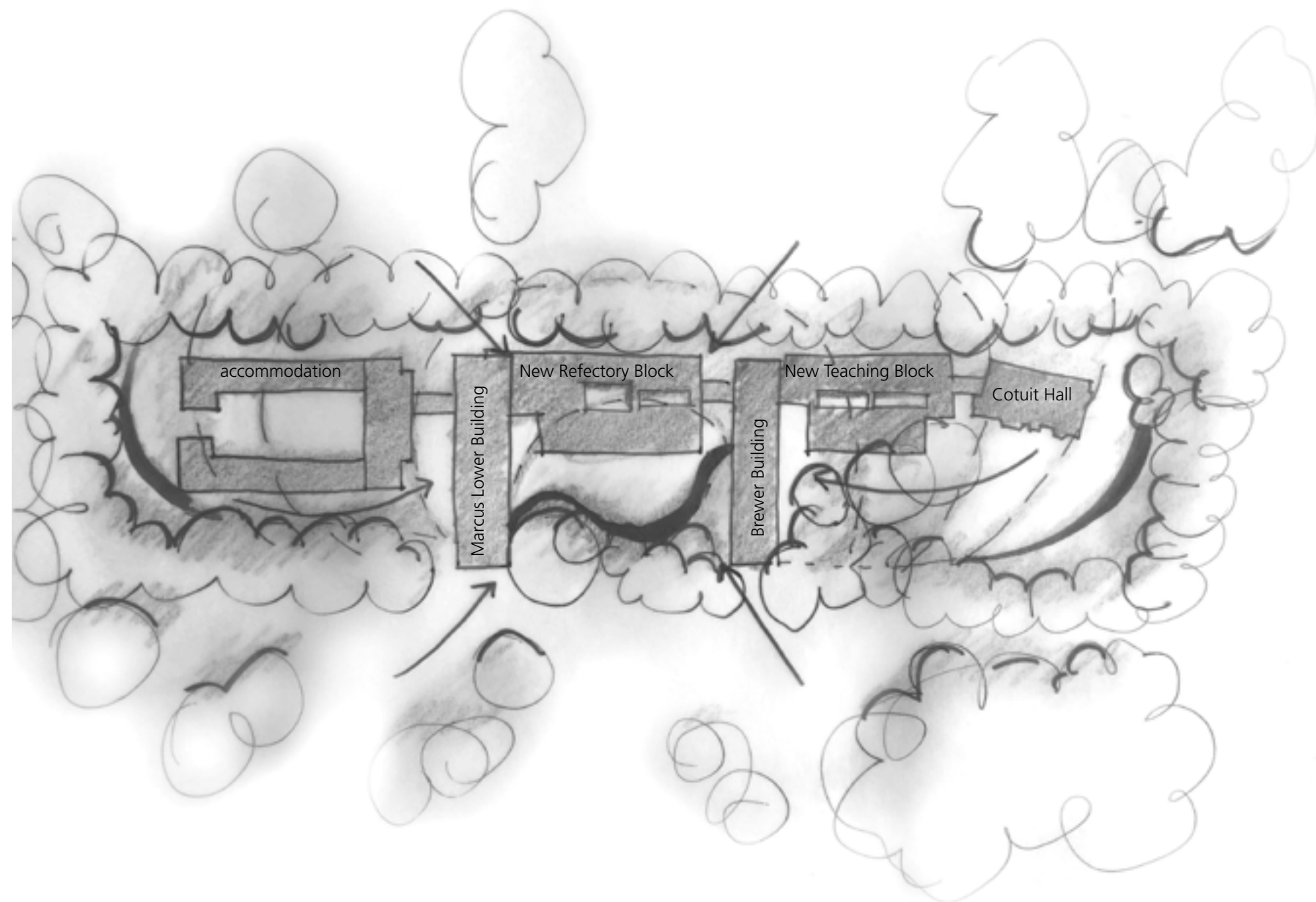


Legend:

- ⋯⋯⋯ EF Academy Cotuit Hall Site Boundary
- ⋯⋯⋯ Pedestrian/ Vehicular Arrival Point
- ➔ Level access to Main Entrance
- Ramp and retaining wall separating Cotuit Hall from the South Lawn
- Existing Service Area to the Cotuit Hall
- Existing hard surfaced Service Road/ Access
- ||||| Weak boundary/ lack of low level screening
- ➔ Neighbourhood Views
- Steps and high retaining walls to accommodate level change that segregate the gardens
- ~ Sloping ground
- Inaccessible woodland / ground level understory planting

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Existing Site Constraints



The concept for the landscape seeks to complement the mature setting to Cotuit Hall whilst providing a unique and characterful landscape for the residential college.

Our aim is to enhance the tranquil and rural nature of the landscape by creating an introspective heart of activity at the centre of the site. The existing contoured ground and proposed lower levels to the new Refectory Block provide the opportunity for a terrace garden, making use of the level change with further enchantments to boundary screening to effectively conceal and enclose this space.

The 'ebb and flow' of activity dissipates through the surrounding spaces, with more reposeful landscapes being proposed. The woodland and south lawn provide an opportunity to bring the landscape up to the building edge, absorbing these structures into the surrounding greenery and creating a seamless transition between soft and hard spaces.

Plan NTS
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Landscape Concept

The proposed landscape setting to Cotuit Hall can be conceived as having three distinctive character areas:

Cotuit Hall and South Lawn:

Our approach is to provide a simple carpet of surface materials sympathetic to the setting that will announce the proposed Main Entrance to Cotuit Hall. Open in character this carpet will provide a clear perimeter to Cotuit Hall whilst separating the movement of arriving pedestrians and vehicles. The curtilage of brick paving will guide pedestrians through the proposed covered walkway that leads to the main entrance.

The existing mix of large pines, cedars and broad leaf trees provides a rich backdrop for a more playful understory of sculpted coniferous hedging and clipped forms. The informal arrangement of cloud-pruned yew and scattering of stones provide a low-level sense of enclosure to the south lawn whilst taking a playful twist on a traditional formal lawn and garden.

The Terrace Garden:

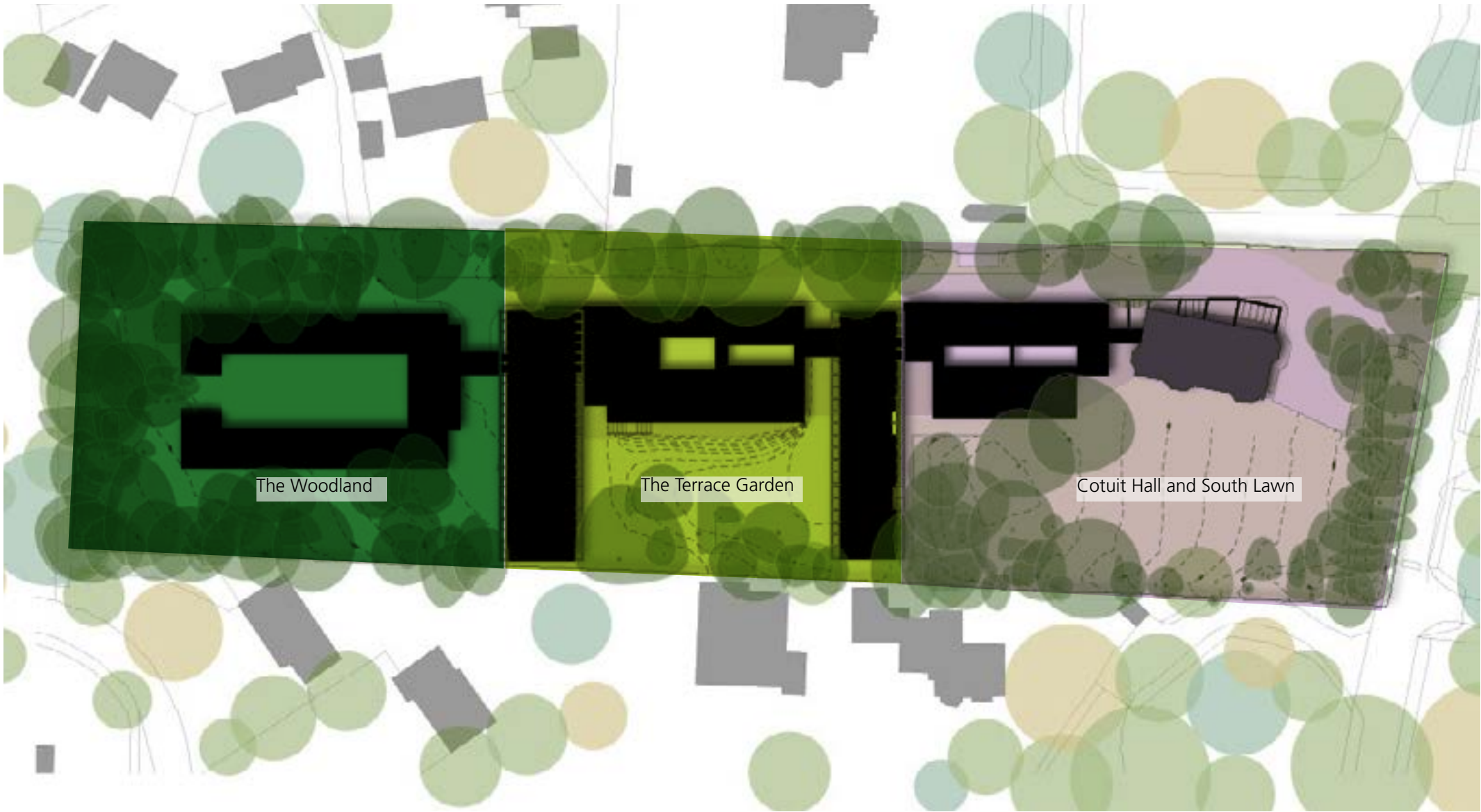
The sculptural form and gradation in the ground levels creates an interesting arrangement of terraced seating spaces that face onto and enclose the external space to the Refectory Block. The terraces not only provide the opportunity for informal seating but also serves as ledge and crevice for planting to establish. This layering in the landscape will help to soften the impact of the new building and also creates a sense of enclosure , an element that existed on the site when this section of the grounds was used as a kitchen garden.

The introduction of smaller canopy fruiting trees along the boundary will help screen the development and also enhance the ecological value of the site.

The Woodland:

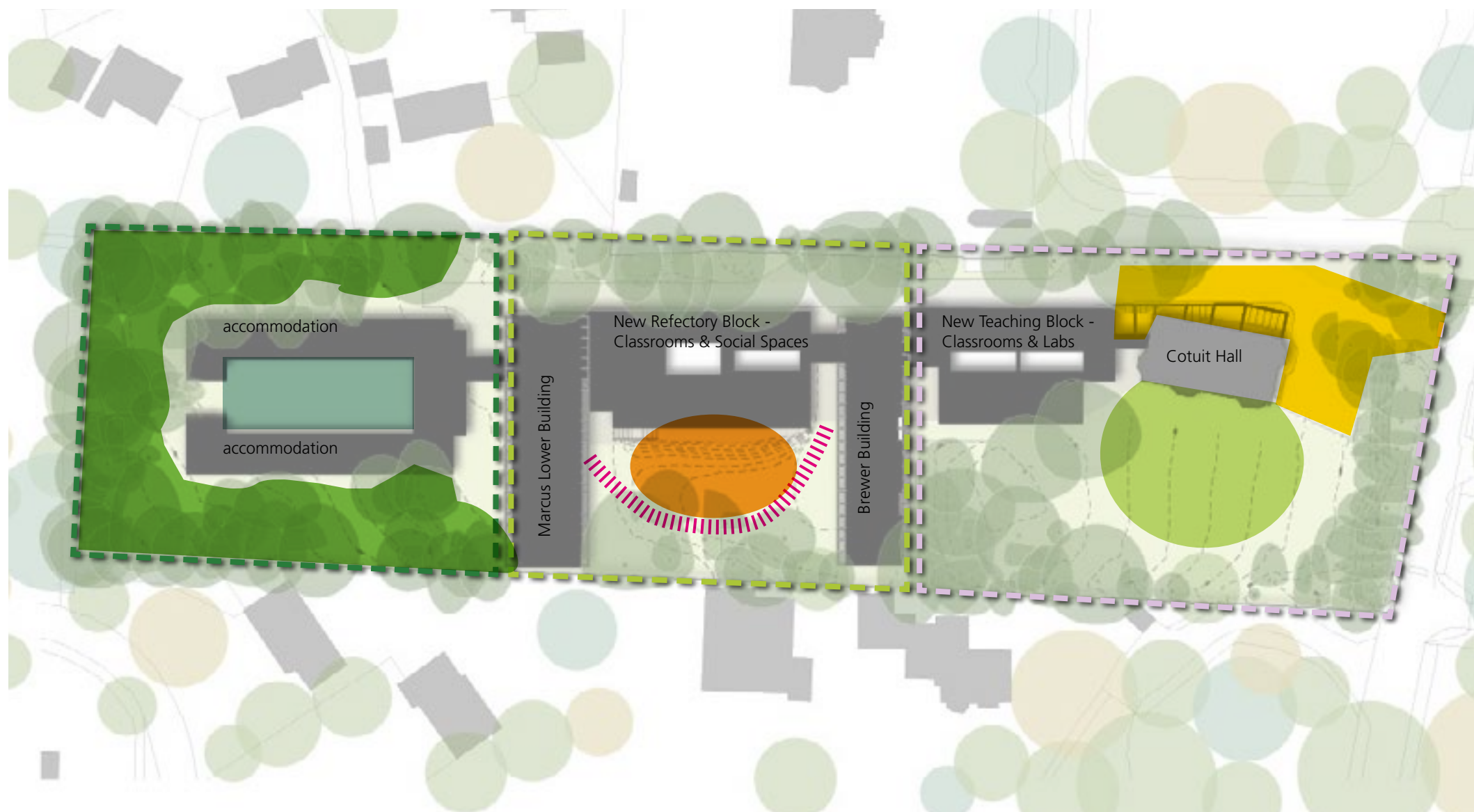
We see the existing woodland character of the west part of the site as an important asset and wish to minimise the impact of development here through further enhancements to the woodland flora. Additional lower canopy trees and large shrubs will be planted to vary the canopy height of the existing trees. A mix of native and wild-life attracting species will be chosen, in particular those of a fruiting and flowering variety, along with herbaceous planting. The woodland landscape will be brought up to the perimeter of the accommodation block, and will contrast in character to the central courtyard space.

Here a calm and reflective space is proposed, with copses of multi-stem trees under-planted with herbaceous planting grasses and seating stones dispersed on a cental lawn.



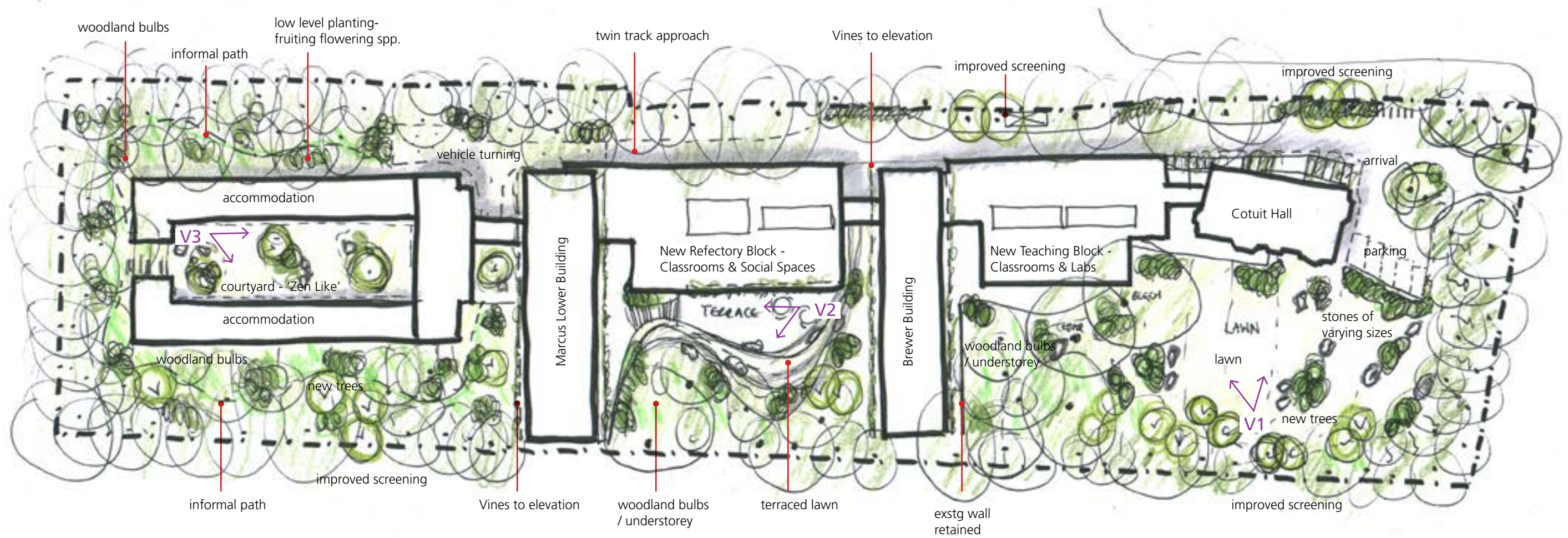
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Proposed Landscape Character



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Proposed Landscape Character & Spaces



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Landscape Sketch Proposal



Sketch View 1: South Lawn to Coduit Hall



Sketch View 2: Lower Terrace to the Refectory Block



Sketch View 3: Lower Courtyard to the Accommodation Block



1:750 @ A3



Illustrative Landscape Plan

Top left to right:

1. Location Plan

Bottom left to right:

1. 'Cloud- pruned' hedging to the South Lawn
2. Resin-bonded aggregate surface to the main drive
- 3 & 4. Scattering of stones across the lawn, varying in size.



1.



2.



3.



4.

Cotuit Hall & South Lawn: Detail Area & Precedent



Illustrative Section 1: Cotuit Hall and South Lawn

Top left to right:

1. Location Plan

Bottom left to right:

1. Dutch Brick paved pedestrian paths and terraces to the skirt of the buildings
2. Amphitheatre terraces to the Lower Terrace
3. Scattering of stones for perching, leaning and sitting
4. Gravel and grass verge track to the service road.



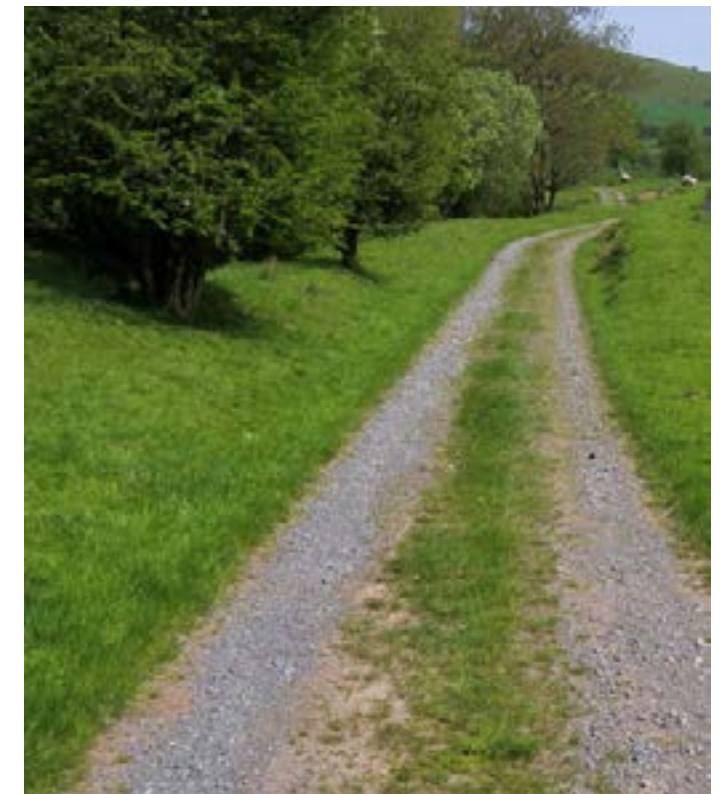
1.



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Terrace Garden: Detail Area & Precedent