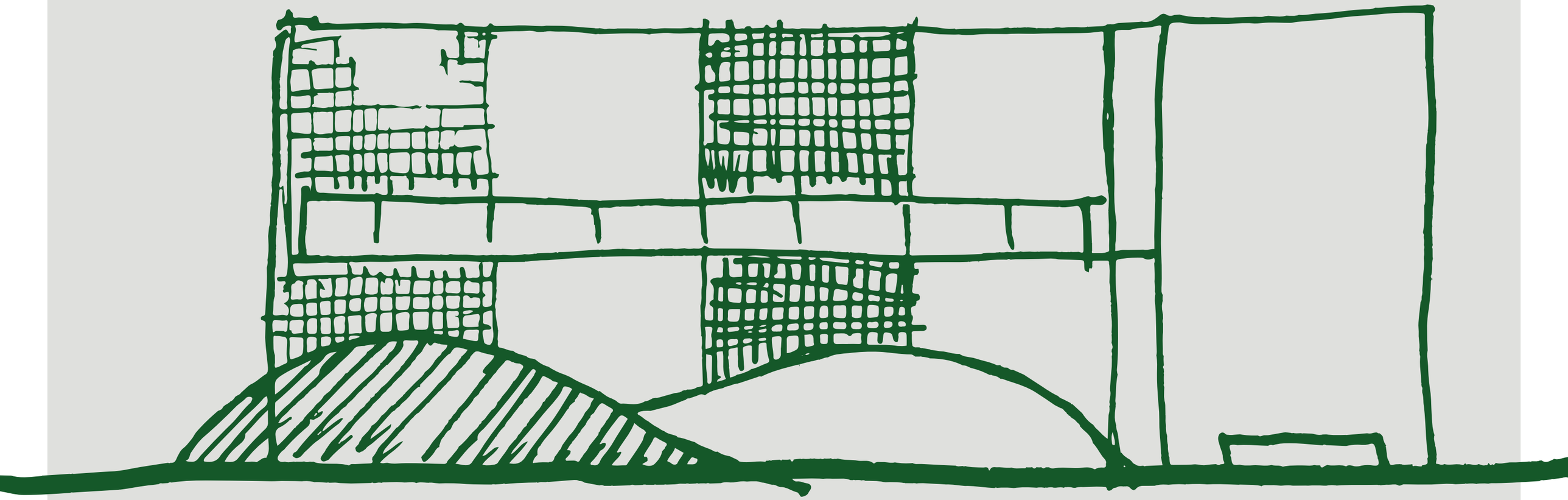
STUDY in SQUARES



INTRODUCTION

Rowner has some great urban spaces – squares, courts and closes…

This document outlines some initial thinking and ideas about how we can look and think about some of the issues which affect these spaces and how we could improve them.

Some local spaces have been neglected and some have not been touched for years! But that means in many cases that we now have a blank canvas to do some simple but amazing things which will make these shared spaces better and improve the image of the neighbourhood and quality of life and even do something good for nature and the environment.

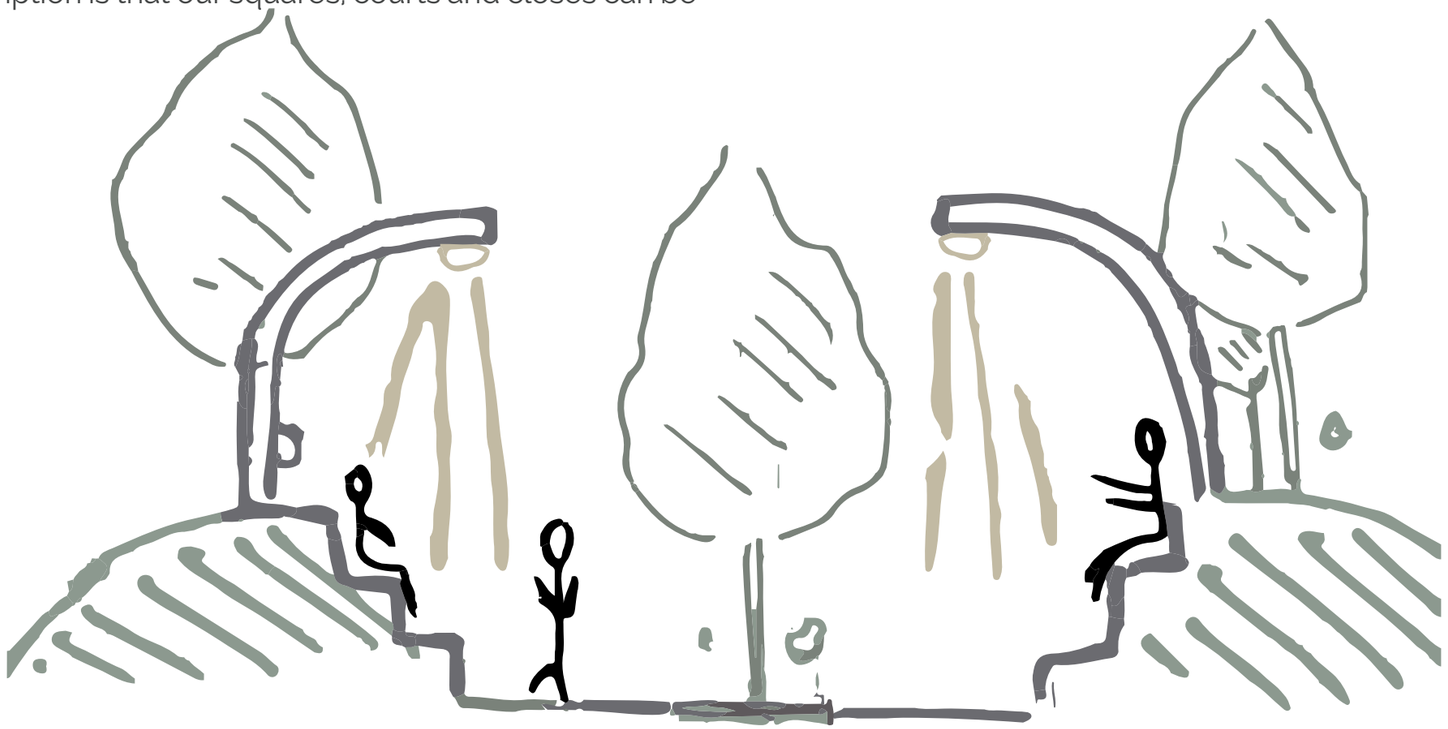
This document was created with collaboration and assistance from the Department of Architecture at the University of Portsmouth. Together with local residents serving as guides and a panel, they have generated compelling initial ideas and concepts. The images shown here are very initial ones and they are not final designs, but they are designed to get thinking and discussions going.

Some very powerful words like home, landmarks, community and identity have been used in this document – they reflect the strong potential of these unique spaces. The underlaying assumption is that our squares, courts and closes can be assets for us all and they can be used, with a little bit of imagination, investment and time to create a better image, feeling and quality of life for all of us wherever we live in the neighbourhood.

This document looks mainly at the larger squares. Specifically we looked at the examples of Cornwell Close, Meadow Lane and Lindbergh Close… there are of course other bigger spaces like the Rowner Rec which reflect the history of the neighbourhood. All these three examples are very different spaces, but they share some similar issues of neglect, in some cases just simple blandness, poor planting and they lack an identity and positive use. If improved, this could have a big impact of the image of the neighbourhood as they are central to movement about the neighbourhood and could act as the central landmarks of a great place to live.

Again these are ideas, and we are really looking forward to the conversations, design sessions and events that will happen over 2024 and 2025 as some final ideas are brought together.

Our deepest thanks to the University students and staff and the local residents who led them as guides in the initial design events.












HERB HILLS & SALAD SLIDES
COURTYARD
COOK OFF!





POSSIBLE SITES

















Samson Close

Samson Close

Carless Close

Carless Close

Cornwell Close

Williams Close

Hunter Close

Rodney Close

Rodney Close

Howe Road

Meadow Lane

Agincourt Avenue

Alver Village square

Blanchard Avenue

Rowner Rec

Hereford Court

Solebay Way

Sheffeild Court

Lindbergh Close

Pegasus Close

Ely Court

Amelia Gardens

Little Woodham Lane

Allenby

Cambridge Road

ISSUES

Good public spaces can help make a community and gives that place a good reputation and these are that places that we like to visit. Locally we have examples like the small towns like Wickham or Alton or new spaces like Priddy's Yard or Gunwharf.

Further afield some of the squares in London or in historic cities like York attract millions of people. If we can, we like to travel to beautiful towns, cities or villages in countries like Spain, Italy and France. We know what a good space is when we are in it… but through habit we have come to expect second or third best in a "place like Rowner".

There are some key elements to successful local places including its image (identity), people (community) and physical layout (environment). To make a better place we need to work on all three of these elements, including:

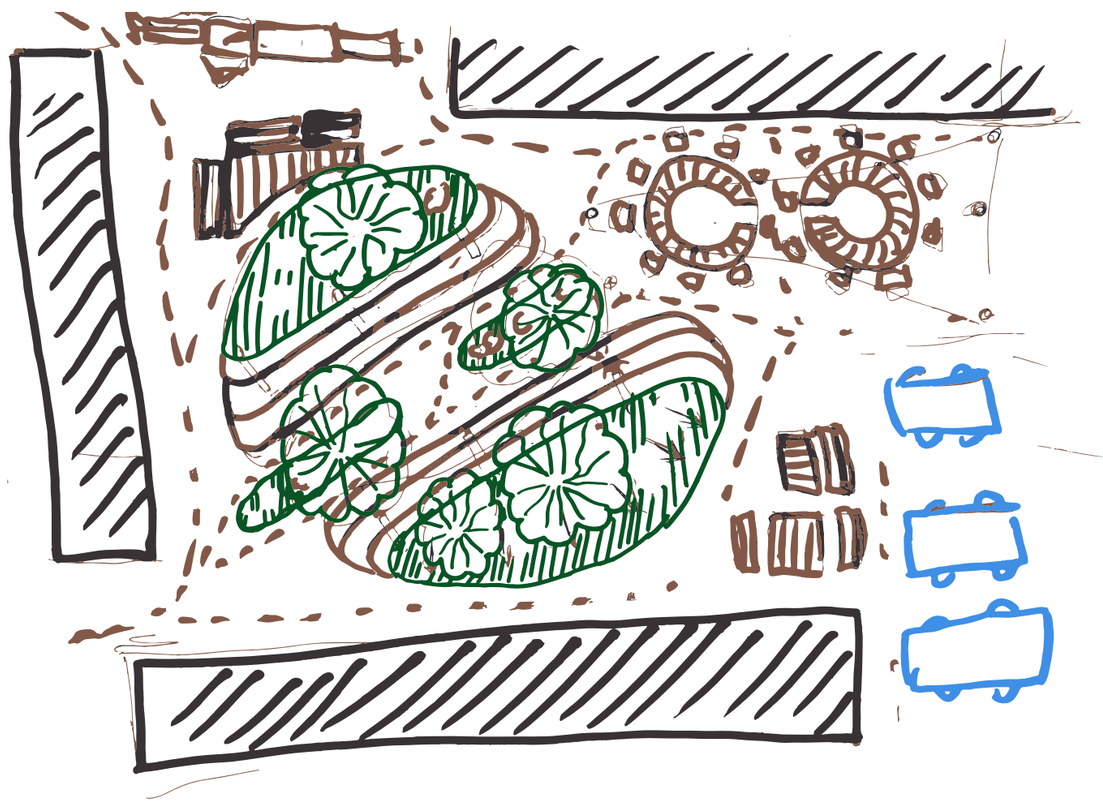
A strong identity – we know when we are somewhere special because there are clear boundaries, consistent use of furniture and it is actually designed for people and use in mind. It might have special shops (café, ice cream, pub), seating, trees, play area etc. It feels unique, and it fits its environment. It might also have a landmarks like a bandstand, statue, fountains, art, trees, picnic area that marks it out so that you end up taking a selfie next to it or saying "I will meet you by…".

It creates community – by providing a space for neighbours to meet and interact, talk, play, cook and eat together. We all remember how isolated we felt during the pandemic. Humans are social animals, and no number of screens can replace human contact. Again in warmer countries people sit out in their local squares and most English streets used to have a 'local' pub where you met your neighbours and had a quick (or long) chat.

A home is more than a building. Meeting people builds trust and understanding. This can mean that if someone needs a little bit of help and/or that they keep an eye out for your home, bike, car, pet etc. people feel safer, and they are less worried and they can then say that it is "nice living around here…"

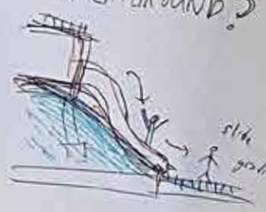
There is also a physical element – to how we use spaces. Where can we walk, keep our bike, rest, put our rubbish, park, play or just hang out? The flows of people walking, riding, jogging, cycling, driving and catering for activities such as playing or relaxing and even feeling safe all need to be planned for and designed in for any space to work. We all know how frustrating that spaces that don't work are… A good local park, attractive street, nice trees etc not only increases the value of houses but how much people appreciate where they live.

We know that we can make our local environment better by looking at our already existing local examples. Some local people have made lovely gardens, balconies and outdoor seating or planted trees and Alver Valley School for example has a wonderful forest school for local children. We notice these examples when we pass by. If we now make it possible for everyone to have a nice environment and to get involved then it will lift the whole neighbourhood for everyone and will mean that phrase "good enough for Rowner" will mean something very different!



INITIATIVES.

PLAYGROUND?





MAINTAINING PAVEMENTS?



Refresh the Benches?



HILLS?

ACCESSIBICITY NEEDS

COMMUNITY PRIDE



Easy upkeep.
-> community commitment once completed.

ALLOTMENTS

SKATEPARK.

OR PERMANENT (TEST IDEAS).

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

LOCAL

FENCING?

GET TOGETHER FOLLOWING NEGATIVE.

NEGLECTED SPACES

RE/PURPOSE / NEW USE.

TEMPORARY STRUCTURES THAT COMMUNITY CAN BUILD.

COMMUNITY + MANAGEMENT.

Community Projects
- Parking / planting trees
- Litter picks

ISTORIC COMMUNITY EVENTS.

DISUSED SPACES

SPACES OF OPPURTUNITY...

THRESHOLD BETWEEN FRONT DOORS + PUBLIC SPACE.

HOW PUBLIC SHOULD/DOES THE SQUARE NEED TO BE?

PARKING? + COSTS...

NO LONGER MANAGED.

PRECEDENTS















PRECEDENTS









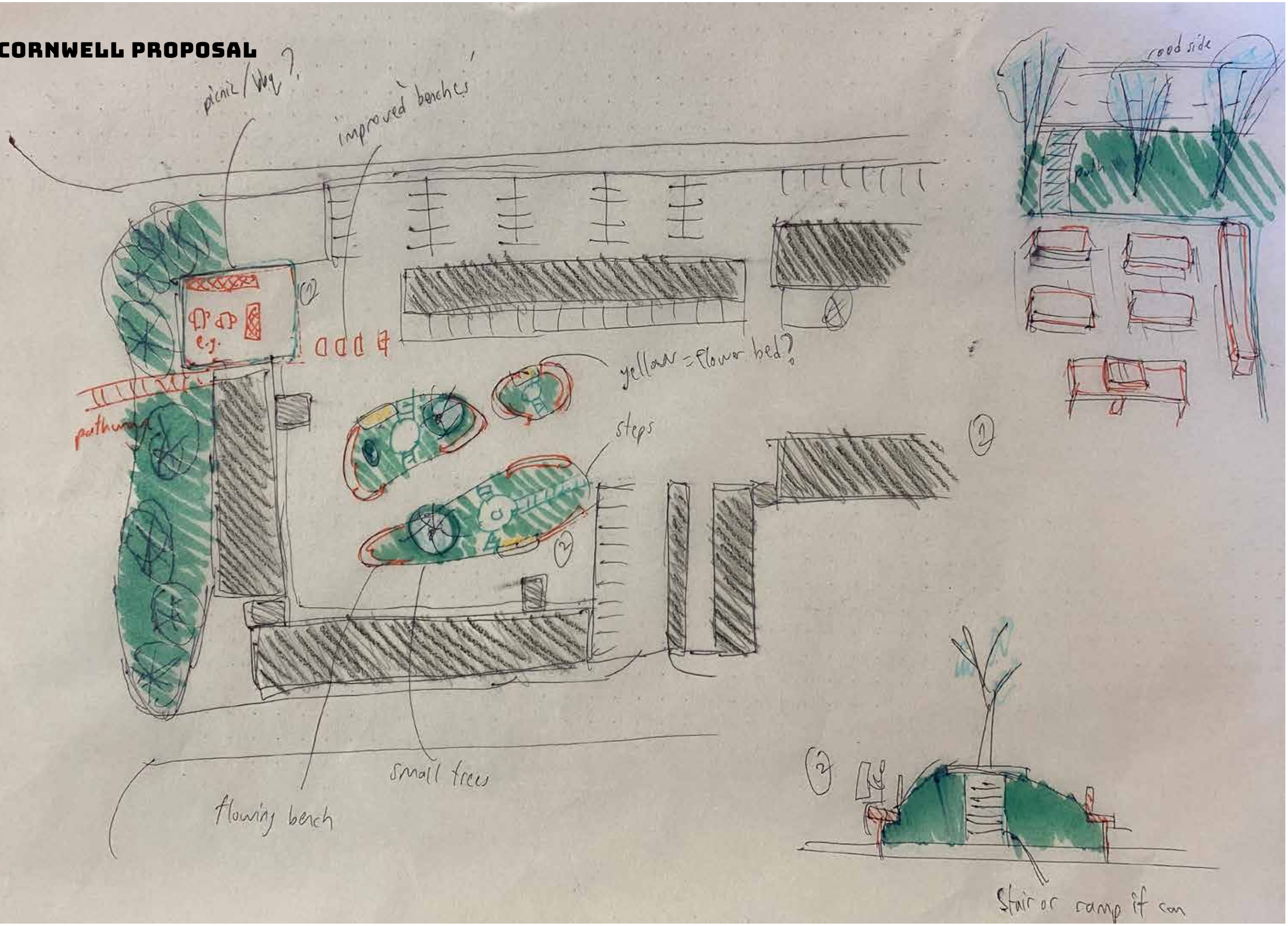




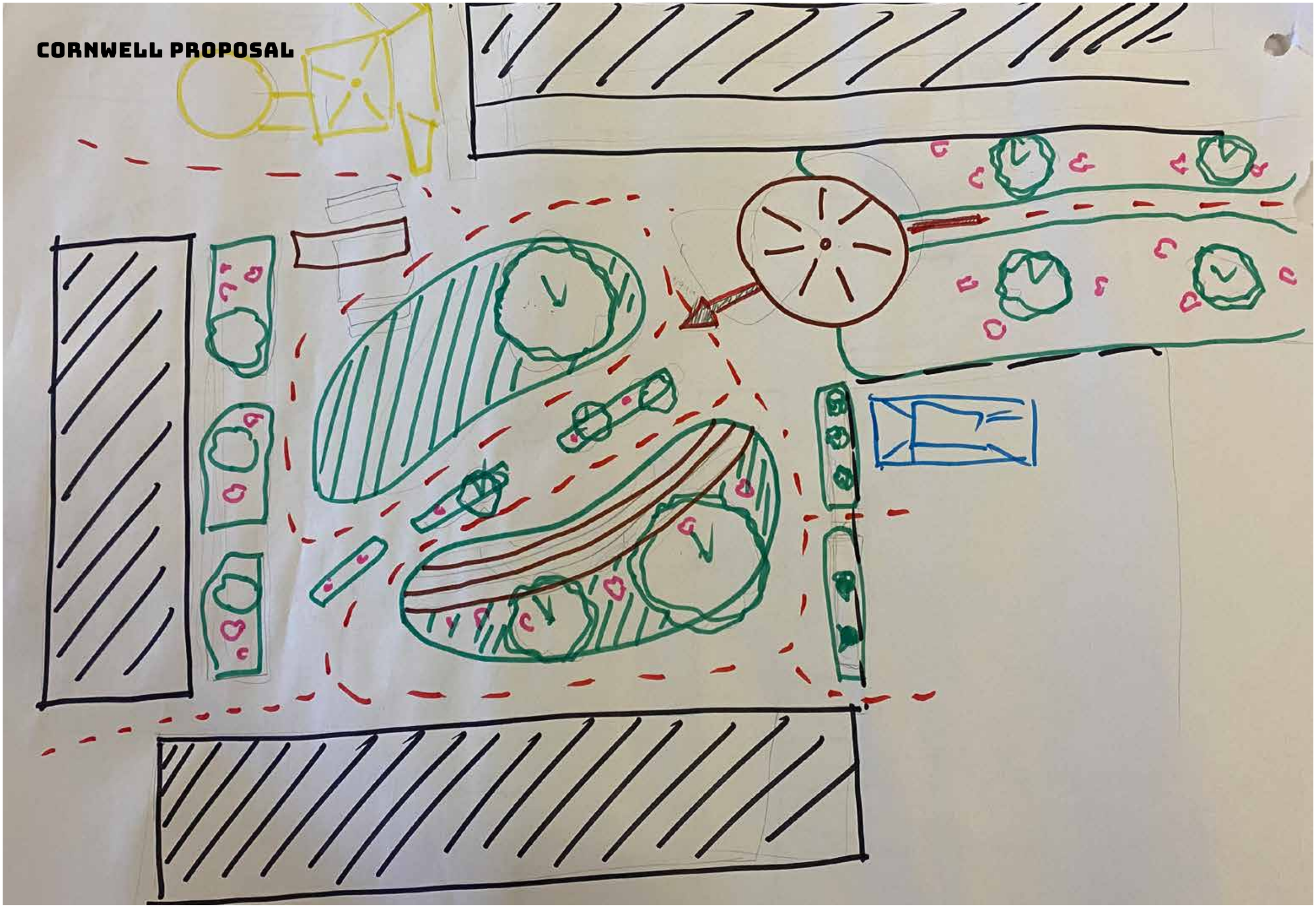




CORNWELL PROPOSAL



CORNWELL PROPOSAL



ISSUES

1. Neighbourhood Aesthetics:
- Observation: The general appearance of Rowner is currently characterised as a run-down and uncared for.
- Recommendation: Initiate a community-led initiative to revitalise public spaces, facades, and common areas. Encourage local art installations and community beautification projects.

2. Abandoned Areas:
- Observation: Numerous vacant spaces create a sense of neglect and potential safety concerns.
- Recommendation: Collaborate with local stakeholders and residents to repurpose abandoned areas. Consider community gardens, art installations, or pocket parks to breathe new life into these spaces.

3. Green Spaces Reimagined:
- Observation: Existing green spaces lack thoughtful design and fail to serve as community hubs.
- Recommendation: Develop a Green Spaces Revitalization Plan in co-design with residents. Incorporate seating, fruit tress, herbs, and multipurpose areas to encourage social interaction and community events.

4. Shared Grass Areas Upgrade:
- Observation: Shared grass areas lack purpose and fail to foster neighbourly interactions.
- Recommendation: Explore the possibility of transforming shared grass areas into communal spaces, perhaps incorporating seating, community art projects, or a shared vegetable garden and wildflowers.

5. Playground Rehabilitation:
- Observation: Children's play spaces are in poor condition, potentially compromising a sense of safety.
- Recommendation: Undertake a thorough assessment of play areas, prioritise necessary repairs, and collaborate with local schools and community organisations to organise fundraising events for a playground makeover.

6. Community Amenities Expansion:
- Observation: Limited community amenities hinder opportunities for residents to engage in communal activities.
- Recommendation: Work with residents to develop local activities based on resident passions to reuse existing venues and spaces

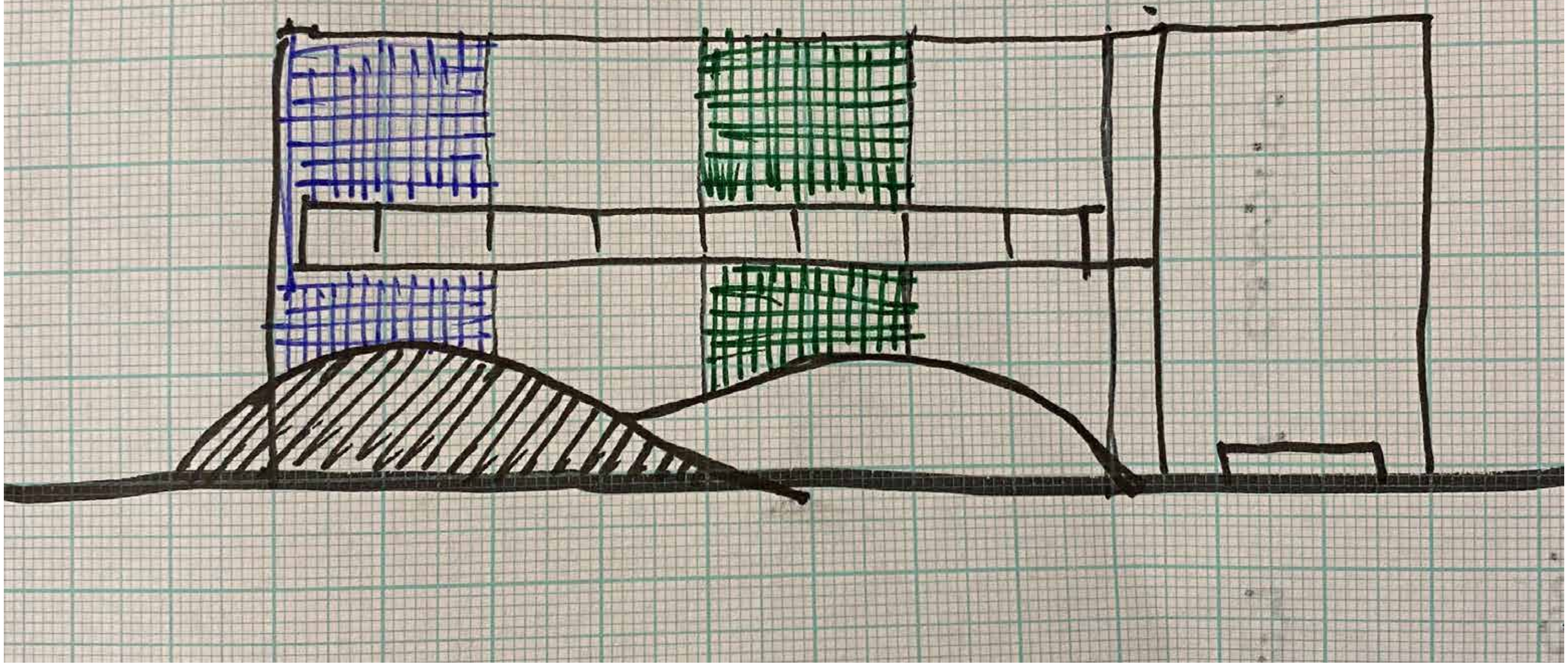
7. Infrastructure Improvement:
- Observation: Streets suffer from poor paving, and redundant spaces are prevalent.
- Recommendation: Collaborate with local stakeholders to address infrastructure concerns. Make roadway upkeep a top priority and think about repurposing unused areas for community use.
-

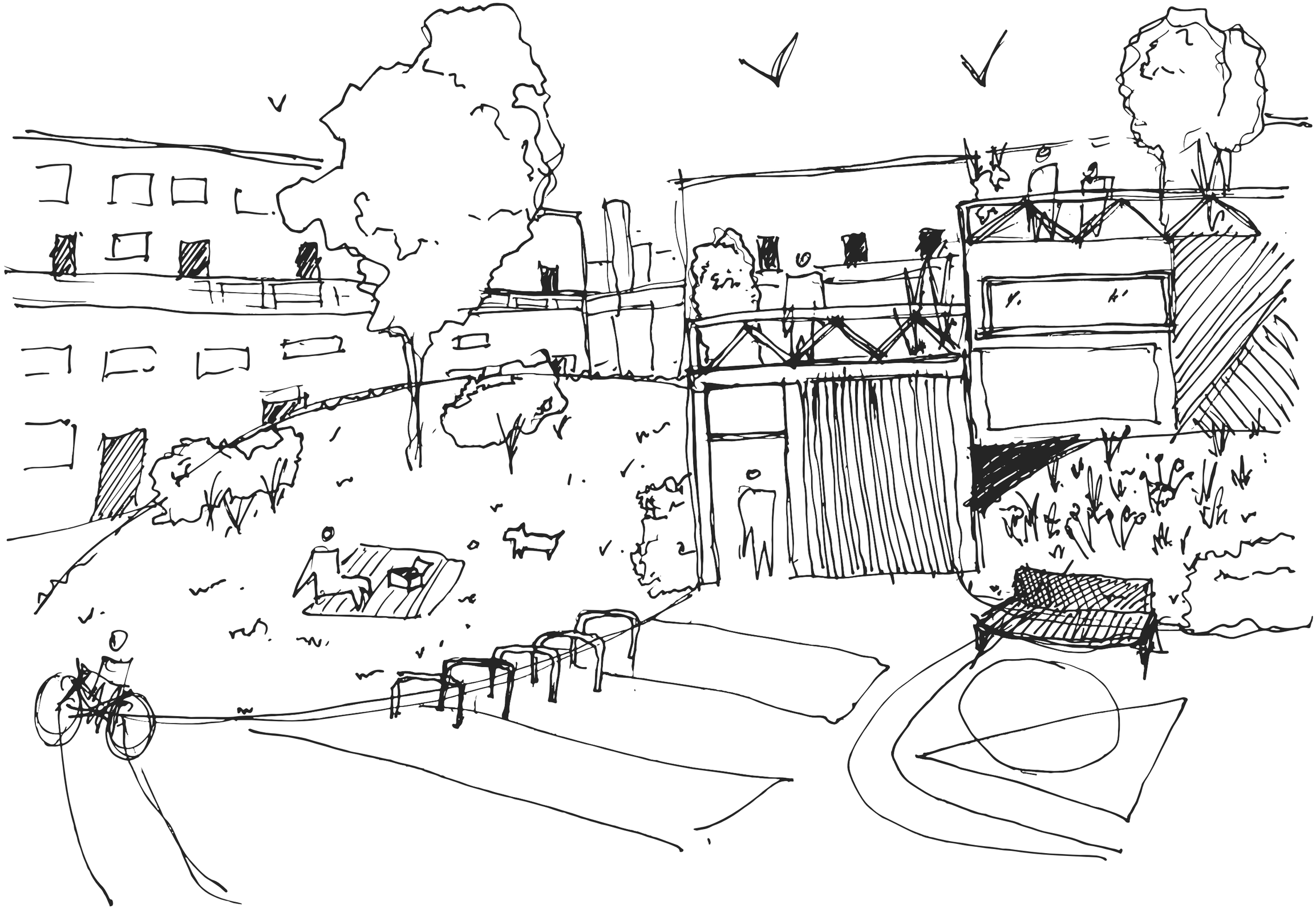
8. Public Seating Installations:
- Observation: The absence of public seating impedes casual interactions among residents.
- Recommendation: Introduce benches and seating areas strategically placed in public spaces. Consider community-led initiatives to design, install and decorate unique seating structures.

9. Kid-Friendly Activities:
- Observation: Limited organised activities for children and young people contribute to a lack of recreational options.
- Recommendation: Collaborate with nearby schools, parents, and community groups to coordinate frequent events and activities tailored for young people.

10. Urban Spaces Transformation:
- Observation: Urban spaces lack vibrancy and fail to serve as community focal points.
- Recommendation: Collaborate with local artists, students and residents to reimagine urban spaces. Consider public art installations, community notice boards, and flexible events in spaces to encourage community engagement.

DIFFERENTIATION + IDENTITY...





CONCLUSION

It is easy to forget about how amazing the public spaces across Rowner are, in both the older and newer areas. Rowner is a neighbourhood with lots of green spaces, beautiful trees and many properties which have good gardens. The closes, courts and squares are unique spaces and even the green humps could be a distinct feature of our unique landscape. We want to make the best of the great things we have and build on them to create a better image for Rowner and for all residents to enjoy living here.

The work outlined above come from some initial visits from the University, conversations with residents and looking at other places locally and around the world. This work highlighted the wonderful opportunity Rowner has to create something special… something that other areas will be jealous of!

Sometimes we need to step back and take another look to see the potential in what we take for granted. This is why we asked for some fresh eyes and ideas to help us produce these very initial ideas. It is not the end but a beginning of more conversations, designing, discussing and trying out new ideas.

We think there needs to be clearer distinct identities or looks for our spaces, more activity like BBQ's and block parties, more conversations and looking out for our neighbours and creating more nature friendly spaces.

Rowner Community Trust can lead and bring the resources together to bring this about. But only if residents want things to change and improve. It will be a process which runs over several years working with a range of organisations. We know that just planting some trees and putting in some new seats won't work.

Most importantly it is local residents who need to be in the driving seat – helping to design and decide on plans as well as delivering the results working with the University, colleges, local groups, young people etc as well as the Councils, Vivid etc. The idea is that 20+ spaces will be improved over the coming years. We will learn as we go along but it will only happen and work if residents want it, support it and get involved.



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